

**Minutes for COUNCIL MEETING of McMaster University Retirees Association  
Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 1 PM (Zoom)**

**1. Welcome & Regrets**

**Present:** Denise Anderson, Cliff Andrews, Helen Ayre, Helen Barton (chair),  
Brian Beckberger, Barb Carpio, Nora Gaskin, Mary Gault, Nancy Gray,  
Heather Grigg, John Horsman, Hank Jacek, Mahendra Joshi, Michelle  
Jubenville, Mary Law, Betty Ann Levy

**Regrets:** Alison Forler, Kathy Overholt, Debbie Weisensee

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**2.1 Council Meeting March 10, 2021 (for approval)**

**Moved** by Mahendra Joshi, **seconded** by Brian Beckberger

*“that the minutes of March 10, 2021 be approved”*

**Carried.**

**3. Business Arising**

**4. Human Resources Report (Michelle Jubenville for Alison Forler)**

• **Benefit administrative practices**

- The benefits program manager resigned, and since then HR has been making changes in the Total Rewards area. At this point Michelle doesn't have any changes in the communication plan about how retirees will learn about changes in administrative practices, but she will continue to work with them on this and let us know if anything develops.
- The current practice is that any change that will impact coverage a) will be posted on the retiree benefits page, and b) Sun Life normally contacts anyone who had a claim of that type within the past X months to advise them of the change. In the case of the orthotics change, it was 30 months (2 ½ years).
- Such changes are relatively infrequent and are usually industry-wide.
- Active as well as retired employees should check online in their booklet, or call Sun Life to make sure they have up to date information before they incur an expense.

- MURA would like to include a statement in the next *MURAnews* about this. **Action:** Michelle will work with Nancy Vukelich to get some wording for the next *MURAnews* about it.
- **Tuition:** The website has been updated with information for people 65+ in the Eligibility and How to Apply sections. Michelle asks that we go take a look and make sure everything looks good.
- **Next of kin email addresses in death notices:** She is still working on it, and should have something soon.
- **Outstanding issues from Brian:** Retiree who didn't get a T4A & person who had eye surgery that wasn't covered. **Action:** Michelle will follow up on both cases.
- **Retiree email accounts bouncing back:** MURA has had a continuing struggle with 3 or 4 @mcmaster.ca retiree email accounts bouncing back as undeliverable and no longer active. UTS advised that if we wanted to know why this was happening we would have to ask HR. Under which circumstances would a retiree email account be shut down? Michelle believes that would happen only in the case of the death of the retiree. **Action:** Helen will send a couple of names to Michelle and she will look into it.
- Michelle will be the HR rep to MURA Council until further notice, replacing Alison Forler. **Action:** Nora will update the Council lists.

## 5. President's Report (Helen Barton)

### Pension Plan Administrative Expenses

The university administration has given notice that they want to replace the existing 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on pension plan administrative expenses with a policy.

Among the issues involved are:

- 1) Who has the authority to approve the change: MURA believes that, since the MoU is an agreement between the member organizations and the administration, it can be changed only with the formal agreement of those organizations. The administration's current plan is to have the change approved by the Pension Trust Committee (PTC).
- 2) The importance of the member organizations retaining oversight of the pension plan administrative expenses: disposing of the agreement writes the member organizations out of this oversight, in effect changing the constitution of the plan.
- 3) The proposed new policy eliminates the 50% elected retiree requirement in voting for expense changes by PTC, substantially expands the scope of approved expenses, and gives unfettered powers to the administration in some expenditure categories.

The MURA Executive and Brian Beckberger (our rep on PTC) are meeting with Wanda McKenna about this on March 20. Hank and Helen B. are trying to schedule a meeting with the MUFA President and Chair of their pension committee before then, as apparently Roger Couldrey has met with them about this. Other affected employee groups are Unifor, Clinical Faculty, TMG and MUALA.

### **UTS Retiree Services**

Heather, Nora and Helen B. last met with Sue McKinlay of UTS on March 18. A definition of the level of phone and walk-in support for McMaster email to be provided to retirees by the Help Desk is still not finalized. We will share the UTS proposal with Council as soon as it has been written up.

### **Alvin Lee's Memoir – *There Was a Farm in Eden***

We will promote Alvin's book that has been converted to e-book format in the upcoming *MURAnews*, with instructions. We are still trying to get it formally published (e.g. on Amazon) to make it easier for people to acquire and load, and hope to accomplish that in time for *MURAnews*.

### **Archives**

Mary Johnston has picked up two boxes of paper archival material from Marianne Van Der Wel, which were previously thought to have been destroyed during the clear out of Marianne's house. There has been no report from Mary yet on what these materials are.

### **CURAC**

The CURAC President's strategic planning session was held on March 29. Helen B. attended. Most of the discussion was on how the strategic planning exercise should be done, with ideas for the CURAC Board to consider. Nothing concrete was decided. There were many specific suggestions of things CURAC should be doing (e.g. developing a database of member association attributes, having more virtual sessions on specific topics of interest/concern).

John will report on the CURAC strategic planning session on communications that was held on March 22.

### **Phone Buddies**

We do not have a volunteer to coordinate this proposed program, so it has been shelved.

### **Carry-Over Items**

#### **MURA Council Portfolio Roles**

The role of MURAnews Chair has been vacant since Phyllis DeRosa Koetting finished her Council term. This still needs to be filled.

#### **Definition of a Retiree and Retiree Supplemental Benefits**

Still pending. No action since the spring by the University due to pandemic priorities. We have done no follow up to respond to Wanda's offer to meet via Zoom or conference call to discuss it further.

#### **Survey and Strategic Planning**

A final report on the survey results and planning for a strategic planning exercise are still outstanding.

**6. Treasurer’s Report** (Nancy Gray) – written report was circulated

- SEIU sent one of the outstanding cheques, and the other was possibly lost in the mail. The other grants have been received.
- Financial software: When the trial period for FreshBooks was completed, the price went from CAD 15 per month to USD 25. Nancy has now switched to Sage, which will cost CAD 15 per month in perpetuity.

**7. Reports on Special Projects**

**7.1 Academic Awards Endowment** (Barb Carpio)

The new fund now stands at \$10,075 thanks to some new donors. Helen B. and Barb are working with Advancement on a new communication to go out to past donors who have not yet contributed to the new fund.

**7.2 Archives** (Helen B. for Mary Johnston) – we have recovered some material from Marianne Van der Wel, as reported in the President’s report.

**7.3 Fundraising – MURA Cards** (no report)

**8. Information Reports from Committees**

**8.1 AGM** (Mary Gauld)

The AGM is set for Wednesday June 23. Brenda Vrkljan will present, and Mary has asked her for a title, blurb and short abstract to be published in *MURAnews*. We’ll work from the assumption that we’ll do an email registration, and publish some information in the newsletter, but not with as much detail as last time. Mary suggested a copy of Alvin Lee’s memoir as a speaker gift.

**Action:** Helen will ask Advancement if they have any extra copies. Hank will be included in the planning as incoming President. **Action:** Helen B. will ask Heather whether she wants to be involved, so the planning group may be Mary, Helen B., Nora, Heather and Hank.

**8.2 Christmas Lunch** (Mary Gauld)

We have reserved room and caterers for December 7. We will wait until later to publish the date.

**Recent Retirees Lunch online, March 23, 2021**

Twenty-eight recent retirees attended the Recent Retirees Lunch, of 110 invited. All received a restaurant e-gift card. There were many positive comments. The budget was \$1,200, and we spent \$700 for the gift cards and about \$40 in postage. Mary thanked Council members for their help, and several Council members commented that the lunch went well and was an enjoyable and successful event.

### 8.3 Communications (John Horsman)

#### Report on CURAC communications meeting

- Most of the retiree associations have similar issues and concerns about how to keep in contact with their individual members.
- Most have university email access for life except the University of Saskatchewan, who have lost their access to free email and have to pay for the new MS version of email.
- Many organizations have newsletters, not all as substantial as ours, and one is a one-person show.
- Some have web sites, and some don't.
- Similar issues for CURAC itself, i.e. how best to keep in touch with member organizations. CURAC would like feedback from its member organizations. Queens ran a similar member survey to ours, and CURAC would like to have that data shared.

**Action:** John, Barb and Helen B. will talk about information sharing as regards general info and Later Life Learning info. We need to come up with a policy rather than deal with things on an ad hoc basis.

#### 8.3.1 Condolence cards (Barb Carpio)

- No cards sent; 2 passings informally noted
- **Action:** Barb and Kathy should coordinate when either of them learns of a death but HR hasn't notified us about it, and Kathy will be the one who liaises with HR about outstanding notices.
- We do put notices in *MURANews* even if we don't have HR notice.
- Question: Should we give our condolences online when possible, i.e. at the website of a funeral home?
- Suggestion: Forward card through funeral home if no HR next of kin info.
- **Action:** Helen, Barb, Hank, Nora, Kathy will write up a protocol with guidelines on how we will make sure that we have correctly identified someone as one of our members, and how we will facilitate timely condolences, e.g. online at funeral home, forwarding cards through funeral home, etc. We will also work on general guidelines for the Condolence Cards procedure as a whole.
- Hank sent his report from the Spectator death notices to Barb, but she didn't receive it, so he will send it again.

#### 8.3.2 Web site (Nora Gaskin) – no report

### 8.4 Constitution and By-Laws (Brian Beckberger) – no report

**8.5 Membership** (Kathy Overholt) – written report; we are down at least 50 copies for newsletter printing, which will save \$100 in printing and \$45 in postage.

### 8.6 *MURANews* (Helen Ayre)

Info on AGM; publication date May 7

## 8.7 Nominating (Heather Grigg)

### 2021 Nominating Committee Report MURA Council 2021/2022

**Honorary President\*:** Alvin Lee

Executive

Past President (ex officio): Helen Barton

**President (Nominated):** Hank Jacek (One-year term, to 2022)

**Vice President (Nominated):** Susan Birnie (One-year term, to 2022)

Treasurer\*: Nancy Gray

Secretary\*: Nora Gaskin

Councillors

***Nominated for office, two year term until 2023:***

**Betty Ann Levy**

***Nominated for office, three-year terms until 2024:***

**Cliff Andrews**

**Dina LoPresti**

**Kathy Overholt**

**Phil Wood**

*Continuing in office until 2022:*

*Mary Gauld*

*Barb Carpio*

*Continuing in office until 2023:*

*John Horsman*

\*appointed

In accordance with Article 8.01 Section 3 of the MURA Constitution: “Further nominations for the nominated positions will be received by the Secretary of the Association up to seven (7) days prior to the date set for the annual general meeting from nominators who are regular members of the Association together with the verbal or written acceptance of the nominee. Nominations will also be received from regular members at the annual general meeting.”

### **Nominating Committee**

Heather Grigg (Chair)

Pat Fraser

Mary Law

John McKay

Debbie Weisensee

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by Helen Ayre

*“that the Nominating Committee Report for 2021/2022 be accepted”*

**Carried.**

**8.8 Pensions and Benefits** (Brian Beckberger & Mary Law)

Two parking inquiries; two ongoing issues with eye coverage and a T4A

**8.9 Trips & Special Events** (Mary Gauld) – no report

**8.10 Volunteering** (Betty Ann Levy) – no report

**9. Information Reports from Liaisons**

**9.1 University Board of Governors** (Betty Ann Levy) – no report; Board meeting next week

**9.2 Community Engagement Committee** (Betty Ann Levy) – see action item in 8.3 above

**9.3 CURAC** (Helen Barton) – **Action:** We'll send a link to the CURAC spring newsletter to the membership via email.

**9.4 CURAC Later Life Learning Committee** (Barb Carpio) – no report

**9.5 MUFA** (Hank Jacek) – no report

**9.6 Unifor 5555** (Mahendra Joshi) – no report

**9.7 Hourly Staff Liaison** (Cliff Andrews) – no report

**9.8 Hourly Pension Committee** (Cliff Andrews) – no report

**9.9 Salaried Pension Committee** (Brian Beckberger)

Trent is going to join the Ontario University Pension Plan (UPP) on January 1, 2022. Dee Henne and a group in treasury were looking at the cost of McMaster going to UPP, but have decided it's cheaper to run our own pension plan. Brian recommends we look at the 2019/20 Annual Financial Report. There is an unfunded post-retirement pension and non-pension obligation of \$448.4 million. Helen asked Brian to send a link. [<https://financial-affairs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/10/2019-20-Annual-Financial-Report.pdf>]. Pages 15,16, and 17, on Compensation and Benefits, are interesting reading for retirees.

**9.10 Age-Friendly University Committee** (Mary Gauld) – There is no word yet on the upcoming meeting. Mary will keep us posted.

**10. Other Business**

Hank: Death notices in the Spectator that mentioned McMaster in the last month: 5. Mentions that included memorials: 0.

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger at 2:27 pm

*“that the meeting be adjourned”*

**Carried.**