



**RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors Meeting**  
 Tuesday, September 5, 2023: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
 Via Zoom - Meeting ID: 843 1155 2128

<b>Agenda Items</b>				
<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Support Documents / Notes</b>
7:00 PM	1. Welcome & Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of Agenda</li> <li>• Review Action List</li> <li>• Approval of Previous Minutes of Meeting</li> </ul>	Information Approval	John Nangreaves	Pre-circulated: Agenda: September 5, 2023 Minutes: June 6, 2023
<b>ONGOING ITEMS</b>				
	2. Upcoming Meeting Dates & Guest Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 2023 Member's Meeting Date Confirmation and Format</li> <li>b. Confirm Member's Meeting agenda</li> <li>c. Zoom/SMU Bookings</li> <li>d. Guest Speakers &amp; Ideas for Future Presentations</li> </ul>	Ongoing Discussion Approval	John Nangreaves  Judy Black  Peter Hurley	<i>Refer to Agenda Notes #1: Speakers &amp; Approved 2023 Member Meeting Dates</i>  <i>Refer to Agenda Notes #2: 2023 Board of Directors Meeting Dates</i>  <i>Emcee for September 9 – see 31 August 2023 email from Judy Black</i>
	3. Report from National Council Representative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Policy C11: National Council Terms of Reference</li> <li>b. Report of NC Meeting (June 2023)</li> </ul>	Information Discussion	Judy Black	<i>Refer to Agenda Note #3: National Council Report</i>
	4. RASC Halifax Centre Website & YouTube	Discussion	Judy Black	n/a
	5. Financial Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in Signing Authority</li> <li>• RJSC Update</li> <li>• Dave Lane's Update</li> </ul>	Discussion	Gregg Dill Dave Lane	n/a
	6. Member Recruitment and Retention	Discussion	Tony McGrath	<i>Pre-circulated 7 documents re Welcome package by email and Google Docs from Tony McGrath on 31 August 2023</i>
	7. Education & Public Outreach (EPO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach Requests</li> </ul>	Discussion	David Hoskin	
<b>UPDATES / REPORTS</b>				
	8. SCO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade Status</li> <li>• Work Party</li> <li>• Financial Status</li> </ul>	Discussion	John Liddard Tony McGrath Gregg Dill	n/a
	9. GLP certificates and training	Discussion		n/a
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>				
	10. Policy C11: National Council terms of Reference	Discussion	Judy Black	Document containing suggested changes pre-circulated; also attached to the agenda

	11. Halifax Centre Governance Review	Discussion	Judy Black	n/a
<b>NEW BUSINESS</b>				
	12.	Discussion		
	13.	Discussion		
<b>Adjournment</b>				
9:00 PM	14. Adjournment (Next meeting: Oct 10, 2023)			

## RASC, Halifax Centre – Member’s Meeting

Saturday, September 9, 2023 – 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Via Zoom – Meeting ID 881 7691 7735

Agenda Items		
Time*	Item	Responsibility
1:00 PM	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b> Photo Montage	(emcee) David Hoskin
	<b>Presentation: Burning the Candle at Both Ends - My trip to Lapland 2023</b>	Jason Dain
	Social Break	
	<b>Food for the Soul:</b>	Paul Heath
	<b>What’s Up? (September)</b>	David Hoskin
	<b>News from the Board</b>	Patrick Kelly
4:00 PM	<b>Adjournment</b>	

\* Times are for Board of Director information only and for informing presenters of the length of their presentations; they will not be published on the Halifax Centre website. Times will be adjusted for each meeting.

## AGENDA NOTES

Agenda Item, Proposed By, & Date Proposed	Description Received (& Proposed Motion, if Applicable)
<b>Agenda Note #1 re: Speakers &amp; 2023 Member Meeting Dates</b>	<p><b>2023 Approved Members Meeting Dates and Events</b> Members’ Meeting dates were approved at the November 2022 Board of Directors meeting. They have been posted on the RASC(HC) website.</p> <p><b>Confirmed Speakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>September 9, 2023 Confirmed: Jason Dain - Burning the Candle at Both Ends - My trip to Lapland, 2023</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed Meeting Speakers, 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>October 14, 2023 Confirmed: Chris Young – Moon Lore “Members’ Presentations” – to be held annually in October. It would be the opportunity for the Board to thank all the members (given the meeting would be held near Thanksgiving) and, if it were an annual thing, members could start thinking about what they would like to share well in advance (especially if we keep reminding them) in the Board Notes presentation.</li> <li>November 4, 2023 Confirmed: Tim Doucette – visiting the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope (CFHT)</li> <li>December 2, 2023 – also AGM</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Suggested Speakers / Special Presentations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Kaja Rotermund</b> (formation of a high-redshift galaxy cluster)</li> <li>○ <b>Dr. Samantha Lawler:</b> New to the U of R and very busy rebuilding the astronomy program. She also has her core research and took on a leadership role in the StarLink issues and lobbying the federal government about it. <a href="mailto:Samantha.Lawler@uregina.ca">Samantha.Lawler@uregina.ca</a></li> <li>○ SMU Astronomy and Physics Grad students</li> <li>○ <a href="https://rasc.ca/find-speaker">https://rasc.ca/find-speaker</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Agenda Note #2</b> <b>re: Approved 2023 Board of Directors Meeting Dates</b></p>	<p><b>2023 Approved Board Meeting Dates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sept 5 (Labour Day = Sept 4)</li> <li>• Oct 10 (Thanksgiving = Oct 9)</li> <li>• Oct 31</li> <li>• Nov 28</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agenda Note #3</b> <b>re: National Council Report</b></p>	<p>1- <b>Eclipse glasses:</b> Eclipse viewers to be ordered in bulk by national RASC. <u>Action:</u> Deadline for order: June 15, 2023. 500 ordered. In Sept 4<sup>th</sup> RASC <i>The Bulletin</i>: Solar glasses being shipped to the RASC mid-September and will be shipped to Centres ASAP thereafter.</p> <p>2 - <b>Policy C12: National Council Terms of Reference (NC32-2-Act04)</b> (<a href="https://www.rasc.ca/sites/default/files/RASC%20Policy%20Manual%202021%20Ver%2008.0%20%5BRevised%202021-02-15%29_0.pdf">https://www.rasc.ca/sites/default/files/RASC%20Policy%20Manual%202021%20Ver%2008.0%20%5BRevised%202021-02-15%29_0.pdf</a>) An email was sent to both the NC and Presidents forums requesting input into the review of the policy. Our Board's input for proposed changes was requested. Members' proposed changes have been noted and a revised document is attached. The draft will be presented at the September 24, 2023, NC meeting.</p> <p>3 - <b>Election of NC Officers</b> The Chair (Judy Black), Vice-Chair (Jim Fairles) and Council Recorder (Eric Klaszus) were re-elected by acclamation.</p> <p>4 - <b>GLP Usage</b> The form suggested by Don Towne (Belleville) has yet to be posted on the RASC User Pointer Usage site (<a href="https://www.rasc.ca/laser-pointer-usage">https://www.rasc.ca/laser-pointer-usage</a>). Again, in Gathertown, there was a discussion about this and how best to facilitate training and reporting of training and usage. I told them we have the slide deck and speaker notes on our website as well as the video being on our YouTube channel.</p>

**Halifax Centre Board of Directors - Minutes of Meeting**  
**September 5, 2023 - 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**  
**held via Zoom - Meeting ID 843 1155 2128**

**Present:** Judy Black, Gregg Dill, Matt Dyer, Peter Hurley, Pat Kelly, Dave Lane (until 7:35pm), John Liddard, (joined 8:00pm), John Nangreaves, Kathy Walker, Mary Lou Whitehorne

**Regrets:** Lisa Ann Fanning, David Hoskin, Tony McGrath

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

Pat Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm and welcomed members. He asked if there were any changes or additions to the agenda, which had been pre-circulated by email. Judy pointed out that item 10 and 3a were duplicates and suggested deleting 3a and renumbering the agenda. Dave Lane had asked by email to address the Board and he was placed as agenda item #2.

**230905MN-Mot01**

It was moved by Judy Black and seconded by Kathy Walker to approve the September 5, 2023 Board of Directors meeting agenda, as amended.  
CARRIED.

The Action List, which was attached to the minutes of the previous meeting, was reviewed.

From November 29, 2022

**Action 9:** Open.

From January 10, 2023

**Action 10:** Open.

From February 28, 2023

**Action 1:** Closed.

**230905MN-Act01**

Gregg Dill and John Liddard to review SCO inventory and confirm items still exist and assign value to assets.

From March 28, 2023

**Action 2:** Closed.

**230905MN-Act02**

Gregg Dill to provide budget update and indicate where we could fund-raise.

**Action 6,8:** Closed.

**Action 9:** Open.

From May 2, 2023

**Action 1:** Closed.

**Action 4:** Open.

From June 6, 2023

**Action 1:** Open.

**Action 2:** Closed.

**230905MN-Act03**

Gregg Dill to submit the RASC Halifax Centre 2021-22 Annual Financial Statement to NS RJSC.

**Action 3:** Closed. Tim agreed to speak in November.

Action 4: Closed.

Action 5: Open.

Action 6-9: Closed

**230905MN-Act04**

Gregg Dill to provide an update on SCO upgrade fundraising budget.

The minutes of the previous Board meeting held on June 6, 2023 had been circulated by email. Corrections had been sent by email by Pat and Gregg.

**230905MN-Mot02**

It was moved by Judy Black and seconded by Kathy Walker to approve the June 5, 2023 Board of Directors meeting minutes, as amended.

CARRIED.

**2. Presentation by Dave Lane**

Dave resigned as Treasurer of the Centre and as a member of the Board in a confidential email to the Board on July 27, 2023, effective August 4. Prior to the September Board meeting, he requested a few minutes during the meeting to discuss a matter with the Board. Dave explained, in confidence, his personal situation to the Board and the reasons for his actions.

He offered the opinion to Board members that the Centre has historically not managed donations of observing equipment well and suggested that the Board consider developing a new policy to better handle donations of any kind, but in particular donations of observing equipment.

Dave also mentioned that we might want to consider a policy for retention of documents, given that we are transferring boxes of documents when Board positions change.

**230905MN-Act05**

The Governance Review committee to provide a recommendation to the Board regarding retention and disposal of historical documents.

**ONGOING ITEMS**

**3. Upcoming Meeting Dates & Guest Speakers**

Judy indicated that meeting dates are confirmed. Chris Young has volunteered to present on Moon Lore at the October 14 members meeting. Judy had also been proposed that the October meeting would be a time for Members presentations. It was agreed that their presentations would each have a 10 minute time limit. Tim Doucette has agreed to present in November on his trip to Hawaii. December is still open and suggestions included finding a SMU Astronomy grad student or a presentation of astronomy cartoons.

Jerry Black and Bob Russell have indicated that they would prefer that the September Members meeting next weekend be Zoom only, not a hybrid meeting, since Dave Lane won't be available to help with logistics at SMU. They hope to be able to arrange time to test things at SMU before the next Members meeting.

**230905MN-Act06**

Peter Hurley to send an update to the Announce List that the September Members meeting will only be a Zoom meeting.

Pat Kelly volunteered to MC the September Members meeting since Judy wouldn't be available.

**230905MN-Act07**

Peter Hurley to work with Judy Black to shorten the Land Acknowledgement and Inclusivity and Diversity statements.

**4. Report from the National Council Representative**

Judy had distributed by email the most recent report from the National Council. She asked members to review and provide comment before September 24.

**5. RASC Halifax Centre Website and YouTube**

Judy indicated that Jerry was updating the website as required. Jerry has updated the website with photos and video from the Dark Sky Weekend at Kejimikujik.

**6. Financial Update**

Gregg indicated that he and Judy still had signing authority at the Bank, so no changes were necessary. He suggested that Pat should send him the list of people that needed to be reimbursed because of cancellation of Nova East.

**230905MN-Act08**

Pat Kelly to send list of Nova East registrants to Gregg Dill so that reimbursements can be made.

Judy asked if Gregg knew the status of the SCO fundraising budget. He indicated that there was approximately \$1,000 remaining, and confirmed that the \$546 bill from Tony for running power to the storage room/toilet would come from that balance. Gregg reported that our RASC fees revenue from

National office was down ~15% from last year, likely a reflection of a decrease in the numbers of members in the Centre, which is currently 149, down from approximately 170 last year.

## **7. Member Recruitment and Retention**

Tony had sent 7 files that are intended as a draft Centre Welcome package to be sent to new members to the Centre. As Tony wasn't present, he indicated he would pass on comments to Tony and that hopefully they would have a revised package for the next Board meeting. Judy indicated that the National Council was going through a similar exercise and she would ask Tony to assist them also.

Peter indicated that he had intended to ask Jenna if the Halifax Centre list server could be turned off or disabled and several members indicated that that had already happened, but Judy said she would confirm this with Jenna when she spoke with her next week.

### **230905MN-Act09**

Judy Black to ask Jenna Hinds to turn off the Halifax Centre email server on the Driven system.

Pat indicated he felt the Welcome package would help with member retention, because it would help new members see how to become more engaged in the Centre. There was discussion of the influence of COVID on all recreational and hobby groups, where membership had increased but then subsequently gone back to more normal levels. John N made the point that there were just so many more opportunities available for activities to the public that astronomy clubs may be experiencing declining numbers as a consequence. Peter indicated that seeing this happening in the Centre membership numbers was what had triggered he and Tony to try to find mechanisms to counter that, especially after Jenna Hinds had responded last month that National office had stopped sending the previous welcome package. Judy indicated she had a copy of that previous welcome package and would send it to Tony and Peter.

### **230905MN-Act010**

Judy Black to send a copy of the previous Halifax Centre welcome package to Tony McGrath and Peter Hurley.

There was considerable discussion about the reasons for declining membership and possible ways to increase numbers. There was discussion about the efficacy of some of our outreach activities in helping with recruitment and Judy pointed out that our mandate refers to stimulating interest in and promoting knowledge of astronomy and related science and says nothing about membership and recruitment.

Peter also asked if anyone knew if National office still sends out reminders to members when their membership fee is due because he was seeing a number of long-term members who had not renewed their membership. Judy indicated she would ask Jenna if National office was still sending reminders to members.

### **230905MN-Act011**

Judy Black to ask Jenna Hinds if National office was still sending out reminders of membership renewal.

## **8. Education and Public Outreach**

This item was deferred as David wasn't present.

## **Updates/Reports**

### **9. SCO**

John Liddard thanked Tony for all the work that he's put into the maintenance of SCO this summer, especially getting power to the storage room/toilet and organizing cleaning and painting parties. John reported that the propane tank has been removed and that Dave Lane had let him know that a cheque had been received from Superior Propone for the propane that they had recovered from the tank less the charge to remove the tank. He also reported that the re-grading of the road after the flooding has been completed but Minas Energy has now started construction to replace the penstock and there is a significant amount of heavy equipment activity during the day, likely until the end of November, but that members are welcome to access SCO weekends and after 6pm weekdays but with caution. He also

indicated he intends to replace the lock on the SCO gate before the cold weather.

There was discussion about the Annual BBQ planned for September 15 (Sept 16 rain date). John indicated that there shouldn't be any issue with access. There was discussion about the focus on it being a social event but that there would still be observing. Judy volunteered to organize provisions with help from Chris Young.

**230905MN-Act012**

Judy Black to post a reminder of the Annual BBQ event to the Centre Announce List.

**Governance**

**10. GLP certificates and training**

Judy asked that we defer this item until she has an opportunity to talk with Denis Lyon and consult with National Council

**11. Policy C11: National Council Terms of Reference**

Judy indicated she had received comments from Pat and Tony and that she had recirculated the amended document. She wants to ensure that our Centre members' perspective is captured. NC has to address issues of quorum and membership, particularly because she is NC chair and can't vote and also our Centre member. Issues that need to be addressed are the number of members per Centre and that some Centres are too small to have a representative while others have multiple representatives. She indicated that the next NC meeting is scheduled for Sept 24 and asked that comments be sent to her by September 21, 2023. The issues of quorum and membership will have implications on RASC Bylaw #1.

**12. Halifax Centre Governance Review**

Judy indicated that the Governance Committee had not had an opportunity to meet over the summer.

**Adjournment**

There being no other business, Pat asked for a motion to adjourn.

**230606MN-Mot03**

It was moved by John Nangreaves to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Hurley, Secretary

**ACTION LIST (September 5, 2023):**

<b>From November 29, 2022</b>		
221129MN-Act09	<b>Peter Hurley</b> to put amendment of Bylaw #1 to include use of social media to hold meetings on a future he Board meeting agenda (not January 3, 2023).	Open
<b>From January 10, 2023</b>		
230110MN-Act10	<b>Peter Hurley</b> to work with David Hoskin to create a list of volunteers to help with observing and outreach requests that are remote to the HRM area.	Open
<b>From March 28, 2023</b>		
230328MN-Act09	<b>John Liddard</b> to investigate replacing the lock on the SCO driveway or fabricating a cover for it.	Open
<b>From May 2, 2023</b>		

230502MN-Act04	<b>Peter Hurley</b> to explore with National office how member statistics are generated from the Driven database.	Open
<b>From June 6, 2023</b>		
230606MN-Act01	<b>Dave Lane</b> to resolve the double payment of the RASC Halifax Centre 2023 Annual Renewal fee to NS RJSC.	Open
230606MN-Act05	<b>Peter Hurley, Tony McGrath, Dave Lane, Gregg Dill and Pat Kelly</b> to form a task team to determine how to extract data from the Driven database and welcome new members to RASC Halifax Centre.	Open
<b>From September 5, 2023</b>		
230905MN-Act01	<b>Gregg Dill and John Liddard</b> to review SCO inventory and confirm items still exist and assign value to assets.	Open
230905MN-Act02	<b>Gregg Dill</b> to provide a budget update and indicate where we could fund-raise.	Open
230905MN-Act03	<b>Gregg Dill</b> to submit the RASC Halifax Centre 2021-22 Annual Financial Statement to NS RJSC.	Open
230905MN-Act04	<b>Gregg Dill</b> to provide an update on SCO upgrade fundraising budget.	Open
230905MN-Act05	<b>The Governance Review committee</b> to provide a recommendation to the Board regarding retention and disposal of historical documents.	Open
230905MN-Act06	<b>Peter Hurley</b> to send an update to the Announce List that the September Members meeting will only be a Zoom meeting.	Open
230905MN-Act07	<b>Peter Hurley</b> to work with Judy Black to shorten the Land Acknowledgement and Inclusivity and Diversity statements.	Open
230905MN-Act08	<b>Pat Kelly</b> to send list of Nova East registrants to Gregg Dill so that reimbursements can be made.	Open
230905MN-Act09	<b>Judy Black</b> to ask Jenna Hinds to turn off the Halifax Centre email server on the Driven system.	Open
230905MN-Act010	<b>Judy Black</b> to send a copy of the previous Halifax Centre welcome package to Tony McGrath and Peter Hurley.	Open
230905MN-Act011	<b>Judy Black</b> to ask Jenna Hinds if National office was still sending out reminders of membership renewal.	Open
230905MN-Act012	<b>Judy Black</b> to post a reminder of the Annual BBQ event to the Centre Announce List.	Open

### **MOTION LIST (September 5, 2023):**

230905MN-Mot01	It was moved by Judy Black and seconded by Kathy Walker to approve the September 5, 2023 Board of Directors meeting agenda, as amended. CARRIED.
230905MN-Mot02	It was moved by Judy Black and seconded by Kathy Walker to approve the June 5, 2023 Board of Directors meeting minutes, as amended. CARRIED.
230905MN-Mot03	It was moved by John Nangreaves to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm.

## **Summary of the National Council – Presidents Meeting** **Sunday, June 4, 2023 – 3:00 PM – 4:12 PM Atlantic**

### **Purpose of Meeting:**

- To provide a forum for the Centre Representatives to National Council and the Presidents to see and hear the responses of the Finance Committee consequent to the Q&A document provided to them on May 19, 2023, concerning the Committee's draft Society budget for 2023.
- To provide the opportunity for positive feedback to the Finance Committee and the Board.

### **Phases of Change in the RASC:**

*(Courtesy of Dennis Lyons, Winnipeg Centre)*

#### **Phase 1: Deal with Expenditures** (This is the phase we are now in)

- Examine expenses and income
- Determine areas of needed change
- Quarterly financial update
- Board-NC discussions / collaborations

#### **Phase 2: Develop a Viable Budget**

- Support of the membership and the Society as a whole
- Provide rationale for shortfalls

#### **Phase 3: Conduct an organizational review/audit**

- How did we get to this point?
- What needs to change or remain as is?
- How do we avoid a repeat?

#### **Phase 4: Successful continuation**

- Yes, we may look different
- Accountability
- Changes to Governance – Bylaw No. 1, Policies



*Help us work on solutions.  
Be patient as we transition.*

### **Opening Remarks:**

#### **From Charles Ennis:**

There were modifications to the budget as a result of National Council (NC) input. The approach in the past to budget had been far too casual but now it's a very focused approach. We've involved the National Council and we thank NC members for that effort.

All questions in the purview of committees have been forwarded to those committees for their input in this process. The questions should now be focused on what the fee should be and not, or whether fee increases should be made. This was seen as a major shift in thinking.

Because National Council, Presidents and their boards have had the financial statements for weeks, we're not going to be going through this line by line in the budget. The finance committee has had multiple meetings doing that line by line to make this work. The board also has been having many extra meetings. If you have additional questions, the Board will be happy to answer them.

Note that the financial statements and first quarter reports were just received on June 3 and the Board has not met to examine them. Following the meeting next week, the Board will definitely be reporting back to the NC.

**From Catherine Carr:**

Previously, the annual budget was done primarily between the executive director, the finance manager and the treasurer, and then it would be approved by the board and presented to National Council in its complete form. However, as we know this year, as part of the fallout of the losses in 2022 and then a lot of organizational changes which took place in early 2023, we promised and vowed to do things differently, taking a much more collaborative approach. Around the beginning of this year, we had a couple of new members join the finance committee, which has been great to have additional perspectives and questions that wouldn't otherwise come up. We'll be looking to commence the process earlier in 2024 than we did this year.

When finance committee undertook the process, we had more members on the committee and Randy Attwood as acting executive director. We looked at every single line item and what kind of numbers we saw, what kind of activity we saw in great detail in 2022, what we were seeing taking place in 2023, and not only thinking about ways to cut costs, but also what do we have the capacity to handle as a team in the next six to 12 months?

And so what is the mission? I think some of the questions that came up were what directives are being given to staff over the next year. And as you might imagine, it's delivering our core services to members and centers while undertaking to streamline expenses as much as we can, everywhere that we can identify a cost savings. That's the objective.

That led us to the feedback process with the NC. Thank you so much for all your comments and questions. It was very, very helpful and, as a result, a couple of changes were made to the figures that will be included in the final 2023 budget. One of them regards membership fees. It's true we might have been a little over-optimistic in the initial draft of the budget, so we're going to revise that down to \$250,000 in membership fee revenue for this year. That represents a 10% decrease. Then there was one item that we missed, which was shipping revenue. We hadn't included an amount for US freight collected, which as you may have heard is one area where we are focused on fixing the issue that exists in our shipping revenue process. Way too much was spent in shipping costs in 2022. We have to fix that gap. We do need to be revenue neutral. The national office is definitely focusing on that for 2023 and going forward.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION – FLOOR OPEN TO QUESTIONS**

### **1. How does the cost of a general assembly compare to a virtual GA?**

**Jenna Hinds:** This year's general assembly was budgeted to cost \$8,000 and budgeted to make \$11,000 or so. We only spent \$4,000 and made \$7,000 so we actually came out making \$3,000 which is what we expected to make. Savings were in honoraria. We only have one speaker who required an honorarium and in a Sky News teaser that we didn't run.

So that is two virtual GAs.

**Robyn Foret, part 1:** The \$63,000 was the cost of the GA and that's all the hosting and the banquet and all of those expenses directly associated with it. Not captured by the accounting that the center did was the cost to the society to send national reps to that general assembly. So, in addition to the 63,000, it's probably 20,000 or more in travel costs to bring in the eligible participants or delegates, which includes national council reps, committee chairs, board members, et cetera. It's probably more realistic to say at 85,000 to \$90,000 cost for an in-person general assembly for about 140 to 150 people.

**Robyn Foret, part 2:** The actual expense was \$63,184.24 and that expense was \$144 over the revenue generated by the General Assembly, so essentially broke even and 63,000. I feel that burnout at in-person General Assemblies for volunteers is worse than burnout in virtual General Assemblies, partially because we can reach further for volunteers in virtual General Assemblies. We can have volunteers from all over the place, and also because it's just a little bit lighter on work.

*Post-meeting note:*

**2. How do the production costs for an issue of JRASC compare to an issue of SkyNews. And if JRASC is cheaper, where are the cost savings?**

**Jenna Hinds:** I can speak to JRASC, I can't speak to SkyNews and I'm speaking to all the things that have happened since I've arrived. For the journal, it costs more than we're charging for it by a significant amount. It costs about, including shipping, about \$8,000 or so to do a journal run. But main difference is that it only goes out to about a thousand people, whereas SkyNews went out to significantly more, and has higher quality paper. It's harder to compare when we are only looking at just how many issues journal has compared to Sky News.

**Dennis Lyons:** (Comment) Other professional journals actually charge people to have their, unsolicited articles included. This might be looked at to help bring that up to a neutral cost.

**Chris Gainor:** I tried to do a very, very rough comparison just in the last few minutes and I think the cost of an issue of SkyNews is actually much, much greater than JRASC. Our annual budget for SkyNews was in the last couple of years was roughly half a million dollars and that's for six issues in full color and all the distribution. We're also paying contributors and the JRASC has been moving more to color but we weren't paying contributors. Randy Attwood noted in the chat that page charges for articles in the journal should be reviewed. Refereed articles used to be charged, page charges, but these were articles by professionals, not amateurs, but maybe now it's a mix.

**3. However, IMHO, the value of SkyNews is far greater to the general membership than the journal as a member benefit.**

**Charles Ennis:** I think that will change. As I mentioned earlier, there was a number of things that were planned to be put into the Journal and then we acquired SkyNews and they all went in there. The people who originally wanted them to go into the Journal are putting them in the Journal. It's going to make a difference as its value increases.

**4. Recognizing the projection of a shortfall for 2023, do you have an early projection for the 2024 fiscal once the one-time costs have been cleared? And do we have a process for projecting one-year budgets, sample current fiscal plus two?**

**Catherine Carr:** We currently don't, but I think that's an excellent idea. Perhaps in the next couple of months for the next NC meeting, that would be a reasonable objective to have a first look at 2024.

**Charles Ennis:** What we're doing here is developing a new process for doing that, and what is going to come out of this is a better process.

**5. Will NC be able to preview the actuals from the first quarter of 2023, ahead of AGM later this month?**

**Catherine Carr:** Yes. I'll circulate the actuals of the first third of the year to the end of April probably towards the end of next week. Although our year end is December, the statements will be until the end of April.

**6. One of the more alarming issues that has come out of the various discussions and revelations is the apparent lack of financial control. Who can commit the organization or spend money, what limits are in place and who approves them? Right up to and including the ED. I realized this is too complex answer at this meeting, but a report to the NC on past practice and what is**

proposed moving forward would be appropriate. I see this as a significant reason we are where we are now.

**Charles Ennis:** I see that too. This is a part of the process of correcting that. We are looking very closely at the procedures and who is responsible. We mentioned accountability or Judy mentioned accountability earlier, absolutely essential. This is a big question but it's something we're working on right now.

- 7. Delegated spending authorities and spending caps are options to consider when you dig into the topic. For example, some spending authorities may be limited to 5,000 purchase higher tiers to 50,000, et cetera.**

**Michael Watson:** As one might expect, numerous discussions were held with the new executive director. One of the things that the Board has put in place is that the ED is fine with a limitation on expenditures without board approval, i.e., expenditures can be made up to the amount of the budget.

- 8. Given this has been considered, have there been definitive amounts determined at this point, or is that still under discussion?**

**Michael Watson:** For executive director, that is definitive amount. I've just forgotten exactly what that amount is, but that has been set. With respect to other head office personnel, we're going through two processes. One is great shrinkage of the numbers so that they're very manageable. And the second is actually getting people on board to fill those positions and they will be under the authority of the executive director. That's going to be a fairly tight process, and we'll let the NC know about that.

- 9. Are we able to see the final numbers very quickly on the budget with the changes because you mentioned that changes that were made? Just how much has it changed from what it was before one way or the other?**

**Catherine Carr:** We have reduced membership fee revenue by 28,000. We've increased US freight and handling revenue by 13 and a half thousand. The net difference is an additional loss of just over \$14,000 additional. The overall loss we're looking at is \$179,000 for 2023. That's what we're projecting right now, before any of those special SkyNews related items.

- 10. Could the RASC national calendar become a member benefit since SkyNews is no longer offered. Is this possible or feasible?**

**Charles Ennis:** The calendar is one of the things that makes money. The Observers Handbook is the other big one. That's certainly something we can look at.

**Jenna Hinds:** I would show some concern about doing that only because we know from looking at the budget that money brought in by membership dues doesn't cover membership benefits. The calendar is underused right now in terms of use as a marketing tool. And I'd like to expand that before and have it make more money before considering making it available. But it would be taken under advisement for sure.

**Reminder from Charles Ennis:** The calendar is the responsibility of the Editorial Board. That's where we're going to start with the suggestions. Chris Beckett is the Observing Calendar Editor.

**Charles Ennis:** The SkyNews month calendar that was in the SkyNews is going into journal so that will be of a benefit now.

- Q: Would the two months guide calendar be available for members to download?**

A: That's an interesting suggestion we could look into that.

**Q: For those who create calendars as a resource for locals, maybe they should be given access to the rasc.ca website to add those resources for everyone.**

**A:** We really need to do some training first if we're doing that and that's something that is on the list of things that's really important is volunteer training, but just wanted to note that. That was definitely one of the issues that we identified as being a problem. Many of the problems that showed up were driven user issues. Now we're determining who can use it and under what circumstances?

**General Suggestions through the Chat:**

- Perhaps a digital version of a monthly calendar for members. Maybe that could be considered in some fashion. So put that in with that discussion we had earlier perhaps.
- A new marketing item would be an electronic calendar. Yes, programming is involved with a cost, but a great tool to use in the field.
- There are abundance of astronomy calendars available for downloading for free, including one from Alan Dyer and another from CSA.
- SkySafari and Stellarium are also available.
- Windsor Center puts out its own calendar. So there may be other centers that do the same thing.
- At Centre members meetings, the observing chair tells everyone what to look for and it's posted on their website too, so that our members can access it

**11. How are we tracking so far on grants and donations for 2023? I noticed that the budgeted revenue for this line was greatly reduced in 2023, as it was a massive source of deficit in 2022. Just curious how this line of revenue is tracked to this point.**

**Catherine Carr:** As Charles mentioned, we just received the statements for the month of April, and I think we're tracking well on that line.

**Jenna Hinds:** I'm still in the process of tending to fires and so I haven't gotten to the point, but I will be looking into increasing our fundraising dollars a little bit more. As far as I know, I believe we're tracking.

**Michael Watson:** We're actually tracking ahead so far ahead of budget. Budget for this initial period was about \$30,000 and we're ahead by several thousand dollars, but that's not really actually all that helpful. It's not an indication for the entire year because things, and particularly with donations, they're not predictable to come in at a certain rate over the course of the entire year.

**12. I recall an announcement late last year regarding revamping the website. What is happening?**

**Jenna Hinds:** It has not been shelved. We have the membership and publications coordinator for the summer. Their name is Willow, and because they have some experience with WordPress will be working actively on this.

**13. Quick question basically for the board. Jenna put together a national council report, strategic direction for the rest. Has that been accepted? And there seems to be a lot of discussion on the actual physical office space that we have there. I wonder if Jenna could make a comment in terms of what we feel the most likely outcome would be. It's just that our direction does have an impact on how we spend.**

**Charles Ennis:** This is an ongoing discussion that we're having done with our new executive director working out how things should work properly. And again, this is the strategic planning stuff and not the budget planning stuff. It's in progress, but we're focusing on making the necessary cuts and doing the necessary things we need to do to stay in the game.

**Jenna Hinds:** I will say that I am doing very little without advising the board. I'm extremely proactive when it comes to communicating. I am not in a position where I want to be willy-nilly signing us up for

stuff. So I am in close contact with the board and if anybody else, and I'll do my best to continue close contact with the NC as well.

#### **From Michael Watson re Treasurer and Office Staff:**

A couple of our important directors are going to be finishing their terms at the upcoming Annual General Meeting at the end of June, and that of course includes Charles as President and Catherine as Treasurer. My term doesn't end until next year.

What I want to talk about now concerns the Treasurer. We have been fortunate to have Catherine as a Treasurer who does this sort of work for a living. Her term is coming to an end and we are very much needing a new treasurer. The Board has taken the step of amending the bylaw, subject to membership approval, of removing the requirement that the Treasurer be a director. The reason for this, as we set out in the explanation for the bylaw, is that up until now, all of the five named officers have to be board members.

We have nine board members, although we have struggled to find someone who has the necessary skills and experience to be Treasurer and also who was willing to step forward into that position. What we want to do is to broaden it to the entire membership so that we can look for people who are willing and also have the skills and the experience.

We want to take this opportunity now to reach out to the NC and to ask for your help in identifying people with whom you're familiar, people in your Centres, perhaps people on your Councils who have been involved in governance at the central level, and who've demonstrated both a willingness and the experience to work in financial matters who may be prepared to step forward for consideration by the board to take on this role.

Concerning head office. As I think you all know, what we're envisioning is a much stripped down and leaner head office that has essentially three people, the executive director, finance and office manager, and then membership coordinator. We are in the process of doing a search for a new combination finance and office manager. Jenna has developed a pretty great understanding of the computer systems and much of the finances, but she's Executive Director and has a lot of functions to perform. In effect, between now and a few months from now, we are going to be looking for two people to fill the financial portfolios - one being a paid staff member and the other being an unpaid officer/treasurer.

This is something I think that really needs to be top of mind for all of us. Finances have been very much top of mind since the December 5th National Council meeting that all of you will remember. Part of the whole mission with respect to finances is having the right person in that position. So please, the Board is really looking for your assistance.

#### **14. Is it a conflict if the person's the treasurer of a centre as well as if they were suitable for the national treasurer?**

**Michael Watson:** That's an interesting question and I don't think so at all. There tends to be a feeling that anybody who holds two positions has to be in a conflict. That's not true at all. I don't see any conflict whatsoever between being an officer of a Centre and being an officer of National. In a situation where a conflict arises, I think that the person would undoubtedly recuse her or himself from that. I think one of the issues would be whether the person would have time to do both, and I think that that might be more of an issue than conflict.

**Charles Ennis:** The Board examined that because people were finding it difficult to volunteer to be a member of the Board and volunteer for their executive at their Centre and the Board made changes to the policies to make it possible for people to do both because in our experience, it just wasn't happening.

#### **15. Are we talking about people that are currently in a treasurer position in their respective center? Does it have to be a person that is necessarily a treasurer? What do you mean by "experience"?**

**Michael Watson:** No, not at all. What we wanted to have as wide a universe of possible people as possible. It strikes us that someone who has had treasurer experience or is currently a treasurer with maybe a center where the treasurer position does not take up a huge amount of time would have the experience and would be able to step in. And by the way, I should point out Catherine Carr, although she's leaving, has volunteered for some period of time to train and work with a new treasurer, to be able to step in and be fairly familiar with it all. And of course, Jenna would work with the treasurer as well, as would all of us on Finance Committee, because all of us in the last little while have developed a fair amount of facility with the numbers and so on. So that would be one source. But any member who is interested in governance and who has, is for example, a CPA or something like that, just general familiarity with business, we think is probably not necessarily enough, but we're looking for something like that if at all possible, okay.

**Catherine Carr:** To add to what Michael mentioned about, for the sake of continuity, you can tell any interested parties that I will make myself available for a good couple of months, as long as it takes, maybe even the rest of the year to help the new treasurer in their role, answer any questions they might have. And I also want to remain on the Finance Committee if they will allow me to stay.

**16. Have the number of board members required on the finance committee been reduced to allow for more volunteer participation or is that remaining and then adding volunteers to it?**

**Michael Watson:** Probably adding. Committees and composition of committees is not set in the bylaw but rather in policy we can be changed at any time for what is suitable. For now, there are a certain number of people on the finance committee – two of the officers, first and second vice-president by the bylaw have to be on it, but we can have additional members as well. If we were to determine, for example, that there were one or two other people and who have a lot of great experience, we might very well agree to add them and just change the policy. What we want to do is make sure, however, the finance committee doesn't become unwieldy.

**Charles Ennis:** Agreed, we definitely saw that there was a need to get more experience, people with experience as treasurers on that committee and we have benefited greatly from the addition of Gregg and Susan on to committee. It's quite easy to add people to it. We're quite prepared to do that.

**Comment from Dennis Lyons (Winnipeg Centre)**

I just want to make a comment so it's recorded in the minutes.

One, a big thank you to Randy Attwood for stepping in while the Board recruited Jenna into the executive director position. And I know a little bit of email we've been able to see that Jenna's taking over and as she mentioned, she likes to communicate and I can appreciate that or say how much we appreciate that, that's huge. And I did send out the email, but I just want to say it as well, just a big thank you.

A lot of times when there's controversy and things that need to be looked at closely, people can run, but a lot of people put a lot of effort in. Catherine, the Board, National Council reps, and members from the account centers, to provide feedback to move things forward. And I just want to really say thank you to everybody for all the great work. And I know I've missed some people, but just thank you for everything you've been doing to turn things around and make things better. We have a great Society that serves a great purpose in our country and it takes a lot of effort to keep things going. I just want to say thank you to everyone.

**Charles Ennis:** Thank you, it's appreciated. We're doing our best. It's a volunteer organization and we've had a lot to learn in the process of doing this, but we appreciate the support that you've given us. And again, we appreciate you putting those questions forward and suggestions and so on, because it's exactly how this should work.

**17. A non-finance related question. Do we have a privacy management framework for the society?**

**Jenna Hinds:** I can say that's in the works. We're essentially looking at updates and possible changes, additions, to the current privacy policy. Clarifications, procedures, that sort of thing.

**Charles Ennis:** Security is a big issue. It's one of the problems that we discovered as people were not keeping track of who is signed into programs as managers or users and things were just getting ridiculous. So we're tightening that up.

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### Election of the National Council Officers.

#### **By Acclamation:**

- Chair: Judy Black (Halifax Centre)
- Vice-Chair: Jim Fairles (Kitchener-Waterloo)
- Council Recorder: Eric Klaszus (Calgary Centre)

**Laurie Roche:** I just wanted to say thank you to Judy, Jim and Eric for pulling together this year in quite a difficult time and look forward to continuing them working through this. I think that the continuity will be really very helpful throughout the next year and looking forward to working with you. You've been all fabulous, thank you.

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### Closing Comments.

**Judy Black:** I want to thank everyone for the past year. I know it's been a busy one, one that had a lot of emotion attached to it because of what was going on with our beloved Society. And I want to thank everyone for participating in this process, for agreeing the Society is worth saving and that we're working as a team to make sure that it continues to exist. So this is really good. The other big piece of the puzzle is that collaboration between the Board and National Council is being built on and has been highly strengthened. I want to thank Charles and Michael, because I know I've talked to you dear souls quite a bit over the past year in private conversations about various things and how to go forward. And I want to thank you for that. I don't think we would be where we are today without those phone calls and the Zoom sessions we've had over the past year. So I thank you.

To the Board members who are here, please extend our thanks to the others that aren't here. I know that you've had a lot of stressors as well because of us hounding you over the past year. And I'm sure you've also received messaging from members that aren't on Council or aren't presidents. So thank you for hanging in there and for being part of this process and getting us to where we are.

**Next NC Meeting:** September 24.

Have a great summer everyone. And don't forget to look up starting at your feet. Skies are open.

**Charles Ennis:** Thank you, Judy. We really appreciate all the effort that you put into this. I don't know whether everybody on this call is aware of this but she got the President's Award this year and I think she deserves it. Congrats! Thank you to Jim and Eric as well and thank you to all the National Council. We are finally getting this into a situation where we're working together and it's paying dividends.

4:12 PM: Motion to adjourn.