

# Minutes

## ***RASC Victoria Center Council***

**April 1, 2009 7:30pm – 9:00pm**

Astronomy Lounge, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Elliott Bldg, University of Victoria

Attendees: John McDonald, Moe Raven, Li-Ann Skibo, Sherry Buttnor, Joe Carr, Lauri Roche, David Lee, Bruno Quenneville, Charles Banville, Colin Scarfe, Nelson Walker, Malcolm Scrimger, Sid Sidhu, Jim Hesser, Mike Croteau, Scott Mair

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### **1. Review Agenda**

Reviewed and approved.

### **2. Review Minutes from Feb 4, 2008 (5 min) – John McDonald**

Approved with note by Jim Hesser that details of the star party budget be circulated among council so that fee increases and “break even point” can be seen. (Action item – Nelson Walker)

### **3. Check-in Reports (2 min each) –**

President John McDonald reported that the Gaming Commission money has been received.

Vice President – nothing to report

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Sherry Buttnor reported that volunteering is going well, the Bay Center booth went well, and asked Jim to pass on our thanks to the observatory staff.

Treasurer – included in financial report

Secretary – nothing to report

Past President – “no news”

Librarian – nothing to report

School Telescopes - Sid Sidhu reported, “everything is good.”

Skynews Editor – Scott Mair reported that the new Skynews featured a centerfold, an Astronomy Day poster, and thanked Joe for his help.

Webmaster – Joe Carr reported that all is fine with the website and the email list.

National Rep – Chris Gainor was away. John McD reported that “National decided to go with the Toronto proposal re the life members – that they are working on a draft proposal, that money will still have to be sent out, proportionally, that we have twenty-one life members, and that the Centres will get lump sums.

National Education – part of school

New Members – Bruno Quenneville reported that since January, we have thirteen new members, and that we are “still hovering around the same total number with losses.”

Members-at-Large – Malcom Scrimger reported on a “Ham Radio initiative” with IYA. Nine operators were active. He received three reports. One of the operators “made 1518 contacts.” A copy of Malcolm’s report is available upon request.

#### 4. **Financial Report** (5 min)

- a. Financial Report – Li-Ann Skibo reported that we have \$39,995.05 in the gaming account and \$3365.10 in the member account. Sid noted that “public education comes from the gaming account.”

#### 5. **Committees & Projects** (5 min each except where noted)

- a. BC Gaming Commission grant – Sid Sidhu reported, “We got funding to spend on public education.” Jim H. noted that this was “no surprise as the proposal was very well written.” (Following this, a lengthy discussion ensued about spending plans and the proportions of money which was to be spent on each of the two categories of expenditures: public education, and observatory equipment ... there appeared to be some disagreement as to the respective amounts ... later the evening of April 1, Sid emailed to council members a copy of the Gaming Commission approval of our application for funds, which states that the funds are allocated \$14,000 for public outreach, and \$26,000 for “Universal Access to the Universe” (observatory equipment))
  - i. Spending plans – Project 1 – Sid noted, and had sent council proposals, showing that approx. \$13,000 had been identified thus far as Public Outreach projects (see Exhibit 1). Various members brought up items related to public outreach: Bruno has a “good quality wireless microphone.” It was asked if we were going to print the light pollution cards designed by Dorothy Paul. A data projector could be used for Astronomy Café. Lauri needs \$150 for various expenses (posters, displays) Sid will add \$500 for miscellaneous expenses to his list of estimated expenditures. Sid pointed out that the primary purpose of the expenditure has to be public outreach ... if it’s just for our own use, it can’t go in this category ... i.e. if Sid buys a new projector, the Café gets an old one ... it was commented that the Café is an outreach event. Sid: “there may be more items.”

(Motion by Joe Carr) Moved that we approve \$13,440 for public outreach expenditures as outlined on Exhibit 1. Seconded by Li-Ann Skibo, who moved to increase the amount to \$13,500. The motion to amend was seconded by Sid. The motion to approve the amount of \$13,500 was carried.) It was agreed that the \$500 remaining was “for contingency.”

- ii. Spending plans – Project 2 – John McDonald noted that the “wish list” shown in Exhibit 2 totals \$30,900 and that the maximum that could be spent in this category is \$40,000 less the \$13,500 approved above, or \$26,500. There was a discussion of what we “need to purchase.” Items fitting this category were 1) internet access if the DAO does not help us out (~ \$1800), 2) VCO additions (Bruno can hold \$2700 for now), 3) high priority in equipment: the hyperstar unit, and the refractor (the rest can be held for now) \$22,000 is what “we are left with, and for \$22,000 we can use remotely (John, Joe, Bruno) The hyperstar turns the 14” F10 into an F2 instrument (John). Sid: “is there an alternative to hyperstar?” With hyperstar and a camera, we can “stream live on our website.” (Bruno) But the 14” will be primarily a visual instrument. (Bruno, John, Joe)

Tech committee comments: On-line video is simple (David Lee). Committee considered larger scope, but was out of the question as it would have been \$15K minimum to start with a 12” RC (Bruno). The hyperstar will be dedicated to the 14” scope. It was asked how much time would be available for visual use of the 14”. Bruno suggested one night per week for the camera so that visual comes

first. We haven't worked out a strategy yet and will have to consider it. Would like to broadcast daytime into a school. Can't imagine "denting the time available for visual." (John). We always have the 5" APO to look through (Joe). We should keep the 14" generally available for visual use (John). Sid would like to add the storage extension at the VCO.

By the next council meeting, the tech committee will have the internet nailed down and will have met with the NRC staff. (Action item Bruno Quenneville)

Lauri observed that the tech committee is getting to the end of the money, and asked what they would "take off." We would have to downgrade separate items (Joe). Li-Ann proposed a 10% hold back on spending. John pointed out that "we have to spend the money by September."

It was moved by Sid that we approve \$22,200 in expenditures from the VCA program list (the figure being derived as follows: \$30,900 less \$1500 dedicated computer, \$3000 security system, \$2700 for building, and \$1500 for the USB video camera) and seconded by Sherry B. The motion passed. The question was raised as to whether we had the expertise to "do this?" Bruno pointed out that "it shouldn't be a problem. We "are a year away from remote operation."

- b. NRC/CU-RASC – Lauri Roche invited questions and comments.
- c. Observatory Project – Bruno Quenneville had nothing to report.
- d. Astronomy Day – Scott Mair reported good progress. He had met with Eric, and had a walk-through to confirm. Colin and Jacque will send out emails re volunteers. We have new posters, and have written up a press release.
- e. RASCals Star Party 2009 – Nelson Walker reported the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July were reserved. We will know about Geoff Steeves as a speaker in mid-May.

The Messier Marathon was a success.

- f. Events and Public Outreach
  - i. School Telescope Program – Sid Sidhu reported the program is going well except that last night it rained, and that overall, the program has been "very successful."
  - ii. Astronomy Café – Charles Banville reported the Café "goes on," and reminded us of the June 1 Fairfield event.
  - iii. IYA –(30min) –Sid Sidhu, Lauri Roche, Sherry Buttner, Chris Gainor
    - 1. Report on activities to date - Lauri reported, "the Bay Center was great, but the airport was "a flop, not so great, we had 10-12 people every three hours ... it's not worth the effort ... there are four more Fridays." The weather was not great for the event at the Early Music Society (March 28).
    - 2. Update on plans for future events – Lauri reported that 1) October 17 there will be another Early Music event, the author of Galileo's Daughter, Dava Soval will appear there... 2) Beginning next Tuesday at the Museum, following the IMAX movie Cosmic Voyage, from 9:30 til 10:30 or 11:00 PM, we will provide public telescope viewing in front of the Museum. This event will continue through April. 3) April 25 at Centennial Square, at the Earth Day event, we will have a table and displays, 4) a big event is our "100 hours of Astronomy Marathon, April

28 through May 2, in front of the Museum. We need volunteers for the three to four hour shifts, 5) we will then move our scopes to the CU for the Astronomy Day celebration,

3. Media – Sid: “we are not having much luck getting in the newspaper.” Jim “sent a press release for our 100 hours of astronomy event.”
  - g. Membership – Bruno Quenneville – nothing to report
  - h. Light Pollution Abatement – Sid Sidhu – we are going ahead with the light pollution cards. (Action item Sid Sidhu)
  - i. Volunteer Job Jar – John McDonald – nothing to report
  - j. Observing Programs – David Lee – nothing to report
6. **National Issues** (5 min) – Chris Gainor – see above re the life member issue
7. **Adjournment** - John McD reported he is teaching an astronomy course at UVic’s University 101 program

Adjourned at 9:40 PM

**Next Council meeting: June 3, 2009**