

NMPA elects new president

Written by By Megan Gleason Guest Submission
Friday, 12 November 2021 06:03



But not without controversy

SANTA FE — A general membership meeting Oct. 30 in the Anasazi Room of El Dorado Hotel in Santa Fe saw Babette Herrmann, who owns and publishes the free *Gallup Sun*, officially elected to the position of president of the New Mexico Press Association, but not without objection.

NMPA member Bob Zollinger, publisher of the “Gallup Independent” — a newspaper that charges for its print editions — objected to Herrmann’s presidency, because she owns and publishes the free publication.

“I think New Mexico Press has lost its focus by allowing free newspapers, shoppers, to be on the board and to be a voting member. I don’t think it’s right that New Mexico Press Association allows free newspapers to become our president and to direct us,” Zollinger said in an open

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comment at the meeting.

He called for someone else to be elected president.

Multiple members expressed disagreement and distaste with Zollinger's view on free newspapers. Herrmann addressed Zollinger's comments alluding to her newspaper being full of public service announcements.

"That's just not true. Don't sit up here and lie. We don't run a bunch of PSA[s]; we have reporters. We cover news; our newspapers [are] out there if anybody wants to look at it.

"We publish news every day on our website," Herrmann said at the meeting. "I just don't appreciate this."

Outgoing NMPA President Leota Harriman clarified that in order to exclude free newspapers as members of NMPA the organization's bylaws would need to be amended.

Amending the bylaws of the organization would require an action item to be placed on the organization's next general meeting agenda in 2022 at the next NMPA convention. Harriman suggested that Zollinger draft new bylaws to present at the next meeting as an action item if he wished to pursue the topic.

Harriman later clarified that members must have at least 25 percent news content to be a member of NMPA, according to the bylaws.

2021 NMPA Hall of Fame inductee David McCollum, the former publisher of the free "Las Cruces Bulletin," said he challenges anyone who says that a free newspaper "is not a newspaper worthy of membership of the press association."

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Harriman said NMPA is comprised of newspapers of all sizes, even some that are competing, but “as an industry, we have more to gain together than apart.”

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