

SCWA AIKEN CHAPTER OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES (2023)

Important Terms

Chapter Leader: Known also as “Chapter Lead,” “Chapter President,” and/or “Chapter Chair,” this person is chosen by chapter members through an annual election process to be their designated leader. This person is responsible for managing meetings, drafting/documenting meeting agendas and minutes, sending out emails to members, and serving as a hub of communications between the SCWA Board and the chapter.

NOTE: For the Aiken Chapter, there are two co-leads. Bettie Williams facilitates the first meeting of the month, administers all emails to members and meeting participants, develops the monthly chapter newsletter, and coordinates visitors and new member orientation to the chapter. The second co-lead, Paul Davis, serves as the direct link and hub of communications between the chapter and the SCWA Board and represents the chapter at Chapter Liaison Meetings.

Meeting Facilitator: The person chosen to lead the meeting. The chapter leader facilitates the first meeting of the month. Amy Blunt, a longtime member in good standing and past chapter leader facilitates the second meeting.

Chapter Member: A person who affiliates themselves with the chapter. Members do not have to attend meetings to maintain chapter affiliation (and receive all the resources and benefits therein) but must remain in good standing under the SCWA guidelines. This includes maintaining their annual membership dues.

Visitor: A non-member new to SCWA and/or the chapter who has not yet completed their SCWA membership. Visitors are allowed to attend up to three chapter meetings before their membership must be completed.

Meeting Participants: A member or visitor who attends one or both monthly meetings.

Authors/Writers: A meeting participant or member who has submitted their work to the Chapter Lead for critique.

Piece/Work: An author’s/writer’s writing submission to be critiqued.

Meetings Structure

Zoom vs. In-person Meetings

SCWA AIKEN CHAPTER OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES (2023)

Currently, all meetings take place via Zoom. Periodically, members are asked by the Chapter Leader to indicate whether they wish to continue Zoom-only meetings or to return to an in-person format. As long as the majority of members wish to meet via Zoom, we will continue to do so. If this changes, we will change with it. Occasionally, we do have in-person gatherings for members to meet and fellowship.

Overall Meeting Structure/Process

The Aiken Chapter meets twice monthly via Zoom on the first and third Tuesday at 6 PM. The meetings typically end at 8:30 PM, but never extend past 9 PM.

The first meeting, known colloquially as the “Primero” meeting, is facilitated by the designated Chapter Leader/President. The meeting has an agenda allowing for the sharing of updates from SCWA and the capturing of snaps/congrats regarding the accomplishments of chapter members. After this, the meeting focuses on reviewing and critiquing member submissions. Following the Primero meeting, minutes with attendance recorded are shared with the chapter.

The second meeting, known colloquially as “Segundo,” is facilitated by a selected chapter member. This meeting is specifically for reviewing and critiquing member submissions.

Meeting reminders are sent out to all chapter members two weeks prior to the meeting. Members must indicate their willingness to participate in the meeting to receive writer pieces for critique.

NOTE: Members are welcome to attend as many meetings as they like. This is true whether they have a piece ready to critique or not. The more the merrier!

Visitors, Non-members, and Lapsed Memberships

Visitors and non-SCWA members are welcome to attend up to three meetings. This includes submitting work for critique and offering suggestions/criticism to authors. Following the third meeting, however, visitors must become a member in good standing with SCWA.

Participants with lapsed SCWA memberships are not allowed to attend meetings until such time as they update their membership and bring it into good standing.

Submission and Critique Process

Submissions Process

SCWA AIKEN CHAPTER OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES (2023)

All submissions must be emailed to the Chapter Leader one week prior to the scheduled meeting date.

To be accepted, submissions should:

- Be no more than 5-6 pages in length,
- Be double-spaced,
- Be 12-pt. *Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial* Fonts,
- Be in MS Word (to allow for track changes),
- Include page numbers, and
- Include (in the header or footer of the document) the author's name, the author's email address, and the piece title.
- Include a TW/CW (Trigger Warning/Content Warning) at the top of the first page if the submission contains any graphic/explicit material regarding violence, sex, and/or hate speech. (Examples: *TW: Graphic depictions of murder/suicide. OR This piece contains explicit sex.*)

NOTE 1: *This does not mean you cannot submit this material. You can. It is also not meant to censure writers from creating explicit or graphic material or submitting them for critique. It merely provides a warning so members negatively impacted by emotional/mental/physical trauma or otherwise offended have the ability to opt-out. This does not mean your submission will not be critiqued or that you cannot participate. It will be, and you can.*

NOTE 2: *The warning should only be included when submitting a piece with explicit scenes in the areas outlined above. Things mentioned in passing through dialogue or narrative that are not explicit or graphic in nature do not need to include a warning. (For example, if a character tells another she is a rape survivor but does not detail the rape explicitly, you do not need a warning.) If you have a question about this, please email Bettie Williams.*

NOTE 3: *Warnings of this nature do not often arise in this chapter. However, as it is a new SCWA guideline, I am compelled to include it here.*

Submissions are then compiled and emailed out to meeting participants. Once critiqued, participants email the updated document to the designated author.

Critiquing Process, Before the Meeting

Critiques can be completed in a variety of ways. This can include printing out the piece and writing suggestions/comments directly on the page. Then, the critiquer scans the printed copy and emails the scanned version to the author prior to the meeting.

SCWA AIKEN CHAPTER OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES (2023)

The standard process for critiquing is to use [Track Changes](#)/Comments available in Microsoft Word. Then, the finalized document is emailed to the author prior to the meeting.

NOTE: All meeting participants are expected to complete/email critiques for each submitted piece. Even if you have no specific criticisms or suggestions, participants should email something to the author to demonstrate they have read the piece. This could include a list of items the participant liked/enjoyed about the writing.

Critiquing Process, During the Meeting

During the meeting, the meeting facilitator counts the total number of submissions to be reviewed and divides that by the number of minutes left in the meeting. This provides the average number of minutes for review/critique of each piece. After a timekeeper is selected, he/she is responsible for letting the group know as time counts down (5-minute warning, 1-minute warning, etc.)

Next, the meeting facilitator chooses an author/piece to be critiqued. Meeting participants take turns discussing the selected piece and providing suggestions/comments on what they liked and what they would do to improve it. Authors should not provide comments or argue during this time. Following critique from all participants, the author can make any needed clarification statements. Of course, an author may answer any specific questions raised by participants when asked.

Once the author completes their clarifying comment(s), the facilitator chooses the next author/piece to be critiqued and the process continues again until each author/piece has been critiqued. It is a common for the facilitator to choose their own piece to be critiqued last to ensure all authors have a chance to have their pieces discussed.

Additional Items of Note

- A monthly newsletter, *Aiken Chapter Chatter*, is presented to members via email as part of the meeting announcements/reminders for each month. This newsletter is designed and updated by the Chapter Leader and has information on a variety of topics including:
 1. Upcoming SCWA events/news,
 2. Writing tips and tricks,
 3. Snaps and congrats to members on their writing accomplishments, and/or
 4. Important writing information of note.
- Every December, the Primero Meeting is changed to an in-person holiday party. This event typically takes place at a chosen restaurant in Aiken and allows members to

SCWA AIKEN CHAPTER OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES (2023)

interact and fellowship with each other. Members cover the cost of their own meals. At this meeting, no critiquing takes place.

- An informal election for chapter leader takes place every December. Those who wish to become the leader are asked to submit their nominations before the December Primero Meeting. Candidates must be in good standing with SCWA. Members vote for their chosen candidate at the meeting via a show of hands. The candidate with the most votes becomes the next chapter leader.

A chapter leader's term lasts from January 1 to December 31. The newly elected chapter leader begins their term of office starting in January following the election. The outgoing chapter leader is usually feted and thanked for their work and dedication.

A chapter leader may serve as many terms as they wish. However, they must be re-elected each time in December. Any member is allowed to nominate themselves to run against the current chapter leader during the nomination process.