

Minutes of the RASC Victoria Centre Council Meeting
January 6, 2016 (unapproved)
Fourth Floor Lounge, Elliott Building, University of Victoria

Attendees: Joe Carr, Bruce Lane, Chris Purse, Sherry Buttner, Jim Hesser, Leslie Welsh, Lauri Roche, Matt Watson, Nelson Walker, David Lee, Michel Michaud, Sid Sidhu, Dan Posey

Meeting convened 7:30 p.m.
Serving as Recorder: Leslie Welsh

1. Discussion with John Aldag, Member of Parliament

Sherry indicated there had been an e-mail from John's office which sought a meeting with RASC Victoria Centre, and the details of the visit were only finalized a day or so previously.

John Aldag, Member of Parliament for Cloverdale-Langley City, indicated he wanted to attend the Council meeting to discuss the National Historic Sites program and the potential ceremonial completion of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory's (DAO's) designation process by awarding a plaque in a ceremony, with media profile.

John was a regional manager for 32 years at Parks Canada, in the latter part of his career stationed at Fort Langley. His purview included four national historic sites, including two on Vancouver Island. He assisted in the designation of the DAO a national historic site, but no plaque was placed or ceremony was ever held, despite John's numerous attempts to initiate them. This is similar to some 50 other plaques which were made but not awarded. As far as John is aware, the DAO plaque still sits in a warehouse in Langley.

John would like to see these historic sites publicly commemorated under the new government. He's exploring this possibility along with others, and how they might relate to potential funding needs for the Centre of the Universe. He noted that several cuts in funding by the previous federal government had been reversed by the new government. Depending on community interest, he'd like to see the renewal of the plaque unveiling program and will advocate this with the Minister of the Environment and the B.C. Liberal Caucus. Jim confirmed that the plaque has not in fact been installed at the DAO.

John asks if there an interest in funding of the Centre of the Universe, or is this now a dead issue?

Bruce suggested that a new national historic site designation of Cattle Point Dark Sky Urban Star Park be considered. John noted that proposals for new national historic sites are submitted to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board chaired by Dr. Richard Alway.

Jim noted that the cost of staff to NRC when the Centre of the Universe was closed in August 2013 was approximately \$250K annually. The rationale for cutting was that federal labs have no role in the provincial jurisdiction of education, but this seems to him a poor justification. John noted that a plaque commemoration ceremony might draw attention to the need for funding of the Centre of the Universe. Leslie noted that such funding need not necessarily come from the National Research Council, but perhaps could be sought from Heritage Canada or elsewhere instead. John acknowledged that he and his government colleagues would have to be prepared with an answer when media covering the ceremony would inevitably inquire about the status of such funding, but that the reestablishment of funding wouldn't likely be able to be announced at the ceremony. John has a meeting scheduled in early March with the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of the Environment (who is responsible for Parks Canada), to discuss the Historic Sites program.

Sherry expressed enthusiasm for instituting a plaque ceremony, possibly in association with some aspect of the centennial of the DAO, and with an effort to reestablish funding. Responding to John's invitation, Leslie suggested that a partnership be undertaken to pursue these matters, involving the interested organizations in Victoria and John Aldig's office. Lauri indicated the enthusiasm of Friends of the DAO.

John indicated that it would be opportune to hold ceremonies for plaques in conjunction with the sesquicentennial of Canada in 2017. There was discussion of what aspect of the observatory's centennial history could be connected to 2017, with no conclusion, but confidence was expressed that a hook could be found. May 2018 is the notable centenary of the observatory ("first light"). The two Victoria groups that should be involved in this effort are Friends of the DAO and the RASC Victoria Centre, with the National Research Council local management to be kept informed. John offered his contact information as e-mail address John.Aldag@parl.gc.ca and personal cellphone (604) 603-2578.

The Council **decided by consensus** to further explore these matters. **Action: Sherry** will send a note to inform John of the specific liaisons in both FDAO and Vic Centre, in a partnership effort.

2. Minutes of October 7—Les:

Sid noted that "No decision was made" should be deleted, and that it had been decided that the Royal B.C. museum will be the site for Astronomy Day. Jim had offered some amendments in writing prior to this meeting. The minutes of October 7, as amended, were **adopted by consensus**.

3. Executive Officers Reports (2 minutes):

a. Treasurer's Report –Bruce: Budget.

Bruce presented a budget for 2015-16 (attached:

<https://drive.google.com/a/victoria.rasc.ca/file/d/0B2Bz6li54M0MVZWOEdkNkxXUm8/view?usp=sharing>).

An important question is whether we will take part in the Hobby Show, where most of our raffle tickets are typically sold?

Calendar purchases now go under administration, so that line item has increased. Sales of lottery tickets have decreased somewhat, so Bruce is conservatively estimating them for this fiscal year 2015-16.

Joe, seconded by Sherry, moved that Council approve the budget. Carried.

Matt discussed some technical issues for the Victoria Centre Observatory, including some possible budget requirements.

b. Secretary's Report –Les:

No report.

c. VP Report—N/A:

Michel is off to sea, to be mostly gone from April 2016 to Christmas. Sherry will fill in, while Michel assists as he can.

Diane will provide back-up on the library.

d. VP2/Membership Report-Chris:

There are 218 on the membership list, with 13 on the grace period list. A few new people are showing up at Astro-Café. Sherry noted that she'd been referring interested members of the public to the Astro-Café.

The RASC Victoria Centre has a UVic telescope session scheduled for Friday. **Action Sherry:** Notice to go out to members list. It was noted that Chris, Sherry and John now all have keys.

e. **Skynews—Reg Dunkley**

No report.

4. **Committee/Project/Other Reports:**

a. **Star Party— WHEN?**

Sherry indicated that Council should establish a date. September 30 is a new moon. Concerns were expressed about coldness and dew.

Labour day weekend is not a good weekend for a star party. August 6th and 7th with a near first-quarter moon. Or August 27th, with waning last quarter moon. Bright Angel Star Party will probably July 29-30th.

Les, seconded by Chris, moved that the Star Party be held the weekend of August 26-27-28th. Carried unanimously.

b. **Public Outreach —:**

No report.

c. **School Outreach—Sid:**

Total Galileo moments from school outreach are 1,236 since September 2015, in 32 events. Night sky viewing for a number of schools coming up. Sid thanks members for their assistance at these events. Tuesday January 19 there's an event, while Eagle View school has night sky viewing on February 16, and Strawberry Vale school is scheduled for January 14 night sky viewing. **Action: Sid to seek support from the membership.**

d. **DAO Summer Saturdays—Lauri: RASC or FDAO?**

Lauri addressed the Saturday summer evenings program at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO) as being part of a more comprehensive program for the Centre of the Universe. Tomorrow Friends of the DAO will submit its proposal for a land-lease agreement, with discussion to conclude by end of February. Then programs will be planned. During the November 23, 2013 meeting after DAO was closed, Dan Weiner stated that NRC wants to get out of the business of public outreach and school programs, but would support one other organization as lead. Other groups would have to be through the lead organization. This was the reason for the formation of Friends of the DAO, plus to carry out fundraising for the CU. The program proposal will be for 3 years and include all the different aspects—summer DAO nights, Vox Humana/music/art cultural nights when inspired by astronomical, paid tours (including interest from cruise lines). A draft responsibility chart has been created to clarify roles and responsibilities. Friend of DAO want the NRC to pay to support the free public programs (security, commissionaires, etc.) NRC has done this for two years, and is ready be able to continue.

FDAO would like a letter of understanding with RASC Victoria Centre to cover the program for 2016, and there would not be a letter of understanding between RASC Victoria Centre with NRC. FDAO suggests that the RASC to do the same program as in 2015, but this time it would be through a land-lease obtained by the FDAO. The Victoria Centre would be fully responsible for summer Saturday

programs, astronomy day, or any other programs it wishes to propose (e.g. Perseid meteor shower observing night).

Action: Laurie will provide a copy of this submission to NRC, to RASC Vic Center. (note: Laurie provided these the next day, and they are attached:

<https://drive.google.com/a/victoria.rasc.ca/file/d/0B2Bz6li54M0MSWtMVGlxRWWh6ZIE/view?usp=sharing>,
<https://drive.google.com/a/victoria.rasc.ca/file/d/0B2Bz6li54M0MSWtMVGlxRWWh6ZIE/view?usp=sharing>).

Lauri's questioned would the RASC be willing to continue to do the Summer Saturday program? FDAO would be responsible for liaising with NRC re security. Laurie noted that Science Summer camps would lease through FDAO as well.

Council **decided by consensus that the Victoria Centre will do the summer Saturday programs** similar to 2015, with details such as dates to be decided later.

Les asked whether Laurie had submitted an application to the RASC national Special Projects Program to support activities at the Centre of the Universe, noting that such programs were to be delivered by and credited to RASC members or Centres. Would the RASC Victoria Centre be involved? Laurie indicated that a proposal was submitted late in December, under the auspices of some individual members, and with mention of cooperation with the Victoria Centre, but no direct connection. **Action: Laurie will share the individuals' proposal** (see <https://drive.google.com/a/victoria.rasc.ca/file/d/0B2Bz6li54M0MSWtMVGlxRWWh6ZIE/view?usp=sharing>).

Laurie noted that she'd be out-of-town from March-June (or July) for personal reasons. Laurie would resign her national representative post if someone else wanted to come forward to perform the function. Nelson offered to back her up during her absences, and Laurie will continue. **Action: Nelson and Laurie.**

e. Website – Joe:

Co-hosting partner zenfolio did a major upgrade to their infrastructure, so speed and access should be improved.

Jim noted that Council positions should be updated. **Action: Joe**

There were 999 visits from 757 users in December with the average stay being 1 minute 20 seconds. There were numerous international visits.

f. Tech Committee–Matt:

Matt is obtaining an estimate for spray foam insulation for the roof and walls of the Victoria Centre Observatory. There was a question about potential for flaking after aging; but Matt and others deemed this unlikely, and the insulation could also be wrapped to preclude problems.

The new flooring and dehumidifier as well as other technical fixes have basically solved the floor water problem which existed with the carpet last year. New tiles were installed.

New computer from 2 years ago now has an SSD, and will be reconfigured with the hard drive from the old tower.

Several Council members commended the efforts to date.

g. Other-: HOBBY SHOW, ASTRONOMY DAY, SOLAR ECLIPSE 2017.

Hobby Show:

Westshore Town Centre Hobby show is the first week of February (starts February 6-8th). It's a great venue to sell lottery tickets. Need someone with a truck available for possibly three days, depending on what is displayed. Sid confirms there is something to offer for the raffle. The Centre needs a coordinator for this event. Discussion in Council: Bruce can organize the participation, but cannot do the logistics (i.e. transport of display materials). **Action: Bruce will be the coordinator** (consensus decision). **Lauri will help. Sid will provide transport.**

Astronomy Day

Astronomy Day is May 14th. Event will be at Royal B.C. Museum, although it's not currently on their online calendar. Who will coordinate? **Action: Lauri will check the date with the Museum.** Lauri offered to assist on a committee, but not lead. Nelson volunteered to lead the committee. **Action: Nelson will seek help from the membership.**

2017 Solar Eclipse

Susan Bennett sent an e-mail to Lauri. Ralph Chu (Toronto Centre) has booked a set of rooms in Casper, Wyoming, for Centre people. Susan asks if Victoria Centre is doing something as a group. Sherry noted that this was not occurring, but there could be something done informally. Much discussion ensued. **Decision (by consensus): the Victoria Centre will not organize a solar eclipse trip. Action: Sherry will canvas the general meeting for interest in a group trip, to be self-organized.**

5. National Issues—Lauri

Nothing to report.

6. New Business: B.C. Societies Act—Nelson.

Nelson notes that there is a new B.C. Societies Act which came into force on November 28, 2016 and provides for 2 years for organizations incorporated under the previous Act to file new or amended by-laws that comply with the new provisions. Les asked whether the 1988 by-laws, amended in 2000 and posted on the Centre web site, were the Centre's current by-laws, noting that we weren't following many provisions. It was confirmed that these are current. **Action: Nelson will do a preliminary draft of new by-laws by the next council meeting, for discussion. (After the Council meeting, Les volunteered to work with Nelson on the by-laws)**

In the light of much discussion on the RASCals e-mail list server, Jim asked if the Centre's Light pollution abatement committee active and pursuing issues with Greater Victoria municipalities, notably the City of Victoria which plans to spend a million dollars on LED lighting? Dave Robertson is the LPA Chair for Vic Centre. **Action: Sherry will send an e-mail to Dave to ask what is going to be done re City of Victoria prospective upgrade program. Action: Dave should be reporting to Council on activities of the LPA.**

Adjournment

Chris, seconded by Bruce, moved adjournment at 21:40.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, March 2, 2016 Fourth Floor Lounge, Elliot Building, University of Victoria