



## McMaster University Retirees Association

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### Minutes for COUNCIL MEETING of McMaster University Retirees Association Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 1 PM (Zoom)

#### 1. Welcome & Regrets

**Present:** Denise Anderson, Helen Barton (chair), Brian Beckberger, Barb Carpio, Alison Forler, Nora Gaskin, Mary Gauld, Nancy Gray, Heather Grigg, John Horsman, Hank Jacek, Mahendra Joshi, Michelle Jubinville, Kathy Overholt

**Regrets:** Cliff Andrews, Helen Ayre, Mary Law, Betty Ann Levy, Debbie Weisensee

Council welcomed Michelle Jubinville, Senior Manager, Payroll, Tax and Data Management – and Alison's boss – to the meeting.

#### 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

##### 2.1 Council Meeting January 13, 2021 (for approval)

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

*"that the minutes of January 13, 2021 be approved"*

**Carried.**

#### 3. Business Arising

#### 4. Human Resources Report (Alison Forler)

- **Pension statements** went out to retirees and deferred pensioners in December and January, for the third time.
- **Notices of retiree deaths:** Alison encouraged Council members to keep sending notices of retiree deaths if we hear of them, with a copy to Kathy Overholt.
  - **Action:** It might be time to check when we last put something in *MURAnews* about what to do for end of life planning re: notifying HR.
  - **Action:** Helen requested that Hank send a list of the McMaster-affiliated people whose obituaries he records to Kathy Overholt once a week.
- **T4A Tax slips** will be coming from CIBC-Mellon in the next month, and T4s from the University for people who retired in the last year. HR will continue to update addresses as they hear about changes. **Action:** The *MURAnews* committee will put this notice on the annual schedule for *MURAnews*.

- **Tuition waivers and tuition assistance:** could the HR web site do a better job of distinguishing between waivers for those under 65 and free tuition for those over 65? Alison commented that the recent question from a retiree uncovered some procedures that need to be straightened out.
- **Administrative practices** re: who can prescribe orthotics, etc.: what constitutes a change in benefits or a change in procedure, and how is that communicated to the insured person, whether a retiree or an employee? There should be some sort of communication, and Michelle and Alison will work with Total Rewards (the HR team responsible for the building out of the policy and overall structure of the pay and benefit programs) to address the issue.

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

### **MURAnews Mailing Opt Outs**

- Some progress. Twenty-eight responses have been received as of today. Goal is 200!

### **UTS Retiree Email Support Service**

- Sue McKinlay, Senior Manager of Client Services UTS, contacted Helen on Feb. 5. UTS would like to review the level of phone and walk-in support for email provided to retirees by the Help Desk. This was last reviewed in 2017. The issue, of course, is to what extent should UTS be expected to help solve software and hardware problems for retirees before “suggesting that the retiree seek alternative assistance from a certified retail outlet” (quote is from the UTS 2017 statement). The new email system, as well as the ever-growing wide array of devices and software used by retirees to access their email, is causing a gap between what UTS thinks they can reasonably provide and the expectation of some retirees.
- UTS will draft a document and contact us to set up a review meeting.
- Heather volunteered to be in the group along with Helen and Nora. **Action:** Ask UTS for stats on how many inquiries from retirees they get, and of what type, and whether they propose differing levels of support for emeritus faculty and all other retirees.

### **UTS Website**

- During this same phone call, Sue stated that UTS is aware that the retiree portion of the new UTS web site needs to be made more visible. The web site is apparently deemed only a basic necessary conversion, not finished. Work will be done as soon as there is time to have a ‘Retirees’ presence on the UTS home page. Apparently many Mac community groups are still missing.
- Until changes are made, retirees either need to know that the link is <https://uts.mcmaster.ca/retiree-services/>, or know to look in the “Staff” section on the home page and follow the arrow to “See Retiree Services”. **Action:** MURA should let retirees know about this as often as practical in *MURAnews*, on our web site, and by emails.
- Heather commented that if the web site were easier for retirees to navigate, they might have fewer questions for the help desk.

### **AROHE Webinars and Trial Membership**

- Helen attended an AROHE Zoom webinar on January 27. It was very interesting to learn about two U.S. university retiree associations - U. Wisconsin (Madison) and Portland State U. One association is mainly faculty, the other a faculty and staff mix. Both are very active associations offering many events and activities – e.g. book clubs, breakfast clubs, speaker series, hiking and bridge groups. Most have continued virtually during COVID. Both have fees to belong, but are also supported by their universities (e.g. one has a part-time office manager paid by the provost).
- Lots of good ideas:
  - a virtual holiday party with visit time, a trivia challenge, wine tasting, and a video performance by their university opera director
  - virtual guided tours of campus venues
  - developed a by-law to deal with situations like the pandemic when normal constitutional procedures cannot be followed, and instituted an annual review of by-laws
- MURA has been given a free trial membership until July 2021. All on MURA Council can participate in webinars as they are offered, and also use all resources of the AROHE web site and organization. It would normally cost MURA \$120 annually to join (I am not recommending this, just noting.) We do receive the AROHE bimonthly newsletter via CURAC free of charge.

### **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.

### **Three-Year Funding Shortfall**

Still a pending item for the new Council/ next year:

- Budgeting to make up for the shortfall of approximately 20% of our budget (\$2,500) due to Unifor's decision to reduce their support, and lack of support from SEIU.
- We will not be spending either the AGM or Christmas lunch budget allocations for the current year. (\$2500 & 375, respectively), so the impact will not be felt until the 2021 – 2022 fiscal year.

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

Still pending. No action since the spring by the University due to pandemic priorities. No follow up has been done by us 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.

### **Council lists**

**Action:** Nora will fill in the blanks, finalize, and send out/post.

## 6. Treasurer's Report (Nancy Gray)

### Financial statements

While Helen and Nancy were reviewing the draft financial statements in January, Helen noticed a classification error. The catering expenses for the AGM had been included in the expenses for the New Retiree Luncheon in error, and vice versa, and a printing expense was moved to the AGM. In addition, the approved contribution of \$5000 to the McMaster MURA Scholarship Fund was not made. It has since been made, and the \$5000 contribution is now reflected as an accrual in the restated financials. The financial statements that will be shared with Sue Speare in May for her audit will now reflect these corrections, and annotations will explain the changes from the documents that were presented at the 2020 AGM. Nancy shared documents that outline these changes.

### Bank accounts

We have closed the Tangerine account, which was tied to Beth Csordas personally. We now have 2 business accounts at ScotiaBank, a no-fee (based on a balance of \$15,000 or above) chequing account and a savings account (with a better interest rate), including an access card, which will allow Helen and Nancy access to the accounts online. The only thing we still can't do is electronic transfers, because of the "any two to sign" nature of the chequing account. Nancy thinks eventually they will start allowing electronic transfers for "any two to sign" accounts, following the lead of other banks like CIBC.

### Updated budget

An updated budget reflecting the reduced funding will be presented at the March meeting.

## 7. Reports on Special Projects

**7.1 Academic Awards Endowment** (Helen Barton) – status hasn't changed since last month by more than about \$50, and a targeted mailing will be sent to people who donated in the past but haven't donated yet this year.

**7.2 Archives** (Mary Johnston) – Council discussed that we would like to look into how to get some online storage for MURA archives; Google, UTS, etc.  
**Action:** ask UTS if they can offer us anything.

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

## 8. Information Reports from Committees

### 8.1 AGM (Mary Gauld)

Date: June 23

#### Actions:

- put an announcement in the next newsletter
- speaker ideas: ask the President if he has a topic of interest to retirees; ask the new Provost, Susan Tighe; ask Brenda Vrkljan if she can do something

longer than the short presentation she will do for the Recent Retiree Luncheon

**8.2 Christmas Lunch** (Mary Gauld)

**Action:** Nora and Helen B. will work with Mary on the list of special guests.

**8.3 Communications** (John Horsman) – no report

**8.3.1 Condolence cards** (Barb Carpio) – no written report

- Verbal report: Barb has sent cards for Peter Pineo, Klaus Schoenfeld, John Browning and Ola Lunyk-Child.
- Heather did not send any cards in January, and will send a list of whom she has sent to, to Barb.
- Mahendra will send information about a death he learned of to Barb.

**8.3.2 Web site** (Nora Gaskin)

- published latest issue of *MURAnews*
- added several news updates
- updated the Constitution with the new Bylaw 3

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

**8.5 Membership** (Kathy Overholt) – no report

**8.6 MURAnews**

- The latest issue was less expensive to print and mail than the last one due to it having fewer pages. **Action:** Helen will send the latest invoice to Nancy.
- It was more work to produce two versions of the newsletter, a longer one for the online version, and a shorter one for the print version. It was very nice to have the freedom to have more content in the online version.

**8.7 Nominating** (Heather Grigg) – It's been less of a challenge this year to get a full committee. Committee members in addition to Heather are: Mary Law, Debbie Weisensee, Pat Fraser and John McKay.

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

In addition to the ongoing issues around administrative practices and tuition assistance clarification, there was one question about claim assignment for dental coverage (i.e. the insurance provider pays the dental office directly, instead of the insured person paying, and then being reimbursed by the insurer). This is a relatively new feature for Sun Life, but retirees won't have access to it since our benefits are "frozen". There was a question about the July \$300 federal government senior benefit, which was given to everyone who was collecting OAS. **Action:** Brian will write, and Nora will post an item in the news section of the website about the benefit being tax-free.

**8.9 Trips & Special Events (Mary Gaud) – Recent retiree lunch**

**Date:** March 23

**Time:** 1:15 for a 1:30 start

**Speaker:** Brenda Vrkljan is interested in being the speaker (10-15 minutes); she does research on older people driving.

**Action:** let Alison Forler know about the date and timing

**8.10 Volunteering (Hank Jacek for Betty Ann Levy)**

Hank talked to Karen McQuigge of the Alumni Association about the interest in volunteering indicated by the MURA member survey, and directed her to his article in *MURAnews* on the topic, along with the ten recommendations on increasing retiree involvement. Karen said she would share the article with Trish Chant Sehl, Director of Volunteer Engagement for the university. Helen recommended that Hank bring Betty Ann into the loop on this. **Actions:** Hank will call Betty Ann. Someone will get in touch with Trish Chant Sehl about volunteer opportunities for retirees.

**9. Information Reports from Liaisons**

**9.1 University Board of Governors (Betty Ann Levy) – no report**

**9.2 Community Engagement Committee (Betty Ann Levy) – no report**

**9.3 CURAC (Helen Barton) –** we received notice that we are up for renewal of membership on Apr 1. There is a \$300 fee, the same as past many years.

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by Heather Grigg

*“that Council authorize the Treasurer to renew MURA’s CURAC membership for 2021-22”*

**Carried.**

CURAC has put out a call for nominations for the CURAC Tribute Awards for an individual or group who have made a significant contribution to either their individual organization or to CURAC itself. Council was invited to submit nominees to Helen by the deadline of March 1, 2021.

**9.4 CURAC Later Life Learning Committee (Barb Carpio)**

There is going to be a meeting of the group. The group is aware of the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal; McMaster is seen as a leader in this area.

**9.5 MUFA (Hank Jacek)**

- Hank got an email from Mara Giannotti, Executive Director of MUFA, who gave him the names of the two people involved in the MUFA benefits sub-committee, Catherine Anderson and Laura Parker, a former MUFA President. Hank talked to Laura, who said that the sub-committee makes recommendations to the MUFA bargaining committee, but that anything they

did would be unlikely to affect retirees, since our benefits are “frozen”. She also pointed out that the university is concerned about the costs of benefits, and that all the different benefits programs are complex and difficult to keep straight, and that there had been an HR review that had mentioned this problem. Going forward the university wants to have much simpler pension and benefits plans, and Laura mentioned a recent HR review that talks about this problem. Going forward they want to have a much simpler plan, but again, this would not affect us. There is something about this review on the HR website at <https://hr-review.mcmaster.ca/>. In order to see some parts of the review you may need to log in with your MAC ID. Hank asked to be included in any future meetings of the MUFA Benefits subcommittee. **Action:** Brian will send Hank a copy of the report on the HR review.

- Regarding changes in benefits administrative practices, Hank discussed the issue with Laura, but did not get the sense that MUFA was very concerned about it. **Action:** Helen wondered if MUFA in general, not just the sub-committee, was hearing from their active members about the issue, and Hank said he would raise it with them again.

**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)**

The sub-committee meeting that was supposed to happen on Monday has been rescheduled to February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**9.10 Age-Friendly University Committee (Mary Gauld) – no report**

## 10. Other Business

Hank reported 9 death notices that mentioned McMaster University in the Spectator since the last meeting, 8 with no funerals, so there would have been only one day where the flag would have been at half-staff. **Action:** Hank will send the names he finds to Barb Carpio and to Kathy Overholt.

**Moved** by Brian Beckberger at 2:43 pm

*“that the meeting be adjourned”*

**Carried.**