MINUTES - OCT 2026

CLUB BUSINESS

President Gary Fitzpatrick called the meeting to order at 10 am and asked for a motion to approve the September meeting minutes, as printed in the club's newsletter and posted on its website. Ruth Anna so moved and Chuck Hawkins seconded. The minutes were approved by acclamation.

In **Treasurer Bill Gates'** absence, **Secretary Lois Leach** reported that the club has $8,206.62 in its checking account, including $0.67 in interest. The reserve account totals $5,557.46, with quarterly interest of $40.32.

President Gary thanked **Tanya Davis** and the Hospitality Committee for the Halloween-themed goodies -- which, as usual, were mouth-watering. He also congratulated the handful of members celebrating birthdays in October.

On behalf of the We Care program's **Karen Dreher**, **Lois Leach** said that get well cards went to three members -- Beth Avery and Dottie Miller, who were both hospitalized, and Nancy Hollmeier, who had surgery. Karen also sent a sympathy card to **Franz Huber**, whose sister passed, and to **Wayne Ash** on the death of his wife Linda. For years, **Linda Ash** spearheaded the Newcomers We Care program, during that time sending cards to hundreds of members who had health issues or had lost a loved one.

The Membership Commitee's **Larryne Zygmunt** announced that two new members attended the meeting -- **Jill Seal** from Breckenridge and **Scott Cook** from Orchard Mesa. **Pablo Aguirie** from Reno, Nevada, also attended as a visitor. **President Gary** welcomed them all with "It's always nice to see new faces."

President Gary also announced a series of decisions made by the Newcomers Club officers during a September 24 board meeting:

- Considering earlier concerns about organizing this year's annual holiday party, the board agreed to hold it on Tuesday, December 15 at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, 743 Horizon Drive. The Doubletree catering staff will take care of the meal and room set-up, so no outside caterers will be needed. More details on menu options and costs to come.
- Since there have been administrative problems when members pay for Newcomers activities using Zelle, the board decided to temporarily suspend Zelle as a payment option until the problems are resolved. This will include payments for the December 15 holiday party. Members can still pay using checks. Once the club is ready to resume Zelle usage, members will receive specific instructions on Zelle transactions.

- For years, the club has raffled off member-donated items -- including bottles of alcohol -- and used the proceeds to fund coffee and treats served by the Hospitality Committee at monthly coffee meetings. Recently, the board learned of several legal problems with that practice: 1) Under Colorado's charity gaming statutes, no form of alcohol can be used as a raffle prize. 2) Under the same statutes, eligible non-profit organizations must get a bingo/raffle license. 3) Because Newcomers Club is a 501(c)7 social organization instead of a 501(c)3 charitable organization, it doesn't fall into the category of non-profits that are eligible to get a raffle license. The board considered continuing the unlicensed raffle but excluding alcoholic prizes, but ultimately voted against it. Since the raffle has been generating more money than necessary to support the Hospitality Committee's efforts, the raffle is discontinued. In its place is a box, located on the treats table, where members donate directly to the Hospitality Committee. Anyone who donated items for the raffle can retrieve them. Any unclaimed raffle donations will be donated to Heirlooms for Hospice retail store at 435 E. Main Street.

- The board voted to approve "Grand Junction Newcomers and Friends" as the club's Doing Business As/Trade Name, while leaving its legal name as is. The addition of "and Friends" makes it clear that people don't have to be a recent arrival in the Grand Valley in order to join. It also underscores the fact that many members were newcomers when they joined, but have remained club members for years -- sometimes decades. All that's required to register the club's DBA/Trade name is filing a form with the Colorado Secretary of State's office, so no attorney is needed and no changes to the club's original formation documents are required.

- The board is looking at the future possibility of moving the monthly coffee meetings from the Masonic Center to the new Community Recreation Center. There are pros and cons for both facilities, and the board plans to invite Tanya to join them on a tour with the Rec Center events staff, to ensure the space offers the features needed for meeting, socializing and serving food. If it's workable, the board will then make a proposal to club members for their approval.

CLUB EVENTS

In **Steve Likovich's** absence, **Nile Leach** of the five-member Tour and Lunch Club team said that a sign-up sheet is available for the October 28 tour of the HopeWest PACE program facility, 2754 Compass Drive. HopeWest PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) is a one-of-a-kind Mesa County program that fills the services gap for local seniors who may need medical or other help but want to stay in their own homes or are on waiting lists for assisted living. **Nile** also said that the planned November 19 tour of the Ouray Fish Hatchery fell through because the hatchery had a catastrophic equipment failure. As a replacement, he has arranged a tour of Spirit Engineering, Inc., a manufacturer of fully ready-to-fly vintage-style small aircraft on November 19 at 10 am. Spirit developed its flagship aircraft, the SE-1 all-metal Art Deco-inspired single-seat plane in secret for over a decade. Lunch at Munchie's in Fruita will follow the tour. A sign-up sheet will be available at the November 11 meeting.

Douglas Grodt, who leads gentle hikes for Newcomers members, said the next hike will be a fairly level, easy one through the Grand Junction Wildlife Area to the confluence of the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers -- the confluence that gave Grand Junction its name. "We can expect to see lots of wildlife there,

including deer and wild turkeys," Douglas stated. For more information or to sign up for the extensive email distribution list of members that Douglas maintains, contact him at newcomershikers@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Tanya Davis announced that the P.E.O. Sisterhood -- short for Philanthropic Educational Organization -- is hosting its annual Holiday Craft and Bake Fair on November 7 from 9 am-2 pm at the Crossroads United Methodist Church, 599 30 Road. Several other Newcomers members belong to the local P.E.O. organization, which raises funds for women's higher education scholarships, grants and loans. The fair will include a large selection of home-baked goods, including cookies, plus soup and dessert, plus handmade arts and crafts.

Suzan Fournier and **Esther Schneller** represent Newcomers Club in its partnership with the Mesa County Public Libraries to present the Armchair Travel program. Each month from September through May, people who have taken interesting trips, either domestic or foreign, present their experiences through photos and narrative. The presentations are free and open to the public. "If you have ideas for future Armchair Travel presentations, just let us know," **Suzan** said. "We're always happy to work with you." On October 22 at 6:30 pm at the Clifton Branch Library, **Colleen Jorgensen** will share her 8-day small-boat cruise through the Galapagos Archipelago. "Colleen did this presentation one year ago at the Central Library and it was popular, so we're bringing it back, **Suzan** said. On November 3 at 5:30 pm at the Fruita Branch Library (Fruita Community Center Meeting Room) **Steve Reed** will showcase Argentina by exploring its tango, soccer, wine, steaks and regional connections to Colorado. On November 5 at 6:30 pm, at the Central Library, Sherry Kaufman will present her travels in Scotland.

Ruth Anna announced that Friends of Mesa County Libraries will hold its annual book sale on October 26-28 from 9 am-2 pm at the First Congregational Church, 1425 N. 5th Street (across from Grand Junction High School). All proceeds from the sales go to support Mesa County Libraries programs, including summer reading, Comic Con and Culture Fest. In addition, local non-profit organizations with proof of their status can qualify to get free books.

GUEST SPEAKER

Dr. Brian Hill, Mesa County Valley School District 51 superintendent, described the district's current situation, with both ups and downs. On the plus side, it's celebrating notable student accomplishments: 100% of the districts' schools have earned the top two academic ratings awarded by the state; elementary students are reading at the highest levels in history; the graduation rate has been at an all-time high for three consecutive years and hundreds of students are earning college credits and industry certificates tuition-free while they're still in high school.

On the flip side, D51 schools have been under-funded for years, since Colorado ranks 44th among 50 states in per-pupil funding and D51 ranks 171st among Colorado's 178 districts. "The cost of operating a

school district that provides the resources -- including great teachers -- that kids need to succeed far exceeds the funding we're currently getting," Hill said. "We've closed and consolidated several district schools, cut administrative costs by 21% -- more than any Colorado district -- and increased and promoted learning options to attract more students. That still doesn't close the gap." Now, he said, D51 is asking voters to approve a property tax increase, initiative 4A, that would increase teacher pay, add more security officers in elementary schools (currently one security officer serves four schools) and continue the career and technical education programs that provide students with real-life skills for the working world. As D51 superintendent, Hill can provide facts about 4A but can't advocate for its passage. **Curtis Englehart**, executive director of Grand Junction Economic Partnership, chimed in to Hill's presentation, adding that "Investing in our schools is crucial to our local economy, attracting new businesses and growing existing ones."

Lois Leach, Secretary