



McMaster University Retirees Association

Gilmour Hall Room B108
1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4L8, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23171
mura@mcmaster.ca
www.mcmaster-retirees.ca

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

1. Welcome & Regrets

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

Regrets: Denise Anderson, Alison Forler, Mary Gauld, Debbie Weisensee

Helen again welcomed Michelle Jubinville, Senior Manager, Payroll, Tax and Data Management, McMaster HR, and announced that Mary Gauld would be absent due to the birth of her granddaughter the previous night.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 Council Meeting February 10, 2021 (for approval)

Moved by Brian Beckberger, **seconded** by John Horsman

“that the minutes of February 10, 2021 be approved”

Carried.

3. Business Arising

4. Human Resources Report (Michelle Jubinville for Alison Forler)

- Alison has been off since the last meeting and Michelle attended in her place.
- Brian briefly consulted Michelle on an issue raised by a retiree whose claim for eye care was denied.
- **Benefits Administrative Changes:** Alison brought the issue forward to the responsible manager, but that person is no longer with McMaster and Alison is off, so no update. Michelle will continue to follow up. She thinks the main issue is one of communicating those changes effectively, and she will continue to push for that.
- **Tuition Waivers/Reimbursements:** With the new AwardSpring platform for tuition reimbursements in place, HR needs to clarify on its web site how retirees should proceed if they want to take a course, whether they are 65 and over (tuition waiver) or under 65 (reimbursement). The Organizational Development group has been

asked to put additional information on the web site, and they are going to bring it forward at their next meeting (date unknown). Michelle will try to get further information for us about when the next meeting is.

- **Retiree Deaths:**
 - We minuted at the last meeting that Alison was encouraging MURA Council members to send her any notices of retiree deaths that come to their attention. We think that the best process would be for people to send death notices to Kathy Overholt, who will be the gatekeeper, sending a list every few weeks or once a month to HR of any names that haven't already been received from HR. **Action:** We need to clarify with Barb, Kathy and Hank about sources for death notices and which ones Barb uses for condolence cards. Michelle requested that only one person send death notices to HR, and Helen designated Kathy as that person.
 - When we get a death notification now, we get the next of kin's name, relationship and mailing address. We would like to get both their postal address and email address, to facilitate communication with spousal survivors (*MURAnews*, etc.). **Action:** Michelle will investigate and find out if this is possible, and if it can be cleared through privacy.
- **March 23 Recent Retiree Event:** We need updated HR handout & one or two HR people to attend. HR is in the process of finding someone to attend, and they will update the handout if necessary.
- **HR Realignment:** HR is doing some realignment of their teams and work. The pension team reports to Alison, but will start reporting to the Total Rewards Group to work under Kerri Walsh. Further down the road they will determine who should be the proper resource for MURA, and that person will start attending our meetings.
- **HR Review Report:** Brian was no longer authorized to look at the HR review report document he promised Hank, so had to go into his archives, and sent a copy of the report on Feb. 10.

5. President's Report (Helen Barton)

Appointment of Secretary and Treasurer for 2021 – 2022

- These positions are annual Council appointments.
- Nancy Gray is willing to continue as Treasurer for 2021 – 2022
- Nora Gaskin is willing to continue as Secretary for 2021 – 2022

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

“that Nancy Gray be appointed as Treasurer and Nora Gaskin be appointed as Secretary for the 2021-22 year”

Carried.

Phone Buddies

Helen wrote to Council on March asking for comments on a draft communication to members, which would announce a phone buddies matching service for our members. All responses to date have been positive. One suggestion received: use wording

“physical distancing” instead of “social distancing”. Asking for Council’s approval today. If approved, we need a volunteer to coordinate the connections between participants to be able to move ahead on this.

UTS Retiree Services

- Heather, Nora and Helen met with Sue McKinlay of UTS on March 4.
- Discussed level of phone and walk-in support for email provided to retirees by the Help Desk - 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 elsewhere. Still not resolved. We meet again on March 18.
- Also discussed: consultation with MURA *before* changes are made; inclusion of a “tech kit” in retirement packages, coordinated via HR; checking status of McMaster email accounts that have not been used for a long time; better communication to retirees on what happens to Mac email account upon death of retiree.
- Making retiree portion of UTS website more visible is still not done.

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

- Alvin’s book has been converted to e-book format (.mobi file), and we have permission to distribute to MURA members and friends. There are accompanying instructions for loading it onto a Kindle or Kobo reader, or into a Kindle app, but they are fairly complex.
- Having the e-book formally published would make it easier for people to acquire and load. My understanding is that it is possible to self-publish an e-book for free (e.g. on Amazon).
- Can we find a retiree who is knowledgeable in this area and get this accomplished?
- **Action:** Heather will contact someone at the Campus Store or the Library to see if there’s someone there who could help.

MURAnews Mailing Opt Outs

- Total to date is 35. A long way from the goal of 200! Helen will continue to beg and plead in the next *MURAnews*.
- Council discussed ways of making sure that new retirees all get their *MURAnews* via email. The current practice is that we send all new retirees an email with a copy of the latest *MURAnews*, requesting that they let us know what email address they want us to use for them. Generally about 2/3 of recipients respond and 1/3 don’t. We then send that 1/3 a paper copy of the email via postal mail. Some staff, especially hourly staff, have never used their McMaster email accounts.
- **Action:** We will look back over the past year’s new retirees to see how many people fall into the “no known email” category. How do we make sure they know that if we don’t have a valid email address for them, they won’t hear from us or get a copy of *MURAnews*?

Archives

Have been communicating with Marianne Van Der Wel at Mary Johnston’s suggestion, to try to get the MURA paper archival materials Marianne had at her house for scanning back into the MURA office. The paper materials she had no

longer exist - during Marianne's recent serious health crises, her home was cleared out by others. According to Marianne, however, she had scanned and sent electronic copies of all materials she had to us, and I believe Nora has mounted all of it on the website. We also have at least one copy of the old web site, which contains everything else Marianne had.

CURAC

We received a notice for nomination of Directors and Officers of CURAC for the coming year. Is anyone interested in getting involved?

CURAC is working on strategic planning. We will be participating in a Zoom session on communication issues on March 22 (Heather, and possibly John) and a Presidents session on broad strategic issues on March 29 (me).

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.

Retirement Ready Workshops

Helen thanked Hank and Mahendra for doing the presentations at the February HR Retirement Ready Workshops.

6. Treasurer's Report (Nancy Gray)

- A financial report was circulated covering the 10 months up to the end of February. Have received grant money from MUFA; 2 other grants, from Unifor and the Presidents Office, will come this month.
- All books have been moved to FreshBooks. **Action:** Nancy will share the passwords with the appropriate people.
- Everything has been straightened out with the bank, moving money from savings to chequing to keep fee-free status.
- Expect a surplus of \$4432 for the current year, due to the pandemic reducing our expenses. We hope by Christmas we can do some things in person, so holiday lunch is listed as virtual or in person. Should still have a small surplus for 21/22; after that we're not sure. The \$500 for AGM includes door prizes and speaker gift.
- SEIU has not paid for last year or this year, and have not responded to any of our emails.

7. Reports on Special Projects

7.1 Academic Awards Endowment (Barb Carpio)

Barb has sent out 27 thank you cards to donors. There is \$9,950 in the fund so far. Our target is \$25,000 to make the fund self-sustaining.

7.2 Archives (Mary Johnston) – no report

7.3 Fundraising – MURA Cards – no report

8. Information Reports from Committees

8.1 AGM (Helen Barton for Mary Gauld)

June 23 date is set. **Action:** We will ask Brenda Vrkljan to make the presentation, since late June is always a very busy time for the President's Office.

8.2 Christmas Lunch (Helen Barton for Mary Gauld) – we have a date; nothing else for now

8.3 Communications (John Horsman) – no report

8.3.1 Condolence cards (Barb Carpio) – written report

8.3.2 Web site (Nora Gaskin) – News items added that correspond to selected MURA distribution list emails.

8.4 Constitution and By-Laws (Brian Beckberger)

Brian is still thinking about whether we need to change the Constitution to accommodate the COVID situation.

8.5 Membership (Kathy Overholt) – written report

Current membership is 2,545 and we are making small inroads on postal mailings.

8.6 MURAnews

- We still don't have a Chair.
- Because the AGM isn't until June 23 and Council is April 14, we will have a deadline for submissions of Friday April 23, and go to printing around the end of April, with postal copies being mailed around May 6.
- The submissions to Members Corner have been varied and interesting, and hopefully there will be news about Alvin Lee's book.

8.7 Nominating (Heather Grigg)

The committee has been working and are still trying to fill one or two spots. Cliff Andrews and Kathy Overholt have agreed to be nominated for a second term; Susan Birnie will stand for Council and has agreed to serve as Vice President,

and Hank will serve as President. Barb Carpio, Mary Gauld and Debbie Weisensee are continuing in office until 2022 and John Horsman until 2023. There were a couple of people who had commitments this year, but who were willing to be considered for next year. Will finalize at the April meeting.

8.8 Pensions and Benefits (Brian Beckberger & Mary Law)

We received one question about eye coverage and one about income tax slips.

8.9 Trips & Special Events (Helen Barton for Mary Gauld)

Recent Retirees Luncheon

- We have received 24 responses out of about 100 invitations sent; almost all via email, but have also brought in a few new email addresses from the postal mailing.
- MURA will present; HR people will be there to answer questions, and provide a handout about the changes in benefits from active employee to retired. Will start the event with Brenda Vrkljan as the speaker, then the MURA presentation, with the goal of keeping the event to one hour in length.
- Nora, Heather, Helen will get together to plan the MURA presentation.
- Have sent one reminder, and will send one more, with an explicit direction to sign up to get the link and the free lunch. Then on the morning of, we will send the link to everyone, even those who did not RSVP.

8.10 Volunteering (Betty Ann Levy)

- Betty Ann wants pass on the Volunteering Chair position.
- Hank believes that to have a university volunteer program, you have to find a willing partner in the University administration. He talked to the Director of Alumni Advancement, and has left message with the Director of University Engagement, who, he was told, is the person to talk to about volunteering. He hasn't heard back.
- **Action:** Hank will keep trying to get in touch with the Director of University Engagement. Helen requested that Hank and Betty Ann keep working on this until there is a new Council.
- Helen thanked Betty Ann for all her work in this portfolio.

9. Information Reports from Liaisons

9.1 University Board of Governors (Betty Ann Levy) – written report

- It was very much a report on financial matters and lasted eight hours. Betty Ann learned a lot about the complexities of divestment and going green, which our current President is committed to. Our investments and pension are very well handled.
- Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) is a rating scale for fund managers, an evolving standard that “refers to the three central factors in measuring the sustainability and societal impact of an investment in a company or business. Analysis of these criteria [is] thought by some to help to better determine the future financial performance of companies.”

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

9.3 CURAC (Helen Barton)

- Call for nominations for the executive and board of CURAC
- There are two CURAC strategic planning sessions meetings coming up, one for communication issues (Heather and John will attend) and one for association presidents on strategic planning (Helen will attend).

9.4 CURAC Later Life Learning Committee (Barb Carpio)

The group is trying to coordinate everything that is going on at a national level, and streamline it so people can easily find out what is going on across the country. Barb would like to have one link that would gather it all together.

9.5 MUFA (Hank Jacek)

Action: Hank has to get back to the Executive Director, Mara, to see if she's heard back from MUFA members about benefits administrative practices.

9.6 Unifor 5555 (Mahendra Joshi)

Action: Helen and Mahendra will talk about setting up a meeting with Beth Couchman, and whether there's anything in particular they should be discussing.

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)

There was a meeting of the working group on Mar 1 and the final report is due to come out soon. PTC is supposed to be meeting on the 25th.

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

10. Other Business

Hank: Death notices in the Spectator that mentioned McMaster in the last month: 5.
Mentions that included memorials: 3.

Moved by Brian Beckberger at 2:32 pm

“that the meeting be adjourned”

Carried.