



THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA
LA SOCIÉTÉ ROYALE D'ASTRONOMIE DU CANADA

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Sunday, 2020 June 7 by Zoom.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 18:05 EDT by President Dr. Chris Gainor (Victoria). Dr. Gainor did not call for Centres to sound off because members were appropriately using the chat function of Zoom.

(MOTION AGM2020-1: Gainor) To approve the agenda as circulated. Carried.

Jenna Hinds (Youth 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. 5-6 of the 2019 Annual Report. The following motion was presented:

(MOTION AGM2020-2: Town/Hesser) That the minutes of the 2019 AGM be adopted as published. Carried.

3. Reports of Officers

President's Report - Chris Gainor

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

Dr. Gainor introduced the Board: (Robyn Foret (Calgary), Charles Ennis (Sunshine Coast), Catherine Carr (Toronto), Eric Briggs (Toronto), Michael Watson (National), Colin Haig (Hamilton, retiring), Brendon Roy (Thunder Bay, incoming) and Dr. Phil Groff (Executive Director).

Dr. Gainor presented the RASC Statement on Human Rights:

In response to recent events, the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada wishes to state that it supports the peaceful protests and dialogue across the world aimed at addressing longstanding issues of racial inequality, and in particular anti-Black discrimination and violence. The Society is dedicated to equality of opportunity and treatment for all, regardless of race, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, age, marital status, and disabilities. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.



In response to a question from the floor about the Statement on Human Rights concerning the Anti-Harassment Policy G24 in the Policy Manual, Dr. Gainor asked Mr. Watson to respond. Mr. Watson noted that the statement included much of its language from the Anti-Harassment Policy and thanked Mr. Ennis and the Inclusivity and Diversity Committee for their input into this process.

Karim Jaffer (Montréal) on behalf of the Montreal Centre, questioned the use of the word "peaceful" and noted that the inclusive nature of outreach should be reflected by actions taken by the Board and volunteers to be inclusive and diverse. Mr. Ennis asked to respond, and noted that he would be addressing similar concerns in his report.

1st Vice-President's Report — Robyn Foret

Mr. Foret shared details of his responsibilities, specifically:

- Strategic Plan
- Information Technology
- SkyNews Magazine
- Committee Structure

Mr. Foret was overseeing a major shift in how information technology was used in the Society by moving to the Cloud, and the IT Committee was changing to become an advisory board. The structure of the management of SkyNews Magazine was changed. A new publication, the 2021 Night Sky Almanac, by Nicole Mortillaro, with the RASC imprimatur, was available for pre-order from Firefly Books. Mr. Foret stepped in as the chair of the Nominating Committee although it was contrary to policy. The Nominating Committee was re-formed by the Board itself as a committee-of-the-whole.

Mr. Foret presented the names of the Board-appointed committee chairs:

Committees:

Astro-Imaging - Stuart Heggie

Awards - Chris Gainor

Constitution - Michael Watson

Education and Public Outreach - Laurie Roche

Finance - Catherine Carr

Fundraising - Charles Ennis

History - Clark Muir

Inclusivity and Diversity - Charles Ennis



Information Technology - Walter MacDonald

Light-Pollution Abatement - Bob King

Marketing & Communications - Eric Wickham

Nominating (Committee of the Board) - Michael Watson

Observing - Blair Stunder

Publications (Editorial Board) - Robyn Foret

Trustees:

Helm Fund - Catherine Carr, Colin Haig, Dave Lane

Public Speaker Program - Charles Ennis, Bruce McCurdy

Special Projects - Vikki Zsohar, Howard Trottier, Charles Ennis

Robotic Telescope Working Group Team Leaders:

Project Leader - Jenna Hinds

Outreach - Jenna Hinds

Operations - Stuart Heggie

Science - Rick Wagner

Astrophotography - Dan Meek

Information Technology - Gary Fairfoul

Board Liaison - Eric Briggs

Mr. Foret planned to submit a written report for the next Annual Report.

2nd Vice-President's Report — Charles Ennis (Sunshine Coast)

Mr. Ennis reported on the activities of the Inclusivity and Diversity Committee, asking different organizations about their activities in that field, and the recommendation of Dr. Nicole Cabrera Salazar of Georgia State University who assisted the Canadian Astronomical Society/Société Canadienne d'Astronomie for their own Equity and Inclusivity Committee. Mr. Ennis noted that further actions were expected to be taken, as a further response to Mr. Jaffer's earlier question.

Mr. Ennis referred to the Special Projects Fund report circulated by Katrina Ince-Lum (Toronto), which fund was not very active in the past year. Two projects were funded: a West Coast First Nations project from the Vancouver Centre, and one other.



Mr. Ennis thanked Ms. Lisa di Veto (Fundraising Consultant) for her work in the area of fundraising for the Society.

Mr. Ennis reported that 8 Centres applied for roughly \$6000 from the Public Speakers Fund during the reporting period, about the same as the previous year, and referred to the written committee report.

Responding to a question concerning who would be eligible to receive inclusivity and diversity training as a part of the process in future, Mr. Ennis said that representatives from Centres would be asked to participate, and that training videos on the subject may be circulated for wider use.

Secretary's Report — Eric Briggs

From his written report included in the 2019 Annual Report, Mr. Briggs read out amendments to the Policy Manual which had been made during the year:

“Unattached” members who have chosen not to join a regional RASC Centre were reclassified as “National” members.

Policy G9: Society Nominations and Elections was amended so that an eligible candidate should “have the support in writing of at least 3 members of the Society,” replacing the previous “have the support in writing of at least 3 people, one of whom is a member of the Society.”

Appendix A: Directors and Officers Code of Conduct, and Appendix B: RASC Board of Directors Agreement were deleted, and the Policy Manual retained the amended Policy B1: Board of Directors Terms of Reference, that no longer referred to Appendix A and B.

Policy B7: Board Appointments was retitled “Filling Board Vacancies.”

Mr. Briggs read out the proposed amendments of the by-laws, which were to be ratified later in the meeting:

By-law No. 1, Section 9—Board of Directors, 35.4 that “No person who is an elected officer of the Society may simultaneously be the President, Secretary, Treasurer, or a National Council Representative of a Centre” shall be amended to “No person who is a director of the Society or who is the President, a Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer of the Society may simultaneously be the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, or a National Council Representative of a Centre,” to be ratified at the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

Mr. Briggs read out the names of members who passed away during the year, and asked for a moment of silence in their remembrance:



Michel Bois (Ottawa); Martin Mills (Mississauga); Shirley McIntyre (Toronto); Charline Norgrove (Toronto); John Payzant (Edmonton); Peter Ross Simpson (Toronto); Robert Spencer (Mississauga); James M. Tisdale (Okanagan); George P Wanjoff (National).

Dr. Gainor also noted the passing of Kevin Kimball (Montréal) and Barry Shanko (Vancouver). Mr. Ennis noted the passing of Scott Harlow (Sunshine Coast) after the end of the reporting period. Ms. Hinds noted the passing of Rev. Patrick Power from the St. John's Centre. Mr. Briggs noted that any members who had passed away after the end of the reporting period or whose passing had been temporarily overlooked would be included in the next Annual Report.

Treasurer's Report — Catherine Carr

Ms. Carr presented an overview of the written report that was presented in the Annual Report and Finance Committee Report that had also been circulated. She noted that the Society had experienced an operating loss for 2019, \$117,170, and that that was an improvement on the previous year, when the operating loss was \$137,018 in 2018. Outside of the written report, she described the Emergency Membership Fund that was set up to defray the costs of membership for members in financial hardship due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. That fund had not been heavily used yet, but members were supporting that file.

Ms. Carr responded to a question from David Chapman (Halifax) about the loss incurred by the 2019 General Assembly, but no detailed reason other than low attendance was available for why it had lost money.

Ms. Carr and Dr. Groff responded to a question from David Brown concerning details of the emergency membership fund.

Responding to a prompt from Don Town (Belleville), Ms. Carr encouraged members to read the Notes to the Audited Financial Statements, in particular Notes 4 (Investments), 5 (Investment in SkyNews, Inc.), and 12 (Expense allocations.)

Ms. Carr and Dr. Groff responded to a question from Laurie Roche (Victoria) that there were no appreciable costs to the Society from the cancellation of what would have been the in-person 2020 General Assembly in Coquitlam, due to refunds.

Dave Lane (Halifax) asked about a court case concerning SkyNews Inc. Dr. Groff responded that the Society was not a defendant in any ongoing matter, and that SkyNews on behalf of the RASC had recently negotiated a settlement with a former employee.

(MOTION AGM2020-3: Carr/Ennis) that the audited financial statements be accepted. Carried.

Executive Director's Report - Phil Groff

Dr. Groff briefly expanded on his written report, describing his earlier plans to visit in person with Centres, "new normal" operations at the National Office during the coronavirus pandemic, online offerings being conducted via YouTube and Zoom for public outreach in astronomy, and the new information technology infrastructure.



Responding to a question about possible future consolidation of the Journal of the RASC and SkyNews, Dr. Groff described the consolidated Editorial Board, and noted that the Journal does not make money, but expressed hope that it would have a role in the Society's future nevertheless, bearing in mind the way that SkyNews had been turned around.

Walter MacDonald (Kingston) asked if the online resources that the RASC had started to use so effectively would continue to be used after the end of the coronavirus pandemic. Dr. Groff thanked Ms. Hinds for her frequent activities in providing such online outreach during the crisis and stated that the RASC did not plan to step back from its new activities after the crisis was over. Ms. Hinds noted that she was working on a guideline for hosting online star parties that should be useful for Centres. Dr. Groff was unwilling to make a recommendation as to when normal operations might start again, deferring to government and health authorities, and follow the best scientific advice.

4. Reports from Committees

The following Committees presented their reports to the Society:

Astro-Imaging Certificate Committee: Eric Briggs, as Board liaison, briefly spoke about this program.

Awards Committee: Colin Haig announced the 2020 RASC Award Winners:

- Service Award: Steve Holmes (Kitchener-Waterloo), Dennis Krause (Okanagan)
- Simon Newcomb Award: John A. Read (Halifax)
- Qilak Award (presented by CASCA): Julie Bolduc-Duval
- Qilak Award (présenté par la Federation des Astronomes Amateurs du Québec): Jean-Marc Perreault
- Chant Medal: Dr. Michel Duval (Centre Francophone de Montréal)
- Ken Chilton Prize: Peter Pekurar (Kitchener-Waterloo)
- Fellow of the RASC: David M.F. Chapman (Halifax), Randall Rosenfeld (National)

Dr. Gainor announced awarding the President's Award posthumously to Barry Shanko (Vancouver).

Constitution Committee: Mr. Watson presented links to the Annual Report and noted the proposed bylaw amendments.

Education Committee: Laurie Roche

Ms. Roche noted the written report that she had circulated. thanked the members of the committee: Karim Jaffer, Lucas Kuhn, Tony Schellinck, Ron MacNaughton, Colleen O'Hare, Linda Pulliah, Kirsten Vanstone, and Krista van Laerhoeven.



History Committee: Clark Muir (Kitchener-Waterloo)

Mr. Muir congratulated Mr. Rosenfeld for his RASC fellowship. He briefly described the new RASC History Project, an oral history exercise to gather locally held lore.

Information Technology: David Lane

Mr. Lane described the restructuring of the committee into a working group, and replacing the iMIS system.

Observing—Blair Stunder (Prince George)

Mr. Stunder noted that eight observing certificates had been awarded so far in 2020. He noted that the Explore the Universe/Explorer l'Univers and Explore the Moon/Explorez la Lune certificate programs had been made available in French for the first time, and that a double stars observing program was being prepared.

5. Election of Board Members

(MOTION AGM2020-4: Nominating Committee) To acknowledge the acclamation of Charles Ennis, Catherine Carr, and Brendon Roy to the board of directors. Carried.

6. Motion re: By-Law Amendment

(MOTION AGM2020-5: Constitution Committee) that the proposed amendments to By-Law #1 of the Society, passed by the Board of Directors on 2020 March 7, be approved. Carried.

7. Election of Auditor

(MOTION AGM2020-6: Carr/Chou) To Appoint as Auditors Tinkham and Associates for 2020. Carried.

8. Other Business

Dr. Gainor noted a special award being prepared for Catherine Berry in thanks for her work on preparation of annual reports for several years.

Dr. Groff noted the possibility of the 2021 General Assembly being hosted in person in Winnipeg. There was general approval of the idea of continuing to host portions of general assemblies online.

(MOTION AGM2020-7: Watson/Ennis) A vote of extreme thanks and appreciation to Colin Haig for his service to the Society over the past 10 years. Carried.



(MOTION AGM2020-8: Attwood/Hesser) to acknowledge Chris Gainor's role as president and to thank him for his hard work. Deferred.

9. Adjournment

(MOTION AGM2020-9: Town/Poole) To adjourn. Carried.

Mr. Haig thanked Ms. Hinds for her hard work in preparing the teleconferences for the GA.

The meeting was adjourned at 20:15 EDT.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Briggs

Secretary