

**Minutes for COUNCIL MEETING of McMaster University Retirees Association
Wednesday June 11, 2008, 1:30PM
at Joan Parker's Home, 27-40 Wesleyan Court, Ancaster ON L9G 5C7**

THANK YOU Joan for hosting our last meeting of the year and the first meeting of next year, all at the same time! The feast of fruits and cheese and beverages was wonderful+!

Present: Helen Barton (chair), Jeff Chuchman, Beth Csordas, Geoff Evans, Helen Dietsche, Margaret Jenkins, Michele Leroux, John McCutcheon, Joan Morris, Veronica Morrison, Kathy Overholt, Joan Parker, Pam Penny, Kathy Ryan, Anne Sinclair and Marianne Van der Wel

Regrets: Cliff Andrews, Mike Hedden, Roman March, Allisan Noble, Rod Phillips

1. Welcome & Regrets:

The meeting started at 1:50PM giving council members a chance to settle in at Joan's home and partake in the fabulous food/drink Joan provided.

Helen Barton thanked our out going council members (Joan Morris and Roman March) and welcomed our new members (Kathy Ryan and Mike Hedden)! She also thanked Joan Morris for agreeing to continue as a consultant on constitutional matters. Helen welcomed back Michele Leroux from her leave and thanked Jeff for filling in for her this past year.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

(a) Council Meeting Minutes for the last meeting on May 14, 2008

MOTION

- Geoff Evans **motioned** that the May 14, 2008 minutes be approved as circulated.
- John McCutcheon **seconded** the motion.
- **Carried** unanimously

(b) Annual General Meeting (AGM) Minutes for May 28, 2008

MOTION

- Geoff Evans **motioned** that the May 28, 2008 AGM minutes be provisionally approved as circulated.
- Margaret Jenkins **seconded** the motion.
- **Carried** unanimously

John McCutcheon commented that he really appreciated the minutes as they were a good record of what happened. Council agreed.

3. Review of the AGM (held May 28, 2008):

We estimated about 150 people attended. The making of the photo ID cards was a huge success with 66 people getting new IDs. What drew the people? We think it was:

- the free lunch
- the nice weather
- the free parking with special arrangements for mobility challenges
- our improved advertising (e-mail notice/separate coloured sheet with the MURAnews)
- UTS (University Technology Services)' Photo ID set up at the AGM

The food was very good. Our hats off to Joan Morris for getting more sandwiches as the crowd was bigger than we had anticipated. We were a little short on desserts. The flowers on the table, to become door prizes at the meeting's end, were a nice touch. Thank You Joan for all the arrangements!!!

The length of this year's AGM was just right and the timing throughout was very good. Congratulations Helen Barton! While Brian Henley was surprised at the large size of this year's group, he spoke well and the length as well as content of his speech was very good.

We had some favourable verbal feedback from members attending.

Audio Visual forgot to send a remote for the slide projector. Instead, John McCutcheon assisted by pushing the required projector button!

Suggestions for Next Year (AGM 2009):

- Have UTS come back with the Photo ID equipment again. Though we won't expect as large a number of people requiring new IDs, some will and this is a good draw!
- Add a note to next year's advertising that new photo IDs can be obtained during regular business hours at the UTS office (currently in TB13) as well as mentioning this fact in the Summer 2008 MURAnews.
- Door Prizes were a great idea. Let's think of some donations for next year. Anne Sinclair will look into the feasibility of offering a coach trip for a couple or two singles as a door prize.
- Could Parking issue parking passes and/or transponders at next year's AGM?
- The wraps were big and we might consider having more sandwiches (smaller than wraps). The desserts could be brought out later after people have had a chance to eat some of the main course (that is "Don't bring out everything all at once at the start."). Overall council prefers more or less the same menu for next year.
- While we discussed different venues for next year such as the Great

Hall of the University Club or the CIBC Hall on the 3rd floor of the student centre, council agreed that we haven't yet grown large enough to require a different hall. We prefer to stay in Convocation Hall for next year.

- Please start thinking about suggestions for next year's speaker.

Joan Morris will write up the AGM procedures for next year's organizer. Again, thank you Joan.

4. Business Arising

(a) Scholarship Endowment Fund (Beth Csordas/Helen Barton): We have no new figures to report. The spring letter encouraging members to donate has not yet gone out as there are staff changes in the advancement office. Jenny Thomson, the new coordinator, needs time to adjust. When the letter does go out, we may ask a few council members and/or general members to help stuff the envelopes.

(b) MURA Cards (Kathy Overholt): Kathy reported that we sold:

32	cards the day before the AGM
133	at the AGM
<u>27</u>	since the AGM
192	Total Sold

As a "thank you", we gave Brian Henley, the AGM 2008 guest speaker, a package of 10 and we mailed (via post) 10 cards to Stephanie Lisak, the artist of the painting on the card's front. Kathy sent one card to the university President. 213 cards are now gone as of June 11/08.

Kathy is sending 5 to the Westdale Library and is attending the June 12 MURA trip and will take cards with her to sell.

We discussed the price of mailing the cards as Kathy discovered it was \$9 to mail 10 cards to the Ottawa area. Since postal rates vary, depending on weight category and region we are sending to, Kathy will come up with a single rate for shipping and handling that will allow us to recover our costs closely but not necessarily exactly.

Kathy had a request from Mark Hayley's office for 300 cards but asking if there would be a discount. The cards regularly sell for \$1.50 each, already a low price.

MOTION

- Joan Parker **motioned** that, since these cards are a fundraiser, we can sell cards to university departments in large quantities as long as we make it clear that the cards are not for resale, but with no quantity discount. As a courtesy, we will consult with Stephanie Lisak first.
- Beth Csordas **seconded** the motion
- **Carried** unanimously

Admin. Details: Pam Penny voluntarily passed her MURA office (GH B108) key on to Kathy Overholt. Pam wasn't using the key much and Kathy needs regular access to the office as the MURA cards are stored there.

For advertising purposes, Helen Barton will send the original graphics file of the card's front to Marianne Van der Wel and Kathy.

(c) Past President and Nominating Committee Chair Positions (Helen Barton): Helen consulted with Joan Morris about these two vacancies. According to our constitution, we need to leave the Past President position vacant. For the nominating committee it is always the Past President or a designate as long as that person is finishing or finished at the end the coming term (2008-2009 in this case). Both Mildred McLaren and Helen Barton would be eligible. Council will decide who will be the nominating committee chair when needed later in the year.

(d) Convocation Dinner: This dinner is June 12, 2008. Geoff Evans and his wife, Val, will attend to represent MURA.

(e) Brian Ives' Memorial Service held May 23 in Convocation Hall: The service, led by Gary Purdy, was well attended. Speakers gave a nice tribute to Brian including our Joan Parker who read the tribute that Veronica Morrison had written.

Engineering is considering setting up a scholarship in Brian's name as well as Veronica Morrison's suggestion of planting a tree with a plaque (that would be \$5000). Engineering is also considering a bench with a plaque (only \$2000). Once Engineering decides how to keep Brian's memory alive, we let our membership know so they can make individual donations if they wish.

5. Correspondence

(a) Errors in Sun Life Health Benefits Compensations: A MURA member had written to MURA that Sun Life had made errors in her health benefits payments. Both Beth Csordas and Helen have noted similar errors. Helen and Beth will let Michele Leroux and Jeff Chuchman know what these errors were to pass onto Sun Life, and Helen will also pass on the details of the member's reported error.

Michele Leroux will write a short article for our next MURAnews to remind our retirees to check their benefit compensations and to describe how each retiree can best determine what benefits apply, using the relevant benefits booklet when applicable.

While discussing the Sun Life errors, Michele Leroux mentioned that Retirement Support Services (RSS) is in the process acquiring a new name. As a result of the re-organization within Human Resources, the RSS department will simply be a unit called "Benefits and Pensions". This does not include the word "retirement" or "retirees" and we voiced our concern!

(b) Thank You E-Mails: Helen Barton sent e-mails thanking Brian Henley, our guest speaker at the 2008 AGM, the Parking Department for providing free parking that day and UTS for making photo IDs on site.

(c) muramembs-1 e-mail list: We sent out an e-notice reminding our retirees about the AGM, two notices announcing the 2009 River Boat

Cruise, and one announcing the Orillia trip.

(d) A printed copy of April-May 2008 MUFA (McMaster University Faculty Association) Newsletter arrived. You can also read it at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa/NewsApril-May08.pdf>

6. President's Report

(a) Committee Vacancies & Changes: What interests you? What do you like doing and what do you not like doing? Please let Helen Barton know, over the summer, if you would like to fill a particular council position or change your current position(s).

(b) Clinical Faculty Pension Surplus Distribution: Helen Barton wrote Peter George (University President) requesting a meeting with Les Robb and herself regarding the Clinical Faculty payout dispute. Peter George declined, stating that he had been advised there was a conflict of interest because of a current Clinical Faculty law suit on a different matter. Peter George did offer alternate administrative people to approach. However, both Les and Helen prefer to not approach the people suggested at this time but will pursue alternate approaches to this problem first.

(c) Volunteer Network: Pam Penny, Joan Parker and Helen Barton met with John Popham's staff from the Alumni Advancement Office the previous week. Instead of launching a full campus wide volunteer network at this time, they have chosen to launch a pilot project basically "to test the waters" and "work out the bugs". The alumni staff is taking care not to have any volunteer positions conflict with union and other paid positions. Positions to be staffed by volunteers will be those that wouldn't exist otherwise and would likely be temporary projects. Suggestions for projects and departments to approach for the initial pilot projects are: United Way, McMaster Christmas Party, Susan Mitchell from Human Resources, the International Student's Office and possibly Humanities. In the case of the International Student's office, international students might need help with English, for example, and students wanting help could then tell this office. We may put a small article in the MURAnews about the pilot projects.

(d) Les Robb's Appointment to a Subcommittee of "the Joint Committee". The "Joint Committee" is a MUFA/University negotiating committee for current, active faculty that has bargaining authority. The subcommittee that Les has been appointed to has the task of investigating indexing & supplementary pensions above the DNA maximum (pensions for faculty members with very high incomes). Les Robb has been appointed as one of two faculty members of the committee. In this capacity, Les can express the interests of both active faculty members as well as of those who have retired. Michele Leroux will likely also be appointed to this committee.

7. Treasurer's Report:

Beth explained the discrepancy between two treasurer's reports, one presented at the May 2008 council meeting and the other at the May 28/08 AGM. There was a \$160 expense incurred at the 2006 Xmas party for which a bill was never sent to us (despite sending reminders), so this amount was written off this year. This reduced our expenses over income amount from \$525.37 to \$367.77.

Credit Union Account Signing Officers: Current signing officers are Helen Barton, Beth Csordas, Brian Ives and Marianne Van der Wel. The credit union added Marianne in error when she presented the bank with the motion in the June 2007 minutes dealing with the last change for signing officers.

MOTION

- Beth Csordas **motioned** that Joan Parker be added to the list of signing officers to replace Brian Ives and that Marianne Van der Wel remain a signing officer. Any two signing officers of the four (Helen Barton, Beth Csordas, Joan Parker, Marianne Van der Wel) can sign to authorise a transaction.
- Kathy Overholt **seconded** the motion
- **Carried** unanimously

8. Information Reports From Committees

(a) **AGM** (vacant) - See section 3 for the review of the 2008 AGM

(b) **Cards** (Helen Dietsche) - Helen Dietsche sent bereavement cards to the families of Audrey Holloway (Hospitality Services) and Shelley Saunders (Anthropology). Since Helen Dietsche is away sailing for the summer, Helen Barton will send out any needed sympathy cards.

Helen Barton relayed the news that Susan Farley, MURA's 2007 book prize recipient, died of Multiple Sclerosis in May of 2008. We noted that she very much enjoyed attending our Xmas party and was pleased to have received our award.

(c) **Constitution** (Chair: Vacant, Joan Morris Consultant) - Helen Barton, Joan Morris and Jeff Chuchman are currently determining the definition of a McMaster 'retiree' and the voting privileges of regular and honorary MURA members. There's no report this month.

(d) **Membership** (Pam Penny) - We have 1819 members, with 10 new retirees in June and 40 coming in July (2008). Details available upon request.

Note that some retirees are not being reported by the university. See the May 14, 2008 minutes for details. Jeff Chuchman, Helen Barton and Pam Penny are also comparing the MURA and Human Resources data bases for errors and omissions.

(e) MURAnews (Joan Parker)

- Allisan Noble, who couldn't be with us at the meeting, has offered to be our MURAnews editor. Allisan, who worked for the Faculty of Science prior to her retirement, has an extensive background in publications. Veronica Morrison has offered to assist Allisan to ensure a smooth transition. Furthermore, Kathy Ryan has offered to assist Allisan in an ongoing supportive role. THANK YOU Allisan, Veronica and Kathy!

- The deadline for the summer MURAnews will be set once the MURAnews committee meets soon with Allisan and Veronica. In terms of distributing the MURAnews, only the July 5 booking deadline for the Orillia Getaway is a concern. Otherwise anytime in July 2008 is good.

- Veronica Morrison, our outgoing editor "extraordinaire", will pass along the articles that are currently ready for the summer 2008 MURAnews.

(f) Nominating (vacant) - No Report

(g) Pension & Benefits (Geoff Evans) - Parking sent retirees who have permits a letter regarding the conversion of parking lots to gated ones. Despite this letter we need more information, especially with regard to the timing when parking lots will be converted. The letter sent indicated a \$20 fee for the transponders but that would be applied only when someone needs a replacement for a lost one or wants an additional one for a second vehicle. Transponders will have to be renewed annually. Presumably, this will be done electronically.

Helen Barton, Helen Dietsche and Geoff Evans have applied for transponders and will, hopefully, be able to tell us more about this process.

- Active faculty have negotiated additional benefits to their package. These benefits will be applied to faculty who retired in 2005, 2006 and 2007, to varying degrees. All other retirees are not affected. Jeff Chuchman will put together a MURAnews article describing the changes in benefits for the affected retirees.

(h) Special Events (Margaret Jenkins) - Because only 22 people signed up for the May 15th Gary Warner dinner at the University Club, this event was postponed to either Monday October 13 or Tuesday October 28. After some discussion, council felt it better to move the venue back to the "The Waterfront Banquet and Conference Centre " (formerly known as the Chamber of Commerce Centre - see: <http://thewaterfrontcentre.com/>) as parking difficulties on campus may keep people from signing up for this event. The dinner tickets are about the same price at both venues. The Waterfront Centre, too, will be a nice location, especially if we book earlier in October rather than later. Margaret will investigate!

- Margaret is planning a September trip to the re-opened McMaster Planetarium to be announced in the summer (June/July) issue of MURAnews.

- Rather than actually plan a "fun" golfing event to be organized by John Harvey, a MURA member and former Nuclear Reactor director, he will

place in article in the Fall MURAnews to gauge interest.

(i) **Trips (Joan Parker)** - Anne Sinclair reported that she is planning a 3 day getaway to the [Stone Gate Inn](#) in Orillia. The main attraction for this trip is the "[Are You Being Served?](#)" production at the Orillia Opera House Theatre, immediately followed by a Steak Barbeque Cruise. Many side excursions will include a visit to the Mariposa Market, Vaughan Shopping Mall with optional visits to Casino Rama. The booking deadline for this trip is July 5/08 . If less than 35-40 people sign up by then, Anne will try to convert this event to a single day trip to see just the theatre production and the Steak Barbeque Cruise.

- Tomorrow, June 12, trip attendees will enjoy a lunch cruise on Hamilton Harbour followed by a trip to Niagara's wineries and market places.

- Other Future trips include:

- The sold out "October 9" trip to Niagara on the Lake and the Shaw Festival to see "An Inspector Calls". Anne is accepting people's names for a waiting list.
- "Oh Canada Eh" on December 2/08.
- "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" on January 2/09.
- "The Brit Show" on February 18/09.
- The Sept.- Oct. 2009 River Boat Cruise in Provence/Burgundy, France. Twenty-eight people have already booked. Anne is organizing an optional, extra 3 day stay in Paris for this trip.

(j) **Xmas Lunch (John McCutcheon)** - John proposed that Thursday December 4, 2008 be set as the date for MURA's Xmas Lunch. He further proposed that the venue be "East Side Mario's" in Dundas since this was a big success last year and this year we will have the whole restaurant (minus the room we used last year as East Side Mario is parting with this room for it to be converted to a "Starbuck's"). Hoping we would agree to the proposed venue, John has already booked the restaurant. Both Pam Penny and John feel strongly that tipping be done only on an individual basis and no baskets will be passed around for this purpose. After some discussion, council agreed to these proposals.

We did wonder about the acoustics in the main restaurant area but Pam indicated the restaurant had a speaker system and John/Pam will investigate. We discussed the idea of background music but most councillors were not in favour of this. Please pass on any further ideas (EG: Entertainment?) or concerns to John and Pam.

Regretfully, John will be somewhere on the high seas on December 4/08 and can't attend.

(k) **Web Site (Vacant):**

Motion

- Helen Dietsche **motioned** that Marianne Van der Wel be appointed webmaster for MURA's public web site
- Margaret Jenkins **seconded** the motion
- **Carried** unanimously

Marianne accepted the position and then requested members, as Brian Ives did, to send in photos and events of interest so she can change

our home page fairly frequently. She also asked council members to consider either becoming her "understudy" (training included) or to recommend someone outside of council for this role. As well, she would like to be able to ask questions, from time to time, from people with more expertise than herself. To that end, please suggest names of people Marianne could contact to develop such a list of volunteer consultants. Chris Bryce, Jim Bryce and Ed McCaffrey were immediately suggested.

9. Information Reports from Liaisons

(a) **University Board of Governors (Vacant):** Joan Parker will attend the June 2008 Board of Governors meeting.

Lorraine Allan is a retired faculty member from Psychology, has already served us on the 2008 nominating committee and had expressed interest in being MURA's observer at the Board of Governors.

Motion

- Joan Morris **motioned** that Lorraine Allan be appointed to represent MURA as an observer at 2008-09 Board of Governor meetings
- Joan Parker **seconded** the motion
- **Carried** unanimously

As our designated observer, Lorraine is welcome to attend all our council meeting but is only asked to attend when there is something to report that affects retirees and cannot be adequately covered in a written report. Also if we have concerns or questions that we would like explained or taken to the board, we may ask Lorraine to attend a council meeting as well.

(b) **Colleges & Universities Retirees Associations of Canada (CURAC)** (Helen Barton / Marianne Van der Wel) - Helen Barton reported that the May 21-23, 2008 CURAC conference in Montreal was very interesting.

Of particular interest were the session on "Pensions & Benefits". These sessions gave a good overview of pensions and benefits across Canada. They mentioned that the federal and many provincial governments (with Quebec leading the way) are becoming increasingly worried about the current trend towards "Defined Contribution Plans" as opposed to the "Defined Benefits Plans" which made up most employer/employee plans in the past. With the "Defined Contribution" plans, the pensions & benefits are not fixed amounts; governments are concerned that future retirees will not have enough resources to retire on. This is a special concern since 20% of the current population are in the senior category which is expected increase to 30% in ten years. Governments (again with Quebec leading the way) are examining legislation to assist employers to make "Direct Benefit" plans easier to administer. For example: Finding ways to smooth out the contributions made by the employer instead of greatly fluctuating amounts. Fortunately for us, university and college pension plans are much healthier than those in the private sector.

Another interesting set of sessions dealt with the mental health of Seniors and explored issues such as depression (quite common amongst

seniors), schizophrenia, bipolar, memory loss and more. One study showed that a positive attitude coupled with the ability to make adjustments and accept change as we age (like decreased mobility) has a huge positive impact on mental health of seniors. Those retiring from a university environment tend to fare better than the average retiree.

Once again, we discovered that McMaste retirees, particularly the salaried ones, tend to fare much better (in pensions, pension indexing and benefits) than retirees from other CURAC member associations.

Prior to the meeting, Marianne had sent out a slideshow of photos she took on the last day of the conference (she was shy the first two days). While in Montreal, she also volunteered to be part of the CURAC communications committee, particularly the web page subcommittee.

See www.curac.ca for more detail on the conference.

(c) **MUFA** (Geoff Evans) - No report

(d) **CAW** (Kathy Overholt) - No Report

(e) **Hourly Staff Liaison** (Rod Phillips) - No Report; Marianne plans to visit Rod, who seems to be doing okay, next week to bring him back issues of council meeting minutes.

10. Other Business

Joan Parker will be submitting information for MURAnews on "Mac Seniors", a fitness program offered by Kinesiology. The cost of the program is \$200 annually and participants must first pass a stress test. Sessions are early in the morning but parking is only about \$3.50 for the entire session. *[After the meeting, we discovered parking is \$3.75 per session.]*

Joan Parker is discussing the possibility of another MURA Mad Lappers Walking series with Athletics & Recreation for either the fall 2008 or Winter 2009. Most seemed to prefer the Fall but that would mean the sessions need to be organized by the time the summer (June/July) issue of MURAnews goes out.

11. Next meeting

Wednesday September 10, 2008 at 1:30PM in the Student Centre, Room TBA

12. Adjournment

John McCutcheon motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:00PM. All were in favour.

After the meeting we continued to chat and to eat/drink!