

Minutes
August 27, 2025 Press Club Special Meeting
10:30 a.m. – 11:43 a.m. at West Activity Center Learning Lab

Present: Doug Kates, Editor; Tom Butcher, President; Donna Gagnon; Joanne Cordes, Secretary; 16 members

Call to Order – at 10:30 a.m. by Doug

As this was a specially-called meeting, Doug dispensed with asking Joanne to read highlights from the prior meeting. But he did ask Tom if he had any comments as President of the club. Tom declined. And then Doug asked if any board members had comments. Both Donna and Joanne declined.

Doug distributed a summary list of Building Reporters contribution count during Sep 2024 – Aug 2025. To begin, Doug stated that 60 buildings have no reporter and that is too many. He asked for suggestions on how we can change this...

A. How can we 'place an ad' to acquire more writers? Suggestions followed:

1. Richard B. – Post on Hilda's Facebook page. When Doug countered that he cannot post to Facebook, Pat H., Richard, and others offered to do it on behalf of the Press Club.
2. Jesse T. – Make an announcement (from the stage) at the Good Neighbors Association coffee, the first of this season to be 09/11/25.
3. Irene P. – Create a "Don't be Left Out" flyer and make it available at each building's newspaper basket in the core. (flyer is to encourage each building to be a participator with a writer). See D11.
4. Unknown – Post a sign in each of the buildings without a reporter, to state: "if there is news in your building, call here." And include name/number of a feature writer or any current writer who wishes to write additional stories.
5. Unknown – Post 'request for building writers' to 901 TV.

Conversation developed to ask:

B. Why is it that people do not want to do the Building reporter job?:

6. Tom B. – Let potential writers know what is expected and what to write about; give examples.
7. Toni Y. – People are boring. People don't do anything or go anywhere. People can't come out of their condos. Some are renters who are ashamed they rent instead of own and they don't want to share their lives.
8. Richard B. – 'I didn't want to be a writer because I don't proscribe to the paper's adage of "only good news." There's bad news, too. When my upstairs neighbor dies, which could be at any time, I'll want to write about his life and contributions and note his death. And people will want to know that. Why shouldn't it be in the paper? Tom agreed here. He believes we should have obituary announcements. As do many other residents in OTOW.
9. Diane L. – People don't want the commitment. Every month, long term. Some people aren't interested in even reading the newspaper because they think the content should be broader, more encompassing.
10. Nameless – Doug stated he heard via email from Snowbird reporters who told him that people think the reporter job is too hard. They don't know what to write about.

Doug shifted the conversation to what we call our building reporters. Some say that 'reporter' indicates something too hard, or too demanding.

C. What are some alternative ideas?

Numerous ideas were cited: Newshound, Community Correspondent, Correspondent, Newsy Neighbor, Nosy Neighbor, and others not as memorable. The consensus for most popular were Newsy Neighbor and Correspondent. A final decision will be determined at a later date.

D. In the free-flow of conversation and brainstorming, there was 90% participation – 17 of 19 staffers (at least, whom I heard while taking notes) shared ideas. These include:

11. Irene P. -- Place notices in each building's core, to state that "if you have news. Just call this phone number or email this address and one of our feature writers will contact you for a story." This may become an inspiration for others in the building to volunteer to write. See A3.
12. Tom B. -- Start a new monthly column asking residents to submit family recipes. The evolution of the recipe becomes the story.
13. Richard B. -- Begin one, new column to announce birthdays and anniversaries.
14. Richard B. -- Why not accept trip stories to be used as needed to fill space in the paper? What does it matter that the story is more than the now required 2 months or less time frame?
15. Joanne C. -- If headlines were allowed as suggestions, perhaps the writer would be more incentivized to contribute. Some writers had revealed that they wrote as a building reporter at one time, but then gave it up when their stories were 'too' edited and their personality disappeared from the story. Doug explained what is involved in headline decisions and layout and it is a job for professionals. He did agree to allowing suggestions but with the caveat that the writer should not expect his choice of headline to be the final decision by Doug.
16. Joe W. -- As a professional journalist who understands headlines, Joe offered to write an email for Doug to blast out to all staffers, to explain the preciseness of headlines. Second to that task, Joe offered to volunteer with an 'ad for new writers' to post on Next Door.
17. Tom B. -- In approaching Kevin with the OTOW maintenance division, the idea is to form a column to suggest what is involved with condo upkeep, or hints for more complete sales. Kevin was not receptive to Tom's idea, he said.
18. Diane L. -- Maybe each building should write just once per quarter and then there would be space for more buildings to be represented on a regular routine. This led to Doug bringing our conversations back to the structure of his agenda.

E. Doug asked: "if we get more writers, how do we make more space to accommodate that scenario? Do we cut down on restaurant stories? Do we say you can only write a story if there are 10 or more in the picture?" After some discussion and a hand count vote, the answers are 'no' and 'no'. This potential dilemma is being tabled for the time being.

Paula S. -- Shared that she missed 1 story, one time, and her building residents were so disappointed that they let her know about it. Doug does not want to disappoint current readers.

F. Doug's final question for our group was about meeting protocol. "Did anyone object to the 3 board members -- Tom, Donna, Joanne, meeting without notifying staffers of the meeting?" Quickly, the unanimous answer was 'no'. Doug will now add an amendment to the bylaws to reflect this decision.

Tom B. went on to explain what it is that the board has wanted to meet to discuss recently; i.e. ideas for the press club table at the Fall Fest 2025. Tom continued to explain the idea as each visitor to the press club table, if willing to complete a detailed survey about their read of the paper, will enter their name in the raffle for a basket -- 5 bottles of wine compliments of

Aspirations Winery and food stuff compliments of our club (basket creation by Tom and Cheryl B). The winner will be announced after the Fall Fest, details to be determined.

Since the reference to softening the current title of 'building reporter' had been mentioned throughout the meeting, Donna G. offered compliments to Doug for the website that he created just for our press club. And she commented that she'd appreciate a softer tone because of our status as volunteers, that we are the maintainers of the newspaper. Without dispute, she noted the website is a very useful tool for staffers.

Val M. asked to read her summary on notes of the meeting. She categorized into segments: 1) marketing for more volunteers; 2) clarity on the reporter role and title; 3) focus on paper content; 4) revamping ideas for the future. Without me asking for them, Val shared her notes and I kindly accepted them.

Additional contributors not named above, are Fran F., Betty S., Pat H., Roy L., Patricia C-D., Terri M.. It was expressed to me and I heard comments among attendees that this was a very good meeting. I agreed. It may have continued for a while longer but Doug encouraged that we adjourn because he likes to keep meetings to just an hour. We accomplished quite a bit for one meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 2 at 1:30 p.m. in the East Activity Center's Crystal Beach Room.

Adjournment – 11:43 a.m.

Minutes Submitted By: Joanne Cordes, Secretary