

# Canadian Astronomical Society Société Canadienne d'Astronomie

## Meeting of the Board of Directors via videoconference

Minutes for Sept. 15, 2020

### Present:

Sara Ellison (President)  
Samar Safi-Harb (Vice President)  
Judith Irwin (Secretary)  
Lewis Knee (Treasurer)  
Laura Parker (Director)  
Etienne Artigau (Director)  
Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo (Director)  
Ivana Damjanov (Director)

Absent: Rob Thacker (Past President)

### 1. Adoption of Agenda

Approved

### 2. Approval of previous minutes

June Board meeting minutes: Moved by Samar, seconded by Laura. Passed.

July meeting with the CASCA2021 LOC: Moved by Laura, seconded by Etienne. Passed.

### 3. President's update

#### *NDRIO Researcher Council nominations/membership*

This is the "National Digital Research Infrastructure Organization". CASCA is an associate member. Catherine Lovekin, who is currently the chair of the Computation and Data Committee of CASCA, has been nominated to serve on the Researcher Council and we should know the results in about a week. Catherine will be attending the virtual AGM of NDRIO next week. As associate member, CASCA can have two formal points of contact which are Catherine and the CASCA president.

***LRP schedule update***

A full written report should be available in November of this year and the final report should be available by the end of the year.

***Coalition update***

The coalition members are Sara (CASCA president), Don Brooks, Guy Nelson (Industry rep), and the lobbyist, Duncan Raynor.

The most recent coalition activity has been to prepare an annual document (2000 words max) which was a pre-budget submission, carried out in August. This is a statement about funding priorities; the funding itself would be requested at a later date. There are three priorities (unranked here and also unranked in the submission):

1. the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)
2. the Square Kilometre Array (SKA)
3. the Cosmological Advanced Survey Telescope for Optical and ultraviolet Research (CASTOR)

The SKA is urgent when it comes to timescale. Canada needs to step up on an international scale with the SKA which is rapidly ramping up. CASTOR could have great appeal amongst the government and nation. There has been much discussion about how to strategize. Note that the money comes through different channels, i.e. the Canadian Space Agency would be involved for CASTOR which is significantly more expensive.

***CASCA members attending the AAS winter meeting***

We have been contacted by the American Astronomical Society (AAS) to see whether CASCA members would be interested in joining the January AAS virtual meeting at a reduced rate. Any CASCA members (that are not AAS members) who wish to take part will receive a code from our administrator to be applied at registration.

***Status of the Sustainability Committee***

We had agreed to review the Sustainability Committee after one year to see whether it should move to the status of a regular CASCA committee. However, since the membership was not established until January, 2020 and the committee almost immediately had to deal with the 2020 online AGM, the CASCA Board will postpone this review until the May 2021 Board meeting.

***Replacement Board/CITA Council member***

One of our Directors, Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo will be taking a one year maternity leave beginning January, 2021. The CASCA board will appoint a 1-year replacement director for her. Julie's original term was for 3 years, so her term will end after 4 calendar years and the replacement director will serve one year.

Cynthia Chang has agreed to replace Julie on the CITA Council

## **5. Vice President's Update**

A written update on progress towards the online 2021 CASCA AGM was tabled by Dennis Crabtree. He is looking into a variety of platforms and leaning towards Whova which is user-friendly. The cost of iposters, however, is high (a total cost of approximately \$11K) compared to the general costs of a virtual meeting. Such costs must be covered by the registration fees. Note that iposters were well received by participants of the 2020 virtual meeting, according to exit surveys. CASCA could help with upfront costs via a loan to be paid back after registration fees are collected. However, the Board has asked for alternatives to be explored that might lower the costs. Suggestions as to who should be on the Online Organizing Committee (OOC) as well as the Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC). Once this is settled, the OOC also needs to look into who can host the meeting. These people should all be CASCA members.

Proposed AGM dates are May 10 - 14 2021.

## **6. Secretary's update**

Thirty people who were in arrears with their dues payments for more than two years have been informed that their memberships have lapsed and were referred to the CASCA bylaws as to how to be reinstated, should they wish to become members again. The 2020-21 membership drive needs to start this Fall. Given some of the newer demands on peoples' time, a start date of the end of October was suggested (possibly mid-October) with fees to be at the same level as last year. The fees will go up at the end of the calendar year.

## **7. Treasurer's update**

The annual audit is underway. Investments continue to recover and have gained \$20K in the last two months alone.

## **8. Indigenous Astronomy course**

Consistent with the Long Range Plan, the Equity and Inclusivity Committee (EIC) has endorsed the concept of a course to be offered by Hilding Neilson that focusses on understanding indigenous issues in relation to astronomical observatories. The title is "Astronomy and Colonization in Canada". The Board is in favour of this initiative. The only concerns expressed were that the proposal suggested a relatively small enrollment and that CASCA may be expanding its mandate to include courses that have traditionally fallen into the realm of universities. The course is not actually being offered by CASCA, but should be seen as a pilot project that CASCA can help move ahead, with a small honorarium (\$1K from CASCA and \$1K from the Dunlap Institute). Laura moves and Etienne seconds that the course be supported in this way. Passed.

## **9. Climate survey report**

In the year, 2017, a survey was sent to CASCA members to ask how they felt about the current 'climate' in the community. The purpose of the survey was to inform CASCA policy. A number of questions were asked about their experiences regarding fairness, respect, harassment, equity, etc. Etienne Artigau (Board member on the EIC) presented the results.

There were 152 people who responded, with a higher fraction of women than men. 75% of women and 25% of men indicated that they had experienced a negative incident related to their astronomical careers. Of the sexist or racist remarks experienced, there was very little from supervisors, but there was some from either superiors at the same institution who were not supervisors or from people from other institutions. Regarding the latter, most of these incidents occurred at conferences or meetings. It highlights the need to be more proactive at the AGM and provide guidelines for conferences organized locally. Most people did not know how to report or to whom at a CASCA meeting. 90% indicated that CASCA's efforts to improve equity should continue.

It is clear that CASCA needs to put its efforts into ensuring that all its meetings, whether in-person or virtual, be a safe place and free of harassment, racist or sexist remarks in any way. A good place to start is a simple comment to an 'offender' who may not realize that he or she is being offensive. A code of conduct must be stressed at these meetings, as well as a clear procedure and person or persons who could be contacted if a negative event occurs that cannot be handled easily or comfortably. CASCA recommends that these new procedures be incorporated immediately, starting at the virtual 2021 AGM"

## **10. Any other Business**

The Board is aware of the financial issues facing the JCMT at this time. Currently, Christine Wilson is acting to try to rectify the situation.

## **11. Adjourn**

Moved by Samar and seconded by Lewis. Passed.