

(Partial) Annual Report Future Venues Committee May-June 2010
Submitted by Mona Everett, Temporary Acting Chair

Committee members: Hywel I Davies, Roger Hughes, Will Fanning, and Ian Morris; and *ex-officio* members, David Allen, AdaMae Lewis, and Stacy Evans.

Mona was appointed Acting Chair of this committee for the purposes of reviewing the input received from the Board and others about the two hotel choices in Philadelphia for 2012, and deciding which hotel to recommend to the Board.

We needed to get this done quickly; the hotels thought we were going to conduct a final vote in Portland. That did not happen, but after Beth went to the hotels and provided her input (thank you Beth!), and opinions were received from Chuck Lentz (local committee/Philadelphia) and some of the Board, we were able to move quickly.

Mona assembled all available emails about the hotels and forwarded them to the rest of the Committee.

Mona had at least one email each from Beth, Jenny, Martha, Don, David, Judith, Nancy, Barbara, Alan, and Gerri titled "Hotels in Philadelphia", and asked if anyone sent comments under a different subject heading, or if anyone still wanted to express an opinion about the hotels, to please re-read Beth's descriptions of the two hotels, and possibly visit the hotel websites, and send comments to Mona to be shared with the Committee.

The Future Venue Committee also had a few questions for Kerry from Experient, which AdaMae pursued.

Meanwhile, much time was also spent sorting out the Doubletree Portland reservation situation. Some Board members reported receiving a "no rooms available" message when trying to reserve rooms on the Doubletree website. We feared members had also received this message and may have become discouraged. As soon as the problem was fixed, the needed info was sent out via various websites and emails, and later in *Hwyl*.

Once all comments and information about the two hotels were reviewed and discussed among the Committee, we sent the following Recommendation to the BOT and AdaMae called for a vote:

Following the Board decision to hold the 2012 NAFOW in Philadelphia, we received bids from several hotels. These were considered at the mid-year Board meeting in April 2010, and the choices were narrowed down to Loews and the Sheraton.

Beth Landmesser volunteered to visit both hotels along with some of the local Philadelphia committee. Thereafter, the matter was open for discussion and many BOT members offered pros and cons for the two hotels.

The Future Venue Committee then had time to reread all the comments submitted and also reviewed the two bids, before an agreement was reached. It was not an easy decision, as each hotel has pros and cons, but after comparing the bids, Beth's on-site visit reports, and taking into consideration the space and service needs for a successful NAFOW, the voting committee members who also participated in the discussions reached a unanimous decision. (Three ex officio committee members participated in the discussion, but were precluded from voting on committee business and not all committee members took part in the discussion.)

In the process, the Committee investigated the local transportation situation, and reported on the various low-cost options to reach both hotels. Beth also clarified that neither hotel was isolated or really within walking distance of city attractions for most of our attendees.

The committee was concerned that Loews just has one restaurant and we still have no guarantee that they would provide Cash-and-Carry meals for breakfast and lunch, since they had never done them before. Although there was a mall food court close by, some of our members are not mobile enough to walk that distance. The Sheraton, in addition to being able to provide Cash-and-Carry, has adequate restaurant space to feed everyone all through the day. Another concern about Loews was the closed-in feeling of the lobby and the hotel lobby is where our attendees tend to gather and meet friends. There was also the issue of the jazz band playing in the

pub at Loews Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights, which would preclude us from having pub singing there.

While the local committee members Beth spoke to, said they preferred Loews, and many BOT members felt that this should be given great weight, it was also determined that while some on the local committee had attended NAFOWs, none had actually worked to set one up, and so were not as knowledgeable as Beth when they looked at the various spaces in both hotels. The local committee spokesmen had also indicated that choosing the Sheraton would not be a "deal-breaker".

After reaching a consensus, the Future Venue Committee presented the President with a list of items for possible renegotiation at the Sheraton. We were able to get a lower parking rate; we will be allowed to count the Cash-and-Carry towards our food and beverage minimums; and free internet connections to 25 rooms reserved by members of the BOT.

The members of the Future Venues Committee thank everyone for their input during the discussion phase of this process, and trust that the BOT will support the Committee's recommendation. Special thanks are sent to Beth for the thorough on-site visits and follow-up. The Committee suggests a letter be written to the local committee letting them know of the BOT's choice, thanking them for their assistance, and letting them know we look forward to working with them to put on an excellent NAFOW.

Therefore, the Future Venues Committee recommends that the 2012 North American Festival of Wales be held at the Sheraton in Philadelphia.

The recommendation from the Future Venues Committee was sent June 6 to the WNGGA Board for a vote. All 13 votes cast were for the Sheraton. Eight Board members did not vote. AdaMae notified Kerry Fein of Experient so a contract could be prepared. She also expressed thanks to the Board for good participation in this discussion and vote, and to the Future Venues Committee for their work.

The Committee also appreciates the Board's patience and valued and considered thoughtfully all the comments received on this issue. We

used our best judgment and to make the best recommendation we could, based on what we know about the two hotels and what we know our needs are for a successful NAFOW.

Mona also wishes to thank Will, Hywel, David Allen, AdaMae and Stacy for their participation in this Committee matter and for making her temporary assignment as Acting Chair of this Committee a success. It was a pleasure to work with all of you on the Philadelphia hotel recommendation. Thanks also, to Beth and everyone else who contributed to the discussion—it made our job easier to have your involvement and different points of view.

LOCAL VENUE COMMITTEE - CLEVELAND, 2011

A. Cleveland, Ohio, will be the site of the 2011 NAFOW. The Crowne Plaza, in downtown Cleveland, will be the host hotel.

B. Barbara M. Jones and Sue Stealey will be the co-venue chairs for the 2011 NAFOW.

C. Barbara and Sue met with hotel representatives on Tuesday, August 10 and have mapped out where all of the Festival activities can be held. There are some issues:

1. The only restaurant in the hotel is on the lower level, all by itself, and is a bit dark and gloomy. Food at dinner was mediocre. Breakfast was fine. The new Catering Manager is aware of this, and hopes to have the restaurant spruced up by Sept. 2011. We were able to get agreement to have a cash-and-carry service for both breakfast and lunch Friday through Sunday.

2. There is only one piano in the hotel, and it is in the lobby. We can use it for late night singing, in the lobby, and it can be moved across the hall for the Eisteddfod on Saturday. They will not move the piano from floor to floor. We will have to rent a second grand piano for the Ballroom as well as an organ.

3. The hotel cannot provide a wood floor, for a dance seminar, except in the Ballroom. If a dance seminar is planned, we will have to pay to rent a wood floor.

4. The hotel only has one flag pole. We will need to find two more. Sue Stealey will see if the Cleveland Welsh Clubs have flag poles. If not, we can bring one from Chicago. Anyone who is driving have a flagpole??

5. The seminar rooms are a bit small. There is one good-sized room, which can be used for our Annual meeting on Sat. morning and for the Film Fest, as well as for a morning seminar on Friday.

6. The hotel charges for easels. We will need to know how many, if any, easels WNGGA owns and welcome ideas about where we can get free easels.

D. There is lots of good news:

1. The hotel is in a great location. There are several lovely parks nearby, and beautiful flowers everywhere. I was pleasantly surprised at how clean everything is.

2. The sleeping rooms have all been renovated and are very nice.. Comfortable beds and LOTS of pillows. Half of the rooms face the lake, and it is interesting to see big freighters coming in to port.

3. There will be an Air Show going on Labor Day weekend, with the Blue Angels, etc. And "Taste of Cleveland" will be nearby, around the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame & Museum. For children, the Science Museum is within walking distance.

4. We found several charming areas within walking distance of the hotel: the old Cleveland Arcade is a fabulous building. There is one nice restaurant there, as well as a food court. The 4th Street area has some excellent restaurants, all with tables outside and lots of flower boxes.

5. We can arrange for private tours on "The Lolly Trolley" for our group, with a minimum of 25. Anyone like to volunteer to handle that for us??? Attendees can also take a two-hour boat ride out on Lake Erie and along the river. The dock is about 5 long blocks away.

6. There is good transportation from the airport. The Rapid Transit (\$1.00 for seniors) brings you to about four blocks from the Crowne Plaza, and they will send their shuttle to pick you up. Cab fare was \$30 one way. There are shuttle busses, also, for about \$15 per person. Amtrak also comes to Cleveland.

We will try to involve the local Welsh community as much as we can. Since Sue Stealey is on the Board of The Women's Welsh Clubs of America, she knows many of them. She may be able to arrange small tours to The Welsh Home in Rocky River, for those who would be interested in seeing it. The addition will be completed by Sept. 2011. We will welcome your input and your help!!

Barbara M. Jones
Sue Stealey
September, 2010