

MINUTES
of the Annual Meeting of
The Novel Club of Cleveland
April 27, 2014
Hosts: Jay & Toby Siegel

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by President Leon Gabinet. The president requested a motion that we dispense with reading the minutes from the last annual meeting. A motion was made and seconded to that effect, and the motion was carried.

The following slate of officers for the 2015-2015 and 2015-2016 seasons was presented:

For president, Anne Ogan; for vice president, Jay Siegel; for corresponding secretary, Leigh Fabens and Catherine LaCroix; for recording secretary, Carol Fox; and for treasurer, Mary Douthit. All members in attendance voted unanimously in favor of the proposed officers. In response to a question, President Gabinet pointed out that the Council of Administration for the two years to come is comprised of the immediate past president and the incoming officers.

Currently, the roster of members numbers 32; efficiency, effectiveness and smooth running of The Club is dependent on having 36 members. Accordingly, President Gabinet stated, we would like to encourage members to propose new candidates for membership. He proposed that we alter the current path to membership by requiring just two letters of recommendation, rather than five, as is currently the case. There being no firm bylaws (it is believed these were mislaid some 70 years ago), members determined there was no reason we could not make the change. A motion to that effect was made and seconded; it carried unanimously.

Treasurer Mary Douthit reported that the Club's checking account balance is \$2743.43. President Gabinet raised the possibility of reducing members' annual dues from \$20 per year to \$10 per year, an issue that had been raised at the annual meeting last year. Anne Ogan, as acting recording secretary, read the relevant paragraph from the 2013 annual meeting minutes pertaining to the same subject. At that time, it was determined to table the discussion of what to do with our excess funds: reduce dues, give the money to a book-oriented charity, or increase expenditures for a celebration of the club's future 125th anniversary. The same three choices were discussed. Tom Slavin pointed

out that the 100th anniversary was what he called “a signature occasion,” -- a black-tie event held at The Hunt Club. Leigh Fabens argued in favor of making a statement by making a significant donation to contribute to a modest target, improving literacy. No one was in favor of building up the club’s treasury. The membership voted to retain dues at \$20 annually and to make the contribution of \$1000 to Friends of the Cleveland Public Library. Leigh Fabens and Anne Ogan are to write a letter to accompany the gift.

The next order of business, determining a location for the club's June meeting, was raised by Ted Sande, one of two hosts for that meeting. He pointed out that many members are moving to smaller homes where they will be unable to accommodate the full complement of members for evening meetings. Accordingly, he wanted the group to address (1) specifically, the possibility of holding the June meeting at Dunham Tavern and (2) generically, the possibility that other meetings will need to be held at public places. There is typically a usage cost affiliated with such places, and he urged members to consider how that cost should be borne. No definitive long-term plan was adopted, but it was determined that the June meeting would be held at Dunham Tavern and that those attending would contribute \$10 apiece to defray the cost. The remainder of any obligation would be picked up by the club's treasury.

Catherine LaCroix requested that everyone present review his or her contact information in our annual program booklet so that she may update the booklet this summer. Printing costs for the booklet are expected to be approximately \$350, and the booklets are to be printed over the summer and available at the club's first meeting in early October.

We then moved on to the primary business at hand, selecting the nine novels to be read during the 2014/2015 season. Descriptions of the 18 books proposed by the program committee had been distributed electronically to all members, and are incorporated herein by reference. As is customary, proposals included six books classified as “Classics” and six books classified as “Modern and Contemporary.” The theme chosen by the program committee for next season is “Intolerance,” and six books for that category were presented. Comments were made about each book by those who had proposed them as well as by other members who had read them. Ballots were marked and collected. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:45 PM.

Subsequently, ballots were counted while a delicious buffet dinner was enjoyed by all.

The books selected are:

Classics: Honore' Balzac, Le Pere Goriot; Willa Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop; Ivan Turgenev, Fathers and Sons

Modern and Contemporary: Julian Barnes, The Sense of an Ending; Colum McCann, Let the Great World Spin; Winfred George Sebald, Austerlitz

Theme –Intolerance: Bernard Malamud, The Assistant; Leo Tolstoy, Hadji Murad; Thrity Umrigar, The Space between Us

Following the announcement of the winning selections, some members signed up for 2014/2015 season duties of hosting or writing papers. The program committee undertook the task of completing assignments, noting that they would be delighted if some members would do double duty, given the shortage of members.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Ogan, Acting Secretary