

WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
June 15, 2020 8:00-9:15 p.m.
Zoom Meeting
Minutes by Margo Wheaton

PRESENT:

Board: Sarah Sawler, Angus MacCaull, Nicola Davison, Kim Pittaway, Amanda Peters, Andre Fenton, Margo Wheaton, Gerald Trites, Matt Robinson, Marianne Ward, Lorri Neilsen Glenn, Sean Bedell

Writers Council: Carol Bruneau, Tim Covell, Gwen Davies, Susan Kerlake, Ron Stansfield, Bill Turpin Anna Quon, Alison DeLory, Jessica Scott Kerrin, Ella Dodson, Janet Barkhouse, Philip Moscovitch, Raymond Sewell

General Membership Sam Sternberg, Shirley Godfrey, Raymond Gilbert, Joanne Gallant, Abby Whidden, Heather Marchione, Keanan Byggdin, Martha Cooley, Paton Francis, Tricia Snell

Staff: Marilyn Smulders, Linda Hudson, Annick MacAskill, Andy Verboom

1. Call to order

Matt Robinson called the meeting to order at 8:07 pm. and gave the territorial acknowledgement.

2. Approval of the agenda

Moved by Sarah Sawler, **seconded** by Marianne Ward that the agenda be approved.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. Approval of the minutes from 2019 AGM

Moved by Kim Pittaway, **seconded** by Nicola Davison that the minutes be approved.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. Business Arising from the 2019 AGM Minutes

No new business

5. President's Report (Matt Robinson)

Matt Robinson acknowledges how successfully WFNS staff adapted to the challenge of working remotely and of running our programming online because of the pandemic. He observes that staff “has done a stellar job” and thanks them for their dedication.

Matt presents his written report, and elaborates on the success of our rebranding and new logo development with Kate Macintosh (Mblem Design). He also highlights that despite the challenges faced this year, the WFNS has dramatically increased its social media presence. He notes that offering multi-faceted online events and programs has rendered the organization more visible than ever in the province.

Matt notes that due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board was mindful of making budget decisions with the long-term sustainability of the WFNS in mind. As a result, the Board determined that it was in the best interests of the organization to shift this year's surplus into the restricted fund established last year.

6. Treasurer's Report (Gerald Trites)

Presentation of the 2019-20 Financial Statements.

Gerald Trites summarizes his written financial statements, while highlighting specific points. He notes that chartered accountant Michael Sutherland reviewed our financial statements and that despite the pandemic, “generally, finances are very good.” He also observes that although funds were down in the Thomas Raddall fund, this is to be expected due to the current decline in the market. Gerald says that the accumulated surplus is sitting in the unrestricted funds and notes that, for the moment, “that's a good place for it to sit.”

Gerald also highlights note #13 in the financial statement which refers to the Board's approval of an addition of \$50,000 into the stabilization fund. He notes that the stabilization fund is now big enough that “we'd be able to survive” if we experience a decline in grants and other external sources of financial support due to the pandemic.

Gerald says that despite the year's challenges, “it was great to see all the interest in workshops.” He also reported that donations to the WFNS were up “about \$11,000 this year.”

He remarks that we'll have to watch things closely and “make sure we take appropriate action as needed” over the upcoming months.

Moved by Gerald Trites, **seconded** by Lorri Neilsen Glenn that the 2020-21 Financial Statements be approved as presented.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

7. Appointment of Auditor (Gerald Trites)

Gerald explains that again this year, we've appointed an independent accountant to review our finances instead of an auditor because an independent auditor is approximately \$15,000 more expensive.

Moved by Gerald Trites, **seconded** by Bill Turpin that Michael Sutherland, CA, be appointed auditor for the WFNS 2019-2020 financial year

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

8. Executive Director's Report

Marilyn Smulders presents her written report, outlining some of the community and fundraising initiatives that took place before, during, and after the first wave of the COVID pandemic.

She reports that "in spite of everything, it's been a great year." Marilyn observes that "it was wonderful to see everyone using their time so productively."

She notes that staff at the WFNS were able to move events, workshops, and launches online and that despite the pandemic, the fundraising goal for the new Nova Scotia poetry award was achieved in less than a month.

Matt notes that "staff here have done a fabulous job" and expresses thanks and appreciation.

9. Presentation of 2020-21 Budget (Gerald Trites and Matt Robinson)

Gerald Trites explains that due to the COVID pandemic, this year's budget is "based on the things we can reasonably estimate."

Matt notes that two key decisions were made when doing this year's budget. They are: to remain conservative in projections and to not adjust the budget in an attempt to predict the impact of the pandemic.

Gerald notes that although membership fees and earned revenue was down, prize amounts were up so that offset things a bit. He observed that although we have strong

fundings, loss of funding is always a risk. He says that if there were to be a loss of funding this year due to the pandemic, we could turn to the stabilization fund to address that.

Marilyn explains that the WFNS did make an application for the wage subsidy for two months. She also notes that we'll be receiving \$5,000 from the Canada Council in relief funding.

Marilyn also notes that although lots of school visits and events relating to the Writers in the Schools program were cancelled, the WFNS will still be receiving the usual amount of WITS funding this year.

10. Web and Brand Project Report (Andy Verboom)

Andy reports on the progress of the new branding initiative. He observes that a suite of three new logos and organizational colours has already been created.

He notes that the rebranding effort is inherently “a lengthy process” and reports that members of the Board went through multiple back-and-forth consultations with designer Kate MacIntosh to arrive at a logo design “that feels very Nova Scotia.”

Andy notes that because of the pandemic, moving forward on plans to consider designs for WFNS external signage is not a priority right now. He also notes that initial plans for the most elaborate stage of the rebranding effort—building a new WFNS website on a more user-friendly platform—have been impacted due to the COVID pandemic. He observes that “doing it well rather than doing it quickly is the priority.”

Andy reports that our new website will be more user-friendly and will prevent a number of user interface problems. He says that he will be able to train staff to trouble-shoot whatever small issues might still exist.

11. Nova Scotia Poetry Book Award and Quilt Draw (Annick MacAskil)

Annick reports on fundraising efforts to create a new Nova Scotia poetry book award.

She says that the WFNS received a generous offer from a member to donate proceeds of the sale of materials relating to Margaret Atwood for our fundraising efforts. The resulting \$1,868 was used to kick-start fundraising for the new Nova Scotia poetry book award.

Annick notes that every other province in Atlantic Canada has its own poetry book award and she wanted to rectify this situation. She reports that she started working on a fundraising campaign in February-March initially using snail mail and then moving to social media posts.

She reports that despite challenges inherent to the pandemic, this fundraising effort was very successful and its initial goal of \$5,000 was exceeded.

Marilyn drew a name for the beautiful quilt she made. Amanda Pelham was the lucky winner.

12. Election of Directors 2020-2021 (Matt Robinson)

As outlined in the AGM 2020-2021 Slate of Directors document, Matt Robinson was pleased to present the following Slate of Directors for 2020-21:

New Candidates for Election to the Board:

- Basma Kavanagh (Canning)
- Jessica Scott Kerrin (Halifax)
- Philip Moscovitch (Glen Margaret)
- Anna Quon (Halifax)
- Raymond Sewell (Bedford)

Directors continuing their terms in 2020-2021

- Sean Bedell (Dartmouth)
- Cooper Lee Bombardier (Halifax)
- Gerald Trites (Mahone Bay)
- Amanda Peters (Falmouth)
- Marianne Ward (Dartmouth)
- Margo Wheaton (Halifax)

Candidates Re-Nominated for Election to the Board for a 1-year term:

- Lorri Neilsen Glenn (Halifax/South Shore)

Moved by Matt Robinson, **seconded** by Ron Stansfield to declare the Slate and name the Members elected to the Board of Directors of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia for 2020-2021.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

Matt Robinson made a statement thanking the following retiring Board members for their service:

- Nicola Davison (Dartmouth)
- Andre Fenton (Halifax)
- Angus MacCaull (Antigonish)
- Kim Pittaway (Dartmouth)
- Sarah Sawler (St. Margaret's Bay)

13. Other Business

No new business.

14. Adjournment

Matt Robinson calls for a motion to adjourn.

Kim Pittaway motions to adjourn.

Adjourned at 9:21 pm.