

Minutes

Press Club Meeting, 02/03/2026

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the East Activity Center's Crystal Beach Room

Present: Doug Kates, Editor; Tom Butcher, President; Donna Gagnon, Vice-President; Joanne Cordes, Secretary; 23 members

Call to Order – at 1:31 p.m. by Doug

With a beautiful table spread with refreshments homemade by Betty Spoerl, and Irene Piper promoting and managing the 50/50 raffle tickets, we filled every available seat in the room. It was a good-sized group, and it was because of the reminder email Doug sent to us. Doug confirmed that when he opened the meeting by asking if we came because of his tease about Betty's cupcakes in his email reminder. Doug requested Patty Branch to photograph the table, and Donna suggested including Betty in the picture so it could be used for the paper. Doug then turned the meeting over to the officers.

- Tom showed a picture of an Amazon bag left in his building 48 and asked if anyone else had a bag in their building. No one did. This was all from Tom.
- Donna first gave a rich compliment to Betty in stating that if there were an award for 'Volunteer of the Year,' Betty would be the recipient. In addition to her contributions to our On Top of the World community, she is in the choir and a deacon in her church, Northwood Presbyterian. Recently Betty helped to organize a rummage sale that earned \$33,000 for the church.
Applause. Secondly, Donna noted the ad on page 13 of our February newspaper for St. Michael the Archangel Women's Council *gift basket extravaganza* from which proceeds will benefit the Guardian Angels School.
- Joanne then gave a summary of the January meeting minutes. She also read the list of 25 staffers who qualify for the annual Appreciation Dinner Picnic newspaper.

Doug then began his agenda with:

- a segue to the topic of the picnic to ask, "what food would everyone like?" Donna nominated Tom to be the chef, and there was a resounding cheer from all. Tom then agreed to do it.
- thanks to Tom, Patty, and Joanne for their time spent manning the Press table at the Good Neighbors Club Day in January.
- an introduction and printed examples of the byline changes for clubs' narratives in the newspaper. This is something Doug has wanted to do for some time...have the bylines match in format throughout the newspaper. The staff voiced positive comments on the change and on the font style.
- An announcement that the newsroom ended the year 2025 just \$1,000 less than budgeted. This is not an easy accomplishment – to meet the annual budget amount. Doug expressed that just 3 more ads could have made the difference to meet the \$130,000 budget. He questioned this idea and asked for comments. Diane Like answered by asking Doug if he wanted the newspaper to make more money or not. Staff members responded with remarks.
 - Donna recapped her involvement with advertisers following a May 2025 meeting when Doug brought to our attention how stories submitted timely/or not and his production time – together - determine the newspaper's publishing expense. Advertising revenue, in turn, compensates for this. The suggestion was made to contact advertisers to encourage them to place ads more often.

- Pat O’Beirne volunteered to help proofreader volunteers to make follow-up calls with the current list of advertisers. Doug noted the advertisers count is 120, and this would be a time-consuming task.
- Jim LeBlanc proposed that offering advertisers a discount could encourage them to place additional ads.
- Diane Like proposed offering a discount to vendors who place multiple ads.

Doug stated that Ken Colen would not approve of discounts for ad placements. In summary, Doug did not want to spend too much time on this topic and stated he would meet with Donna (for realistic options).

Continuing with agenda topics:

- The 30th parade presents March 7 and Doug wants the Press Association to participate if we have 10 staffers willing to represent us. When asked for a show of hands, 3 staffers volunteered to march. On a more positive note, Doug stated that he and Tom Riordan of the Irish Club physically went to the 3-way stop with the new recording equipment that Ken Colen provided since the 2025 parade. The equipment passed the test for connectivity and will enable Doug to record the parade live. In other parade news, Doug announced this is Barbara Rice’s last year as a primary photographer since she and her husband are moving elsewhere in Florida. Barb routinely takes 400-500 photos so this will have an impact. However, we do still have the photography skills of Mary Lou Wall.
- In a meaningful change, Ken Colen has authorized Doug to set up a TV studio in the newsroom. This will allow clubs to promote events and board members of the OTOW Association to answer questions or broadcast as needed or desired for special activities.

Jim LeBlanc won \$15 with the 50/50 raffle drawing.

We adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Joanne Cordes