

# Minutes of the RASC Victoria Centre Council Meeting

## September 7, 2016

Fourth Floor Lounge, Elliot Building, University of Victoria

**Attendees:** Sherry Buttner, Bruce Lane, Lauri Roche, Chris Purse, Joe Carr, David Lee, Jim Hesser, Dan Posey, John MacDonald, Sid Sidhu, Nelson Walker, Reg Dunkley, Michel Michaud, Leslie Welsh

Meeting convened 7:30 p.m.

Chair: Sherry Buttner

Serving as Recorder: Leslie Welsh

### 1. Minutes—May 2016: Leslie

Review of Minutes of the Victoria Council meeting of May 4, 2016. Nelson served as Recorder for that meeting and should be so listed. Bruce asked that the current balance be corrected to "\$12,747". Chris Purse was an attendee, rather than Chris Gainor. "DAO" should be "VCO".

*Leslie moved, seconded by Bruce, that the minutes of May 4, 2016 be approved as corrected. Carried.  
Action: Leslie*

### 2. Executive Officers Reports (2 minutes):

#### a. Treasurer's Report: Bruce

*Bruce reported that there is \$10,478 in the members' account and \$749 in the gaming account. Bruce moved, seconded by Leslie, to transfer \$729.91 from the gaming account to members' account. Carried.  
Action: Bruce.*

Bruce noted that \$20 is to be left in the gaming account to maintain it. RASC Victoria Centre ~\$700 (net) on the telescope raffle this spring. Many tickets were unsold.

Bruce announced that the first "RASCals at Cattle Point" observing night is scheduled for October 7, with other dates to be determined.

Bruce initiated a discussion of the Centre's copy of the antiquarian two-volume Barnard's Star Atlas. He noted that it is a rare book that is going for ~US\$6000 on e-Bay (down from an earlier peak of US\$12,000). The Centre's copy is not pristine, but is in good shape. Joe has created a web page, including photos of the book and details of its condition, but not yet posted it. A dealer offered us C\$7,500 about 10 years ago when the Centre was asking C\$14,000. Randall Rosenfeld is knowledgeable. Joe noted that there were no conditions in association with the donation to our library, which was made by a member. Joe asked the Council if he should post the web page on the Centre site if an opinion is obtained on price and disposition. No decision was made.

*Action: Lauri volunteered to contact Randall for an opinion on value and means of disposition, using the information that Joe has provided.*

#### b. Secretary's Report: Leslie

None.

#### c. VP1 Report: Michel

Guest speakers are arranged for each month in the coming year. One speaker, Ted, a member from Vancouver RASC, desires travel expenses (~\$200-\$300) which will have to be approved by Council at the appropriate time.

One members' night (December) will comprise a set of member speakers (about 3 at ½ hour each). We're also looking to hold a night at the Plaskett, with Dave being asked to set it up in imaging mode. But there

is challenge to record these images, since the NRC wifi network is not accessible by RASC.

Sherry reports that room A104 of the Bob Wright Building is booked for September October, January February and March (but not December, when it is unavailable). A suggestion has been made that we could have a pizza night, but we would need a venue where pizza could be delivered and eaten. Joe suggested Olive Grove (W. Saanich road) on an “off night” (Monday-Wednesday), in their wedding reception room. It would be for volunteers at the DAO or other public education events. Another suggestion was the Centre of the Universe, but entry for members, for pizza delivery, and clean-up, were identified as problems. Astro-Café was suggested as a venue, but it is too small.

*Action: John will speak to a contact at the Fairfield Community Centre about their main meeting room or the Garry Oak room.*

Lauri suggested that a supper be held with Prof. Kwok, our September 14 speaker, at the Lemon Grass Thai Restaurant on Caboro Bay at 5:30 pm. September 14. Reservations must be made a day ahead.

*Action: Lauri will send an invitation to solicit interest in attendance at the dinner from Council.*

**d. VP2/Membership Report: Chris**

Current Centre membership is 234, with 13 memberships expiring within the past two months (with memberships therefore ending at about the time of the Encore DAO star party).

*Action: Chris to follow-up with people having expired memberships.*

**e. Skynews: Reg**

Reg notes that the September issue in progress. Reg has an invoice for the Council to pay.

**3. Committee/Project/Other Reports (3 minutes):**

**a. Metchosin Star Party: Sherry**

The Star Party was glorious on the first night, but unpleasant on the second. Public attendance was good. David Lee did an excellent job on his presentation under adverse conditions on the Saturday afternoon. Lauri thought she could’ve started collecting donations earlier, but total of \$690 was satisfactory. Total attendees ~73.

**b. Public Outreach:**

Saanich Fair—Lauri reported that the exhibit and tables were put up in the rain Friday, and came down on Monday in the rain. Saturday was great, with a contact number of about ~1,500 people, mainly locals. Sunday was also a good day. Sid reported that a telescope raffle was completed. There were 16 volunteers over the three days. Given the good public outreach, Lauri recommends keeping this event. Sid notes that Ken Mallory is intending to volunteer to be public outreach coordinator for 2017.

**c. School Outreach: Sid**

Too early to report on this fall’s school outreach.

**c. Dominion Astrophysical Observatory Summer Saturdays: Sherry, David, Nelson**

2,221 public attendees showed up. Joe reported that during the last two events it took about 9 minutes for the last two events to “sell-out”. 204 people showed up for the last night out of 240. Sherry reported many disappointed people have suggested that we charge a nominal fee for the event to improve the rate of attendance. Nothing can legally be done about some scalpers, of which there are a few reselling the tickets. Sid notes that it’s useful to know the level and amount of volunteer effort involved, for reporting and potentially grant applications. Nelson and Laura discussed methods of estimation. Sherry suggests that 25 volunteers for 4 h

each for 14 occasions is a good low-ball estimate of volunteer time for use by Sid (1,400 volunteer hours). Dan suggests we need feedback from the public on how we're doing. There are several anecdotal reports that people had trouble hearing in the dome. Dan reports that the dome attendance varies through the night, with the first group at ~40, second group ~20, last group ~80. Could we use headset technology to overcome the sound problem, or install speakers and use wireless mikes? If the tour size is limited, we wouldn't get many of those who wish to attend through the three dome tours. Joe suggested using survey monkey for people who registered to get feedback. Bruce suggested asking folks immediately after the events. Jim suggested doing a survey on September 24. There were no volunteers to organize this. Or provide paper for responses to be left at the end of the evening. Reg suggested making a specific question with respect to hearing in the dome—a response sheet for that event only, since that's the problem. Sherry suggests simply attempting to fix the problem with being able to hear in the dome, rather than do a survey to quantify a known problem. There was a suggestion to use the Centre's portable speaker system.

*Action: DAO Person-in-Charge, Dome Speakers organize portable speaker system for the September 24 DAO Saturday Star Party.*

Sid commended David for organizing the speakers. Sherry commended Nelson for organizing the volunteers, David thanks the members who stepped up to fill gaps in the outside speaker lists.

**d. Website:** Joe

Joe noted that he'll be away October 1-16<sup>th</sup>, so the web site will be self-serve.

**e. Tech Committee:** Matt (absent)

Dan noted that the Victoria Centre Observatory operations are ticking along well. There are some inconsistencies between the old computer with respect to guiding, but the new computer will fix this problem, with appropriate back-up image of the drive.

Dan spoke on the need and opportunity to further augment or develop some of the equipment in the VCO: Dan noted that we've focused on infrastructure in recent times—e.g. floor, dehumidifier, fridge with water bottles. We've avoided buying equipment, partly because of value of the C\$. Dan pitched that spending money on equipment would be a good way of improving member engagement and benefit compared to other means. He identified two major areas of need:

- 1) replacing the Meade telescope and
- 2) replacing the cameras.

Need to swap out this equipment and invest in new telescope (e.g. Ritchey-Chretien), eventually. Beyond this, we have a light-polluted city, albeit with an amazing site. A new camera (e.g. ZWO's US\$1,400 compared to others at \$3,000) would enable use of narrow-pass filters to deal with pollution and moonlight. Some money should be reserved for such expenditures in future years—perhaps within our current budget. Dan notes the significant efforts to economize on internet and make grant applications, but these efforts didn't come to fruition.

*Action: Technical Committee to produce prudently considered proposal for purchases over the next few months.*

It was noted that B.C. gaming commission money was used to establish the current VCO about 10 years ago, the last time a major expenditure was made. Sid asked about member attendance—Dan says it's been reduced from 2 years ago due to volunteer efforts at DAO summer star party. Chris notes that there are 70 people on the active observers' list. Dan notes that a couple of students from the NRC have expressed interest in joining the Centre and using the VCO.

**g. Other-:**

**Election nominations:**

*Action: Past-President Nelson will serve as the nominating committee and will send out appropriate e-mail requests.*

**AGM preparations:**

Sherry notes that these preparations are complete except that the dinner reservations need to be established.

*Action: Nelson will take reservations for dinner at the AGM.*

### **By-Laws Committee:**

Nelson is assembling material for consideration of the By-Law Committee in the near future.

### **h. National Issues (2 minutes): Lauri, Jim**

Lauri says it's been really quiet at National Council this summer. Jim indicates that a working group meeting over the summer prepared input for a strategic planning retreat in September by the Board of Directors. The London National Council meeting was very good. There are no changes planned for financial allocations to Centres. The 2018 100-year anniversary celebrations are being planned. Next National Council meeting is in November. Lauri will not run for National Representative of Victoria Centre for next year.

## **4. New Business**

### **a) Courtin proposal: Stephen Courtin**

Sherry noted that Stephen was not in attendance to present his proposal (attached) to Council, despite her invitations. In summary, the proposal includes Phase 1 bus repairs and planet model restoration for a \$1,400 cost. Stephen also proposes an appearance fee for himself of \$400 each for Astronomy Day and Metchosin, and other things. Phase 2: Curriculum development, with an undetermined price. Jim noted that Stephen's proposal refers to the old B.C. curriculum where astronomy was concentrated in grade 3, whereas the new curriculum spreads the astronomy education over various grades. Sid indicates that the costs in Stephen's proposal are "discussion" numbers. Although we like the solar system, and Vic Centre members could help update the information on the planets, but it's not best used for school-based events due to the difficulties in setting-up, but rather for Astronomy Day and Metchosin. It was asked what will happen when Stephen is unable to continue? Will the Victoria Centre take over the solar system display? It takes a lot of time (3 h) to set up. Stephen is not a member, but has been historically part of the astronomical community in Victoria. It was asserted that, by virtue of the RASC Victoria Centre having paid for the materials, the solar system model already is owned by the Centre, despite the amount of volunteer work Stephen has provided. The Centre also provided an information content upgrade 2 years ago for the solar system model. Some suggested that the question of ownership is unclear. It is stored at the DAO. Some suggested that the Centre might consider paying a modest amount of money for updating and upgrading the solar system model.

*Action: Sherry will contact Stephen and ask for his estimated cost to update/upgrade the solar system model for Council consideration at a later meeting.*

### **b) Astro Cafe TV/monitor: John**

A report from John is attached. John spoke with Thomas King, the facility-person at the Fairfield Community Centre. Renovations are already planned to renovate the portable classroom where astro-café meets, and space and electrical connections for a new monitor would best be put in place at that time.

*John, seconded by Bruce, moved that \$1,800 be put in the Centre Budget for 2017 for purchase of a new monitor and cabinet for access by Astro-Café, to be sold to the Fairfield Community Centre for \$1 with the proviso that they insure it. Carried unanimously.*

### **c) Prof Kwok honorarium vote:**

*Sherry moved, seconded by Joe, that Prof. Kwok be provided with a \$500 honorarium for speaking at the September 15<sup>th</sup> monthly Victoria Centre meeting. Carried unanimously.*

*Action: Bruce to provide the honorarium in a suitable form.*

*Action: Sherry will provide a thank you letter.*

**d) Information:**

Mary Beth Laychuck has been invited to Victoria for October 23-27 for a teacher's workshop.

Saturday night, October 22, we'd like to have an FDAO/RASC membership night with a pot-luck supper. It'll be a family night. FDAO is organizing this.

Jim mentioned Thinklandia on Tuesday September 13, Gwendolyn Eadie, a figure-skater and astrophysicist, will speak about the physics of figure-skating in Thinklandia's tent-talk.

*Action: Jim will provide suitable Thinklandia event information to Centre members.*

**5. Adjournment**

*Sherry, seconded by Bruce, moved adjournment at ~9:45 p.m.*

Next Meeting: At the call of the president in the new year.