

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

LA SOCIÉTÉ ROYALE D'ASTRONOMIE DU CANADA

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Sunday, 2021 June 26 by Zoom.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 18:02 EDT by President Robyn Foret (Calgary) with 118 members viewing the Zoom meeting.

Mr. Foret introduced Jennifer Howse (Calgary), educational specialist at the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory, and a member of the Métis Nation Region 3, who presented a territorial acknowledgment:

"Welcome to the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's annual general meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional territories of all of the indigenous peoples across Canada. In considering what these territories are and what they symbolize I ask you as astronomers to consider your sense of place and time. According to Blackfoot ways of knowing, there are seven directions. The four cardinal points of north, south, east and west, but also where you are standing on the Earth, the ground beneath you, and the incredible expanse of sky above. Your place within these territories is best understood within the context of these seven directions. As a member of the Métis nation, I am very grateful for the diversity and inclusion goals of the RASC. More importantly, that this mission is not merely aspirational. You can be proud of all of the tangible actions to move this organization towards reconciliation. I encourage the executive and membership to continue with this very positive mission. Ninaskomitin [Welcome], ay-ay, thank you."

Mr. Foret thanked Ms. Howse on behalf of the membership.

Mr. Foret introduced the Board of the RASC:

Robyn Foret, President

Chris Gainor, Past President (Victoria)

Charles Ennis, 1st Vice President (Sunshine Coast)

Michael Watson, 2nd Vice President (National)

Catherine Carr, Treasurer (Toronto)

Eric Briggs, Secretary (Toronto)

Brendon Roy, Director (Thunder Bay)

Mr. Foret welcomed the centre members and their representatives in attendance. He asked members to identify themselves in the chat window of the Zoom meeting.

(MOTION AGM2021-1:Ennis/Gainor) To approve the draft agenda as circulated in the Annual Report 2020. Carried.

Jenna Hinds (Outreach Co-ordinator) explained the features of Zoom relating to asking questions during the meeting.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting had been circulated and published to all members of the Society in p.4-6 of the Annual Report 2020. The following motion was presented:

(MOTION AGM2021-2:Briggs/Ennis) That the minutes of the 2020 AGM be adopted as published in the Annual Report 2020. Carried.

3. Reports of Officers

President's Report - Robyn Foret

A report from the President was also published before the Meeting, in the Annual Report.

Mr. Foret gave remarks apart from his previously circulated written report. At the end of his one-year term as President, Mr. Foret thanked the membership for giving him the opportunity to serve, and thanked directors past and present whom he had worked with for the past 8 years.

1st Vice-President's Report – Charles Ennis.

Mr. Ennis thanked Mr. Foret and added thanks to all society volunteers who stepped up to make everything work during challenging times. Also, he thanked members who made donations to the Society for the emergency fund to defray membership costs and other funds.

2nd Vice-President - Michael Watson

Mr. Watson briefly described the statutory responsibility of the 2nd Vice-President to act in the absence of both the President and 1st Vice-President. He noted he would speak again concerning by-laws later.

Secretary - Eric Briggs

Mr. Briggs read from his previously circulated written report. He briefly described the by-law changes, and offered condolences to the families of the following members who passed during the reporting period:

Anthony Adamson (Toronto)
Diane Bell (Victoria)
Steve Capling (Prince George)
Mario Fabris (Windsor)
Wayne Gilbank (Toronto)
Scott Harlow (Sunshine Coast)
Lloyd Higgs (Ottawa)
Kevin Kimball (Montréal)
John Murray (Windsor)
Rev. Patrick Power (St. John's)
Barry Shanko (Vancouver)
Elmore Wilson (Windsor)
Walter Zukauskas (Halifax)

He also named Ted Oakes (Niagara), whose name was omitted from the written report and Ken Jackson (Vancouver), Joyce Sims (Niagara) and Rick Merion (Windsor) who passed after the end of the reporting period. After a moment of silence, Mr. Briggs noted that Peter Jedicke (London) wrote that Dr. Amelia Wehlau (London) had also passed away, and that the names of members who passed after the reporting period would be included in the Annual Report 2021.

Treasurer's Report – Catherine Carr

Ms. Carr presented an overview of the written report and Finance Committee Report that was presented in the Annual Report. She noted that the Statement of Revenue and Expenses had been inadvertently omitted from the written report, so that statement would be presented as a slide and the statement would be added to the report on the website as soon as possible. She referred to SkyNews Inc as the great turnaround, based on its conversion from a \$64,171 operating loss to a gain of \$2424. She noted that the Society had experienced an excess of revenue over expenditures for 2020, \$24,459, and that that was an improvement on the previous year, when the operating loss was \$117,170 in 2019. She recommended referring to the Notes to the Audited Financial Statements in general, specifically Note 13 for further details on National Operations breakdowns.

The following Motion was entertained and approved:
(MOTION AGM2021-3:Carr/Gainor) that the audited financial statements be accepted.

Mr. Foret responded to a question from Andrew Bennett (Okanagan) about reduction in GA costs, and asked if costs might be expected to stay low once the GA was held in person again. Dr. Groff noted that the apparent loss from the 2019 GA was not actual, because of the way other income lines were reported. He reported that the subsequent remote GA, and the ongoing meeting was slightly profitable.

Ms. Carr responded to a question from Terry Bridges (Okanagan) by reporting the RASC had formalized its investment policy for the Helm Fund with Scotia McLeod.

Ms. Carr responded to a question from Robert Dick (Ottawa) that all lawsuits have been settled and fully recognized in financial statements, and only affected SkyNews figures.

Ms. Carr responded to a question about a light pollution expense, that it was for attendance of an international conference concerning light pollution abatement.

MOTION AGM2021-3 was Carried.

4. Reports of Permanent Committees

Stuart Heggie (Toronto) provided a brief verbal update on the Astro-Imaging Certificate Program. An uptick in participation was reflected in 22 new certificates awarded. He thanked the crew, especially Reem Khalifeh for help. He noted that critiques provided by examiners were welcomed by the applicants.

Dr. Gainor presented the following RASC Awards:

Fellowship Award
Roland Dechesne (Calgary)
James Edgar (Regina)
Michael Watson (National)

President's Award
Renata Koziol

Service Awards

Diane Bell (Victoria)
Andrew Bennett (Okanagan)
Zoltan Boda (Okanagan)
Darrell Chatfield (Saskatoon)
Paul Delaney (Toronto)
Ellen Dickson (Saskatoon)
Les Dickson (Saskatoon)
Blair MacDonald (Halifax)
Ron Waldron (Saskatoon)
Ian Wheelband (Toronto)

Dr. Gainor noted that other awards of the Society were not awarded this year due to low numbers of members nominated for them.

Lori Roche (Victoria) presented a brief verbal update from the Education and Public Outreach Committee. She thanked Jenna Hinds and Samantha Jewett and committee members for their help. She directed members to visit the new Creation Station webpage. She thanked members of the Hamilton Centre for help revamping the NOVA Program (New Observers in Visual Astronomy). She noted that Indigenous Resources were planned to be compiled in the coming year.

Dr. Gainor presented a brief verbal update from the Editorial Board, which replaced the Publishing Committee. He noted Paul Gray (New Brunswick) was completing his final Observer's Calendar for 2022, with help from Chris Beckett (National) incoming. Further to the 2020 report, he noted the success of the 2021 Night Sky Almanac by Nicole Mortillaro (National).

Clark Muir (Kitchener-Waterloo) briefly reported on Historical Committee activities.

Virginia Rufina Marquez-Pacheco (Montréal) reported on Inclusivity and Diversity Committee activities.

Walter MacDonald (Kingston) reported on the Information Technology Advisory Board activities. The major activity of the committee was converting the website hosting to Amazon Web Services, with the help of Curious Orbit. He noted that the new Driven system for logging in to the members section of the rasc.ca website and also secure.rasc.ca now asked for members' e-mail addresses to log in, and not their usernames as before. Mr. MacDonald offered many thanks to David Lane (Halifax) for his many years of running this department.

Bob King (Calgary) reported on Light Pollution Abatement Committee activities, notably consolidation of the operators of parks in the Dark Sky Preserve program after varying periods of no communications with various of the preserves. Mr. King reported that the Artificial Light at Night international conference would be hosted with participation from the RASC committee in Calgary in August 2023.

Emilie Lafleche introduced the new Next Gen Committee. The Next Gen Committee's purpose is to address the needs of current and future RASC youth members (meaning members between 13 and 25 years of age, inclusive) as they relate to programs and

services of the Society. The committee serves to represent the unique viewpoints, values, and experiences of the Society's youth members as they apply to their RASC membership, including a core dedication to upholding the ideals of respect, inclusivity, and diversity within the Society. The committee worked on projects including the Next Gen Scholarship Program: \$1500 worth of scholarships to young members and free memberships. Also Passport to the Universe, a passport-sized booklet serving as an introduction to the RASC and to observing the night sky. The committee partnered with the Inclusivity & Diversity Committee for a RASC general census. The committee implemented Next-Gen specific merchandise going towards scholarships. Also the committee hosted Youth Day at the GA. Ms. Lafleche sincerely thanked the committee members.

Blake Nancarrow reported the activities of the Observing Committee as interim chair, further to the previously circulated written report in the Annual Report 2020. He noted 40 observing certificates awarded, the fifth highest number of certificates of any year.

Charles Ennis reported that no funds from the Public Speakers and Special Projects funds during the reporting period due to COVID, although there was a funds request from the Yukon Centre recently in 2021.

Jenna Hinds reported on Robotic Telescope activities, including telescope upkeep and a new opportunity from SkyNews Magazine, to align with a special astrophotography issue of the magazine in September/October 2021.

5. Election of Board Members

(MOTION AGM2021-4:Gainor/Whitehorne) that Charles Ennis assume the chair for the Election of Directors agenda item. Carried.

Mr. Ennis noted that four positions on the Board were available to be filled at this election, and four nominees whose candidate statements had been published for members to read. One of the positions was to fill the remaining one year of a term or a previous director. Three of the positions are for three-year terms.

Robyn Foret had stated that, if he was elected, he would fill the one-year term rather than any of the three-year terms.

In accordance with the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, further nominations may be made at the annual meeting.

If there are no further nominations, the four nominees will be acclaimed.

Mr. Ennis asked for any further nominations of members for the position of director of the Society.

Robert Dick (Ottawa) asked to nominate Glenn Hawley.

Mr. Ennis stated that Mr. Hawley's membership had been suspended under section 3.6 of By-law #1 and that Mr. Hawley was therefore ineligible.

Peter Jedicke (London) asked if it could be reviewed whether the membership had any authority to make motions that might allow Mr. Hawley's participation.

Mr. Ennis stated that the Board had taken legal advice on this point, which advice did not come from Director and Society legal counsel Michael Watson. Mr. Ennis said that the Board was not in a position to disclose the reasons for the suspension

without Mr. Hawley's consent.

Rick Saunders (London) also expressed concerns about the suspension of Mr. Hawley. Michael Watson noted that there may be a perceived conflict with him answering Mr. Jedicke's question because he was himself a nominee, but he responded to Mr. Jedicke's concerns by referring to Robert's Rules. Specifically, that the chair had ruled the nomination ineligible, and that ruling could be challenged by an appeal of the ruling from the floor by bringing a motion to appeal, that would require a seconder, and would not be debatable. If the chair's ruling was defeated by a simple majority then the ruling would be overturned.

(MOTION AGM2021-5:Jedicke/Dick) To sustain or overturn the chair's decision that Mr. Hawley was ineligible to be nominated and elected as a director. Ineligibility decision sustained.

There being no further nominations, Mr. Ennis therefore declared the four nominees to be elected. He yielded the chair back to Mr. Foret.

6. By-law Amendment

Mr. Watson briefly described amendments to By-law No.1 of the Society, Section 2.1, 5.2, 8.4, 8.5 and 9.4.14, to be ratified at the Annual Meeting.

(MOTION AGM2021-6:Constitution Committee) that the proposed amendments to By-Law #1 of the Society, be approved. Carried by two-thirds majority.

7. Election of Auditor

(MOTION AGM2021-7:Carr/Bennett) To Appoint as Auditors Tinkham and Associates for 2021. Carried.

Mr. Foret briefly introduced the newly elected directors: Betty Robinson, Malhar Kendurkar, Michael Watson (with a 3-year term) and himself, with a 1-year term.

Down Town (Belleville) asked for a feedback line to be opened up on the RASC forum to be opened up in order to plan the 2022 event. Ms. Hinds concurred.

Katrina Ince-Lum (Toronto) on behalf of the Inclusivity and Diversity Committee asked, through the chair, Walter MacDonald (Kingston) if the RASC website could be made bilingual. Mr. MacDonald noted the work involved but approved of the intent and existing limited bilingual content.

Dennis Lyons (Winnipeg) on behalf of the membership thanked the staff for the excellent work they had done during the year, including outreach to centres. He also thanked the Board for their work on the new management model.

Rick Saunders described documentation of R.H. Kingston, the founder of the London Centre, and asked who to send it to for curation. Mr. Foret recommended Mr. Saunders contact the Historical Committee chair Clark Muir, via Phil Groff in his role as executive director.

Mr. Dick noted that the Board of Directors in a committee of the whole represented the Nominations Committee for the current period, and asked why that was. Mr. Watson responded that he discussed this at a recent National Council meeting, when he said that an unusual number of vacancies had opened leading up to that time, and the difficulty of getting interested volunteers to take those roles. He reported that the Board considered the prospect of Board members approaching centres for nominations might prove more fruitful than drawing upon responses from national councillors.

Andrew Bennett asked if he could make a donation targeted to a specific committee. Mr. Foret responded that there were several ways to make targeted donations to certain funds, but not to specific committees. Mr. Ennis and Dr. Groff noted that pitches for targeted donations would be gratefully accepted by fundraising co-ordinator Lisa di Veto.

David Chapman asked for details about reports being canvassed by the Light Pollution Abatement Committee from Dark Sky Preserves, but he retracted his question with the intent to address the chair, Bob King, individually.

John Hurley asked if any of the other board members needed to be elected. Mr. Foret responded that three board positions were nominally electable each year, for 3-year terms. He noted that Chris Gainor, Eric Briggs and himself would complete their terms in 2022 and that Brendan Roy, Catherine Carr and Charles Ennis would complete their terms in 2023.

Morrie Portnoff (Montreal) noted that in the Montreal Centre the issue of the French language was very real, and that the lack of bilingual material affected Montreal Centre membership. However, he noted that there was a separate Centre Francophone de Montréal. He noted that public outreach events in Montreal were very popular and were bilingual. He said that any French language material from the RASC would be greatly appreciated.

Mary-Lou Whitehorne (Halifax) also commented about bilingual astronomy public outreach literature, and collaboration with groups such as the Fédération des Astronomes Amateurs du Québec, and the limited depth of such collaborations.

Karim Jaffer (Montreal) also addressed bilingual issues, noting that most astronomers were primarily anglophone or francophone, but not primarily both. He also noted the effectiveness and limitations of artificial intelligence translation.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Foret noted that the agenda had been completed, so the meeting could be adjourned without a motion to adjourn, according to Robert's Rules.

The meeting was adjourned at 20:05 EDT.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Briggs
Secretary