

# Canadian Astronomical Society Société Canadienne d'Astronomie

## 53<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) via videoconference

Minutes for May. 20, 2022, 14:45 - 16:30 EDT

**Present: Board Members:**

**Rob Thacker (Acting President)**  
**Erik Rosolowsky (Acting Vice President)**  
**Judith Irwin (Secretary)**  
**Lewis Knee (Treasurer)**  
**Laura Parker (Director)**  
**Étienne Artigau (Director)**  
**Ivana Damjanov (Director)**  
**Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo (Director)**

The meeting was called to order at 15:00, slightly delayed because some people did not find the zoom link right away. At 15:04, there were 121 people at the meeting.

### **1) Adoption of agenda [Thacker]**

Motion to adopt the agenda was made by Brenda Matthews and seconded by Greg Sivakoff. Passed. None against.

### **2) Adoption of minutes of Previous meetings [Irwin]**

Minutes of the 2021 AGM were posted last year on the CASCA website. In addition, a link was sent around to the membership in advance of this meeting, namely [https://casca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AGM\\_minutes\\_may13\\_21\\_draft.pdf](https://casca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AGM_minutes_may13_21_draft.pdf). One sentence was clearly spurious and was removed. The corrected version of the minutes was then circulated amongst all CASCA members via the exploder this morning.

Moved by James Taylor and seconded by Gene Milone to adopt the minutes of the 2021 AGM. Passed with 78 for and none against.

### **3) Nominations to the Nominating Committee [Thacker]**

Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo presented two names: Kristine Spekkens and Alan McConnachie, who are willing to be on the Nominations Committee for the next year. As there were not other names put forward from the floor, these individuals were acclaimed.

### **4) Acting President's Report [Thacker]**

The past pandemic year has been difficult because of Covid, with people struggling to cover many CASCA positions. Thank you for your compassion in all of this. CASCA has only 1/2 of a

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staff position to assist with the duties that it carries out. By contrast the American Astronomical Society (AAS) has over 30 staff. CASCA now has 112 committee positions across 13 committees, excluding the Graduate Students Committee (GSC). If we count post-doctoral fellows plus faculty, we have a 37% committee participation in CASCA. In the AAS, by contrast, there are 271 positions, but 4000 full members, or a 7% committee participation. This helps to show the demands being put on CASCA members and suggests that we should not, if possible, form any new committees. Rob is concerned about the diffusion of energy and the possibility of committee burn-out.

The President also presented concerns about the reality of the extent of CASCA's authority. CASCA exists as a not-for-profit corporation run by its members. As such its authority is limited, particularly around the Long-Range Plan (LRP). Because the LRP is commissioned by CASCA and makes recommendations outside of its true authority, there is no enforcement behind the recommendations. Consequently the LRP is ultimately an aspirational document (except for those recommendations around Society operations). This is particularly relevant to recommendations around common deadlines for university applications, etc. Similarly CASCA's authority to negotiate is limited to the remit of its internal operations. As a corporation ultimately authority comes back to the Board, and in many cases the President. All members were encouraged to read the letters patent of the Society ([https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=358](https://casca.ca/?page_id=358)).

As a matter of personal experience, the President expressed support for including early researchers on the Board. The Society is now following the proper nomination process but canvassing for nominations from the membership. Ordinary members in good standing can be nominated for the Board. While the Nominating Committee has often had to find candidates, it is not a gate-keeping committee.

A short discussion of societal conflict over the previous year was presented. The President called attention to the fact that Ms. Bridget Brownlow had given a considerable amount of her time to the Society and that this should be appreciated by members. Discussions about adding an Indigenous-led conflict resolution process are going to be had soon. Thanks were expressed to the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre for the offer. Board training recommendations, as outlined in #1 and #46, have been implemented. A contract to provide training to 10 Board members is now in place. This will be provided by a division of the First Nations University of Canada (<http://www.funiv.ca>) and they are prepared to tailor the curriculum as needed, a request has been made to provide additional details on UNDRIP.

President's Indigenous Advisory Circle: Rob is currently working with the LRP Community Recommendations Implementation Committee (LCRIC) to review terms of reference for this circle. Thanks go to Melissa Labrador, Raymond Seqell, and Jarvis Googoo for providing advice around it.

Thank you to the Coalition for Canadian Astronomy (CCA) which has been strongly focussed on the Square Kilometre Array (SKA). We have had multiple positive meetings with the government. There was no mention of the SKA in the 2022 budget, but that was expected. The overall view is that the SKA lobbying has been very effective. Immense thanks to Kristine Spekkens for supporting coalition activities.

International Astronomical Union (IAU): The President participated in the online business meetings in 2021 as well as provided feedback to the government on the annual assessment of dues. The National Outreach Coordinator position moved to Steven Pellarin, with thanks to Sharon Morsink.

The President finished his report with a short but emphatic reiteration of the threat that satellite constellations present to the research conducted by our community. The situation is not evolving in a consultative or collegial way. We've already moved to mitigation rather than elimination, and the public is a valuable tool in helping to create awareness around how satellites can actually be

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made darker.

Thank you to the CASCA Board, to our administrator, Jessica Marsano, and to our webmaster, Don Hutton. Thank you to the Waterloo Local Organizing Committee, and to Kristi Webb.

## **5) Secretary's Report [Irwin]**

The Secretary's Report is posted on the CASCA website (see [https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=2177](https://casca.ca/?page_id=2177)). This is the first time that our membership has exceeded 600 members. There are still 80 people who are one-year in arrears. Nineteen people are on the two-years in arrears list and are to be removed from membership in CASCA.

Moved by Rob Thacker and seconded by Erik Rosolowsky to remove from CASCA membership, those individuals who are 2 years in arrears. 81 votes for, 4 votes against, and 20 abstentions. Passed.

Werner Israel passed away on May 18, 2022. Rob Thacker provided a few words of tribute and one minute of silence was kept in his memory.

## **6) Treasurer's Report [Knee]**

The Treasurer's Report is posted on the CASCA website at [https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=2177](https://casca.ca/?page_id=2177).

The finances are generally healthy. There was an unexpected return of funds from the last AGM as well as an increase from fees due to an increase in membership. Also there were no Westar lectures or AGM travel expenses. Our administrator, Jessica Marsano, signed another two-year contract in January of 2022 with a 2.5% raise.

The Board decided not to increase dues this year. Members can also lock in rates with a 5-year membership option. Eleven members donated a total of \$6.1 K this year to CASCA Trust.

Please see the cash flow chart in posted report.

Our investments manager is Scott Miller at ScotiaMcLeod and Lewis meets with him normally twice a year, most recently in Dec., 2021. Lewis has had discussions with the investment manager regarding ethical investments, but the manager was reluctant to make any immediate major changes. The Board has resolved to divest of oil and gas over a two-year period. Currently, about 6% of our portfolio is in the energy sector whereas it was 8% two years ago. Further discussions with ScotiaMcLeod will take place about this issue to develop a plan.

## **7) Motion to reappoint CASCA Auditor [Knee]**

Our current auditor is Wilkinson & Company LLC, 785 Midpark Drive, Suite 201, Kingston ON, K7M 7G3. We have a good relationship with them and they are quite familiar with our accounts.

Moved by Lewis and seconded by Doug Johnstone to reappoint Wilkinson & Company as our auditors.

There was some discussion at this point as to whether we could afford to hire someone to coordinate our Education and Public Outreach (EPO) efforts. An investment of \$30K/yr could be a challenge for our society, but perhaps there are ways of doing a job-share with larger institutions.

The motion passed with 89 for and none against.

## **8) Committee Reports [Rosolowsky]**

Erik presented the committee reports. We are now having open calls for committee members, asking for volunteers. These appointments are still subject to Board approval.

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Please see the CASCA web page at [https://casca.ca/?page\\_id=59](https://casca.ca/?page_id=59) for the committee reports.

## **9) Announcement of Results of Elections [Irwin]**

Judith announced that the winners of the Director positions are: Renee Hložek and Karun Thanjavur.

Lewis Knee was the scrutineer and agrees with this result. Congratulations to the newly elected directors.

[The new Acting President, Chris Wilson, took over the chairing of the meeting at this point.]

## **10) Future CASCA Meetings – rotating virtual and in-person [Matzner]**

Chris Matzner, Chair of the Sustainability Committee, spoke in favour of moving to alternating virtual/in-person meetings, thereby reducing our carbon footprint. There was extensive discussion of this concept amongst members. There had also been discussion on the whova platform through the AGM.

Moved by Chris Matzner and seconded by James Taylor to hold AGMs alternating between virtual meetings and in-person meetings preferably with a hybrid component.

Further discussion ensued. It was noted that the Bylaws would have to be amended to enact this change. It was also noted that students may not know how to vote on the issue because some had not yet experienced a hybrid model or even in-person meeting because of the pandemic. Many points were made both pro and con.

A friendly amendment was proposed by Gretchen Harris to make this an issue for the Board to closely examine, rather than deciding on the issue right now. Both the mover and seconder agreed with the amendment. The amended motion is:

The Board is to look into the option of alternating in-person AGMs with virtual (or virtual/hybrid), year-by-year.

Out of 107 respondents, 87 said yes. The motion passes.

## **11) Other Business**

Expressions of thanks go to the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), whose members are:

Will Percival (LOC Chair)

Alexa Villaume (Postdoctoral Fellow representative)

Carter Rhea (Graduate Student Workshop representative)

James Taylor (SOC Chair)

Kristi Webb (Graduate Student representative)

Lindsay Sine (Administrative Assistant)

Michael Balogh

Expressions of thanks go to the Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC), whose members are:

James Taylor (Waterloo Centre for Astrophysics/University of Waterloo) (SOC Chair)

Arif Babul (University of Victoria)

Nassim Bozorgnia (York University)

Ivana Damjanov (St Mary's University)

David Lafrenière (Institute for Research on Exoplanets/Université de Montréal)

Allison Man (University of British Columbia)

Laurie Rousseau-Nepton (Canada-France Hawaii Telescope)

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Aaron Sigut (Western University)  
Suresh Sivanandam (Dunlap Institute/University of Toronto)  
Amy Steele (McGill University)  
Johannes Zabl (St Mary's University)

Announcement of the winners of student talks and posters:

Blake Ledger, co-chair of the Graduate Students Committee, announced the winners as judged by the graduate students:

Best Posters: Rebecca Booth and Mayukh Bagchi

Best Talks: 1st: Jeremy Karam, 2nd Nicholas Vieira

Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo, Director on the Board, announced the winners as judged by the Board:

Best Posters: Rebecca Booth and William Thompson

Best talk: Delica Leboe-McGowan

Note that there were over 100 posters. Congratulations to all winners!

## **12) CASCA 2023 Invitation [Kothes]**

Roland Kothes invited everyone to the 2023 AGM in Penticton, BC. The meeting will be from June 12 -15 at the Penticton Lakeside Resort and Conference Center. Dennis Crabtree shared a photograph of Penticton from 1913. Important note – Penticton has the highest microbrewery density in Canada!

## **13) Adjournment**

Moved by Erik Rosolowsky and seconded by Rob Thacker to adjourn. Passed.

The meeting ended around 17:00.