

Member Questions and Answers December 2014

Introduction

At the December 2014 meeting, TKG President Catherine Osborne answered questions that members had asked during the fall.

There was considerable interest, and similar sessions will be held as more questions arise. Most Executive members are new to their positions and prefer that questions be submitted in advance so that answers can be well-considered. Questions can be emailed to any Executive member.

Questions and Answers

1. Does the membership fee cover the facility and the speaker fees?

In previous years, membership fees covered the venue rental and the speakers, but not all other expenses. We currently have 116 members, while at the end of the 2013–14 year, we had 220 members. Memberships usually come in all year so it is too early to tell, but we may be short this year. We are crunching numbers to see if we can get a better sense of this. Fortunately, our funds in the bank and our relationship with the Frolic mean that this year's program is not at risk, even if there is a revenue shortfall.

2. How is the raffle money used and who decides this? Why not redirect the raffle proceeds to Guild expenses if the Guild is not self-supporting?

Raffle funds are used to support the Guild and not currently dedicated to any other purpose. We understand that raffle funds were used to support charities in the past. When the Guild is in a better financial position, your Executive plans to consult the members about how to spend raffle funds.

3. How much money does the Guild/Frolic have in the bank?

The Guild's and Frolic's financial information is available to all members. The Executive prefers to release financial information verbally in meetings or to individual members, not on the Internet or in emails to members as the information is confidential.

4. How much will the legal bill be for the lawsuit? At least a ballpark figure, please.

There was no judgement for damages against the Guild or the members who were personally mentioned in the suit. The legal fees were paid from the Frolic's bank account in the amount of \$15,000. This was well below the anticipated legal costs.

5. What is the status of the Frolic as it seems to be separate from the Guild? Why can't the Frolic help support the Guild since it uses Guild members as volunteers?

Neither the Guild nor the Frolic are legal entities; we are linked by our mutual intentions and our historical relationship. Traditionally, the Frolic has made enough money to be self-

supporting. It has also supported the Guild to the extent needed. There is no reason why that should not continue if the Guild needs support from the Frolic.

We are tracking Guild and Frolic costs and revenues separately so that we better manage the program and finances of each. The Frolic has its own bank account which allows deposits and payments to be made on a timely basis.

6. Do we have anyone to do the website, the newsletter and social media yet?

A number of long-time volunteers who looked after the website, newsletter and social media resigned recently for personal reasons. The Guild has benefited from their contributions, often for many years, and of course, from the efforts of many other volunteers. The Guild is very grateful to all the folks who have contributed so much.

We are fortunate to have Patrick Madden, long-time Guild member and previous Executive member, step up to the plate again, and take over the responsibility for the Guild's social media presence. Three talented Guild members have volunteered to share the responsibility for the newsletter. We are grateful to Alison Rose, Anastasia (Stacey) Pelechaty and Roberta Brown. Vivien Goffart, who has extensive website experience, recently volunteered to be the Guild's webmaster and we are very appreciative.

You will note that the Guild's social media has changed, and some protocols added. A December newsletter was issued. There are updates to the website.

We do expect to bring back some features to the newsletter that were enjoyed in the past—photos, show and tell report, stitch-of-the-month—as long as we have volunteers to contribute the items.

7. Who is on the Executive in the Communications position?

The volunteers on the various communications files need to work together to ensure consistency of information. And the communications folks need to be in close touch with the Executive as well, both to receive information for distribution and to pass on any issues.

We haven't discussed the Communication position on the Executive and we would like to hear what the Communications folks think. We will get back to you.

8. Will you email messages more frequently so that folks who are unable to attend meetings will still be in the loop?

We will email the newsletter itself and the details of the upcoming meeting. Our intention is to do this at the beginning of the month to provide lots of advance notice. This information should always be available on the website as well.

9. Will PayPal work better next year?

We are working on this. Thanks to those who let us know about the problems which seem to have affected some people and not others. The Guild itself will respond by email to PayPal membership purchases when they are received, to close the loop and provide a welcome.

You may pay your membership free by cheque or cash at the meetings. In addition, we will provide an address so that you can mail a cheque if that is your preference.

10. Do we plan to get a legal status?

It is unlikely. Incorporation, even as a non-for-profit organization, would increase the burden of paperwork and expense. It would require us to hire a professional accountant to do annual tax filing and the cost would be prohibitive. When we looked at other guilds we learned that most have more extensive insurance than we have but none were incorporated.

We are taking steps to protect the Guild and its members without incorporating as a business. We are investigating insurance for vendors, general liability insurance and executive officer insurance. We are also making sure there is cash available for contingencies. A basic guideline is to maintain a contingency fund of about one year's worth of expenses. Without such protection, we are unlikely to attract volunteers for Executive positions.

11. What is the legal status of the TKG?

The TKG is a group of individuals who want regular communal knitting experiences on a not-for-profit basis. It is an unincorporated not-for-profit organization, essentially a club.

The group decides what it wants to accomplish. This might include program events, charitable contributions, and/or special events.

The group elects or acclaims a volunteer Executive to do the work necessary to achieve the organization's goals. This includes setting fees or adjusting programs to ensure that the Guild is sustainable over time. The Executive may voluntarily develop policies/processes to provide guidance on various roles, responsibilities and activities. These would be available to the membership. Topics might include job descriptions and responsibilities for the Executive and other key volunteer positions such as the Frolic organizers, means of ensuring that the program is delivered smoothly and Guild funds spent responsibly, election protocol.

It is tricky to get the right balance between an Executive that is responsive to group needs and one that takes appropriate decisions on its own.

12. What by-laws, job descriptions of Executive positions, and financial reporting rules does the Guild have?

As a new Executive, we have not yet had the time to look into these issues in any depth. At this point it appears that what we have is not comprehensive and we are not certain that we have all the documents that exist. It will take work to sort this out.

If anyone has such documents, please send them to a member of the Executive.

Because the Guild is not a legal entity, there are no legal requirements for such documents. We believe, however, that such documents would help everyone understand the expectations and requirements of all involved and we are committed to developing these as part of best practices.

As the Executive is new and is grappling with the resignations of past executive members and volunteers, this project is unlikely to be completed this year. It will be started!

We hope that a committee or committees will work on these items and report back to the Executive with their recommendations for consideration. This is an area where a member with special interest or expertise might make a huge contribution by volunteering to draft (or provide input on) updated documents.

13. What is the process for adding or removing Executive positions? Could we have a Yarn Store Ambassador and a Volunteer Co-ordinator?

There certainly should be a process for changing the positions on the Executive, but we do not know if one exists. We will put this on the growing project list.

In terms of the specific suggestions of Yarn Store Ambassador and Volunteer Co-ordinator, perhaps we could get specific input into roles and responsibilities for these potential positions.

14. Many of the 2014–15 Executive members were acclaimed. Could these Executive members be reaffirmed?

The Executive intends to propose an updated revised election process early in the New Year.

It is now nearly half way through the program year. We would respectfully submit that time would be better spent developing a sound process for 2015–16 than in revisiting this year. Volunteers to assist in this project would be very welcome.

15. What is the structure of the meetings? Do we still have Show and Tell?

At monthly meetings, the President will usually have announcements. Our invited speaker will make a presentation. The raffle tickets will be drawn. Show and Tell will continue if the members enjoy it and folks bring along their projects. Our program co-ordinator, Debra Rowland, is uniquely suited to oversee Show and Tell, and has agreed to take over this function at our meetings.

We are open to other ideas for meetings, but will need to ask for some assistance in delivering new programming!

16. Have you looked at other guilds for ideas that we could incorporate into our goings on?

We have. Our program appears to be more extensive than that of most other guilds. We will continue to look at other guilds for ideas and encourage volunteers to help with this.

17. Could we have annual prize ribbons for good work in several categories?

That is a very interesting idea. Whoever suggested might take the lead in developing a specific proposal. A number of questions come to mind: Who would judge the entries; What categories would there be?

The Executive believes that the Guild membership should be consulted as to whether a competitive event would be desirable. Once we have a concrete proposal, we can survey Guild members.

18. Can we resurrect some previous events such as World Wide Knit in Public Day, yarn shopping bus trips, or winter (or other season) workshops?

It is a good time to consider reinstating or adding programming, now that the lawsuit is over. Such events would need to break even very quickly, given the Guild's financial situation.

The bus trip was previously subsidized by having a volunteer driver who did not charge for his time. That option is no longer available. Winter workshops were discontinued because many workshops lost money or were cancelled due to inadequate enrollment. It appears that this function may have been assumed by local yarn shops and by classes at the Frolic.

Perhaps we should survey the membership to see what their priorities would be, and we will certainly look for volunteers to co-ordinate such events.

19. Are there ways for Guild members get to know each other?

This is a good question. We could survey the membership on whether this is a priority and what might work. For example, would permanent nametags for meetings be useful, would social knitting events, held in different parts of the city, be of interest, would it help to remind Show and Tellers to state their names clearly, would members like their email addresses to be shared with other members, subject to privacy considerations?

Some members have expressed an interest in arranging a retreat out of town. Due to the expense involved and liability issues, we would need to be very careful in arranging this but would welcome a volunteer to look into this.

Volunteering to work on a project may be the best way to get to know other people. And many hands make light work, as my grandmother used to say!

Conclusion

The Executive would really stress the point that volunteers are desperately needed for time-limited projects.

A great many volunteers have been required to develop and deliver a program of this calibre. The history of this organization is a real credit to its volunteers. We look forward to an enjoyable future.