

RASC Victoria Centre Council Minutes

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Fourth Floor Lounge, Elliott Building, University of Victoria

Attendees: Joe Carr, Deb Crawford, Ken Mallory, Matt Watson, Jim Hesser, Bruce Lane, Nelson Walker, Michel Michaud, Reg Dunkley, Les Welsh

1. **Call to order** and roll call

Called to order at 7:37 p.m.

2. **Welcome** to new members – Chris

Welcome to new members stepping forward to volunteer. We need to involve the new council members in delivering activities and events.

3. **Review of Agenda**

Ken suggested adding some agenda items: phone list for members, buying books for the public outreach program and access to member e-mail addresses for outreach. It was noted that these items could be dealt with during Ken's report as Public Outreach Coordinator, and the agenda was approved by consensus.

4. **Minutes** of Council Meetings of **September 7** and **November 27**, 2016 – Les

a. approval

Jim, seconded by Nelson, moved approval of the September 7, 2016 Council minutes. Carried.

Bruce, seconded by Michel, moved approval of the November 27, 2016 Council minutes. Carried.

Action: Leslie

b. business arising

- *Action: Lauri volunteered to contact Randall for an opinion on the value of the Centre Library's Barnard's Star Atlas and on means to disposition it, using the information that Joe has provided.*

Joe reported that Lauri contacted Randall Rosenfeld, who confirmed pricing is volatile. Joe posted the book sale information to the RASC Victoria web site where it remains. Michel is now the lead on this sale. Bruce noted he'd done some internet research on current prices for this publication, which range from US\$6,000-\$8,000. The option of donating the volumes to someone or some institution was raised. It was noted that as this is an asset of significant value, it wouldn't be in the interest of the Centre to donate it. It was suggested the offer to sell be left on the web site, and that *Council look at the sale offer again in the new year (Action: Michel and Council)*. It was suggested that Michel could approach other Centres for interest in purchasing. Michel noted that paying a commission to a book reseller would be undesirable since these commissions are high.

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

Chris notes he's following up with people as their memberships expire.

- *Action: Technical Committee to produce a prudently considered proposal for purchases for the Victoria Centre Observatory over the next few months.*

Matt reported this is under development. [*Action carried forward*]

- *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.*

It was noted that Sherry indicated that she had replied to Stephen after his proposal has been discussed, but she hasn't heard back. It was suggested without comment that this project be shelved until we're ready to fix up the solar system [*Action carried forward*].

- Motion carried unanimously: *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.*

Bruce has placed \$1,800 in the Centre Budget for the remainder of the 2016/2017 fiscal year. Discussion arose as to whether this amount is too much or too little. It was noted that at the time this motion passed, the timeline was set to accommodate the renovation of the building by the Fairfield Community Association, and that the amount included installation cost and the cost of a cabinet which Sid is coordinating efforts with a member (Alex) to make. Reg noted that he had looked at a proposed monitor from Atlas on Black Friday, and that it was high quality with deep blacks, compared to many screens which have rather greyer blacks. This proposed screen by John McDonald, has good colour adjustment for \$1,400. It was suggested that the high bit rate and depth of black field in a higher quality 4K monitor was unneeded since a) jpegs that we are apt to display are only 8 bits, b) the depth of black matters little in a lit room such as used by Astro Café since the gradation couldn't be seen—and even turning down lights will make a grey screen look quite black. It was noted that the availability of Boxing week sales provides an opportunity to move more quickly and economically than the motion of September 7 envisaged.

Nelson moved, seconded by Bruce, that Reg be authorized to purchase a suitable high-quality television screen for Astro-Café, with a budget of up to \$2,000 including cabinet, installation and monitor. Carried.
Action: Reg and Bruce.

- **Action:** *Bruce to provide an honorarium for \$500 to Prof. Kwok in a suitable form; Sherry to provide a thank you letter.*

Bruce reported that this had been completed.

5. Reports

- a. President & Membership – Chris
235 members as of today.

- b. Vice President & SkyNews Editor – Reg

Reg intends to consult broadly on the acquisition of the television monitor for Astro Café. The December Skynews is nearly ready for publication.

- c. Second Vice President – Deb

No report.

- d. Treasurer – Bruce

There's a balance of \$9,786 in the operating account, with \$20 in the gaming account. There are some outstanding items at calendar year end to wind up, including our application for reimbursement from the RASC national Special Projects Program for the RASC Victoria Centre tablets for the Centre of the Universe displays. It was noted that the iPads have not yet been deployed that David Lee has possession of them.

- e. Secretary – Les

Les moved the following motion, seconded by Jim:

- Motion – Whereas:

1. There have been no decisions taken at Victoria Centre monthly meetings over the last two years-- not even approval of their own minutes;
2. Formulating a formal agenda and conducting such formal extraordinary general meetings on a routine basis represent an unnecessary burden on the President;
3. Announcements and information about Centre activities can be shared with the monthly seminar meeting as desired without necessarily having an extraordinary general meeting;
4. Announcements and other Centre information also appear in SkyNews, on the Victoria Centre web site, and in e-mails to the membership;
5. Minutes of general meetings that are not AGMs or extraordinary general meetings are not required pursuant to the By-Laws;

6. No ordinary RASC Victoria Centre member has referred to the monthly meeting minutes over the past year, or requested access to them (as they have been unavailable on the Centre web site due to technical challenges), and they represent an unnecessary burden to the Recorder (usually the secretary);
7. While the conduct of business meetings monthly does send a message to members on the open democratic practise in the RASC Victoria Centre, and provide an open opportunity for motions from the floor, it also unnecessarily lengthens and complicates the monthly seminar meetings, detracting from the primary purpose of the meetings (i.e. the seminar for those interested in astronomy, whether members or not);
8. Extraordinary general meetings can still be called by the Council to obtain direction from the membership as necessary, with proper notice and even, if desired, in conjunction with a monthly seminar; **therefore**
 - **be it resolved** that the RASC Victoria Centre no longer hold routine monthly extraordinary general meetings, and that the Council provide announcements and other information to the membership as an introductory component of monthly seminar meetings as deemed worthwhile by the meeting chair, while maintaining the ability of Council to call an extraordinary general meeting when it deems necessary to seek direction from the membership.

Les note that he had circulated this motion in October but there had been little comment from Council. It was noted that having Councilors make regular reports at monthly meetings helps general members understand how the Centre runs and who to deal with on various issues. It was noted that such reports could still be done at the discretion of the meeting chair.

Motion carried.

It was suggested that having reports on recent observations by members at the monthly seminar meetings might engage members in a very positive way, as occurs at other Centres (notably including the Sunshine Coast, Saskatoon, and Ottawa Centres). Recent observations could be done following Council reports and announcements. Several people indicated the importance of keeping these observations brief.

Action: Chris will ask observer chairs for input and discuss this idea at the January monthly seminar meeting.

Action: Michel will explore how the recent astro-images could be included in the members' observations.

f. National Representative – Nelson
No report.

g. Tech Committee – Matt

There were 1,339 visits and 1,037 users to the RASC Victoria Centre web site. Zenfolio image displays are tracked separately; there were 350 visits from 209 users. Matt has purchased a better microphone to reduce feedback during the recording of the monthly seminar meetings. Our web site has been changed to using “https”, meaning that we’re fully secure, and Google bumps us up in priority of listing as a result.

h. Website – Joe

Joe noted that the new president has successfully posted his first message. There’s a technical problem between Zenfolio and the RASC Victoria Centre web site concerning display of slide shows. This problem won’t be addressed quickly. **Action: Joe**

i. Library – Michel

Michel was in contact with National Research Council's Dominion Astrophysical Observatory on today to request a couple of nights for the Centre on the Plaskett with David. The dates to be determined, but include March 25, the time of Messier Marathon.

Michel will send out an e-mail for Members-in-Charge (MICs) at the Victoria Centre Observatory to announce a new schedule for MICs. This advance coordination will reduce swaps between MICs. Michel noted that it's very hard to find a target on the 14" because there's no offset available in the software. We're waiting for solution from Software Bisque.

j. Schools Program – Sid

No report.

k. Public Outreach – Ken

Ken would like to have a phone list for members to pursue outreach volunteering—*Action: Chris will provide.*

Ken asks if he could purchase books for members and public outreach. It was suggested that he be provided a budget for this in addition to his regular public outreach budget.

Motion: Ken, seconded by Reg, moved that the Public Outreach Coordinator be granted a \$150 budget for disposition at his discretion for astronomical books. Carried.

It was noted that book donations will continue to be accepted.

Ken requested a list of e-mails of members to support public outreach activities. It was noted that Victoria Centre list serves will provide Ken with options for this, as soon as he's activated his use of the Public Outreach Coordinator's google account (**Action: Ken**).

Action: Nelson also volunteered to provide to Ken member e-mail lists for selected members who'd been active in some public outreach events in the past.

Ken asked if the Centre should participate in the Tillicum Mall Hobby Show. This public outreach takes a significant effort from a lot of members. Ken wondered if we garner many or any new memberships from this public outreach. No one had the answer to this, but it was noted that we do raise a lot of money from raffle sales at the Hobby Show. It was noted that the new management of Tillicum Mall wants different form of exhibits that are not so much about hobbies anymore, but rather more active events for families and children that are designed to pull in large numbers into the mall to stimulate sales. Bruce did speak with Mall management about the changes they've made, and he was surprised that we were even included in 2016.

There was a consensus that the Hobby Show is no longer relevant to us, and that Victoria Centre shouldn't participate. **Action: Ken.**

We'll sell raffle tickets elsewhere, linking them to the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory summer Saturday star parties.

l. Past President – Sherry

No report.

6. Old Business

a. Funding for guest speaker from September 7 minutes – Chris

Ted from Vancouver was intended to be funded. Reg has not followed up since we have six month advance schedule of speakers. In the June meeting Reg suggests having a pre-eclipse show, not involving a guest speaker. Dave Robinson's wife is an astrobiologist. Apply to national speakers' fund for funding for the fall.

b. By-Laws Committee – Nelson, Les, Jim, Chris (ex officio)

Nelson reported that the Committee has been gathering information, but has not yet met. Les noted that he was on the hook to draft a table of by-law articles and annotate them for consideration of the committee, but hasn't started as yet.

c. Bill Smith's Project at Cattle Point – Chris, Sherry

Christ noted that we haven't heard anything further from Bill Smith.

d. Steve Courtin – Chris, Sherry

Discussed above.

e. Astro Café TV/Monitor – Reg, Chris

Decided above.

f. Light Pollution Abatement

The high importance of light pollution to the Victoria Centre, especially given recent activities by local municipalities, makes a report from the Light Pollution Abatement Committee vital. **Action: Dave Robinson.**

7. New Business

a. Website contacts & mailing address – Chris

Chris reported that Sherry asked this summer for her name to be removed from the web site contact list. Chris suggested officers can share phone numbers if they wish, but it won't be mandatory. Let Matt know. **Action: Officers of Council**

b. E-mail lists – Chris

E-mail lists for Councillors are being updated. The question was raised as to what the new mailing address should be for the Centre, and whether a post office box should be established for this. Currently the Centre mail continues to go to Sherry. **Action: Les to get price and location information on a P. O. Box.**

c. UVic Telescope Access – Chris, Sherry, Nelson, Michel

Chris noted that Russ Robb retired in mid-2015, and that a student named Karoon now manages this facility. He's cleared us to have access to the 32" periodically, and Chris and others will meet with him next Wednesday to establish a future schedule. **Action: Chris, Sherry, Nelson, Michel.**

d. Summer Star Parties 2017 – Chris

Centre preparations include making contractual arrangements with/through the Friends of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (FDAO) and the Centre of the Universe (National Research Council) Chris noted that the RASC Victoria Centre Person-in-Charge (PIC) of the DAO summer star parties was asked to get the list of volunteers into the NRC/DAO administration by Thursday each week, and that FDAO was always last, and sometimes late, in providing their volunteer names to the PIC. Chris raised the question that perhaps the FDAO could do this administrative work and provide the PIC. This is primarily administrative and may fit well with the fact that the FDAO already administers the site-use contract with the NRC/DAO administrators. Christ suggested that the RASC could continue to provide volunteers for the star parties, and that the star parties should continue to be characterized as a joint event.

It was noted that the next FDAO board meeting is scheduled for December 9th which is why Ben of FDAO wanted to meeting with Chris. Nelson suggested that the coordination of the RASC volunteers continue to be done by the Centre, but that it needn't be updated weekly. Concern was expressed about the

capability of the FDAO to undertake the primary responsibility for the summer star parties, and that RASC Victoria Centre would share in any public failure that might occur.

Action: Chris to negotiate a hand-over to the FDAO of the overall administration of the summer star parties.

It was noted that FDAO wants to do daytime cruise ship tours as fundraisers. In 2016 RASC Victoria Centre decided which nights we were willing to support, and that for 2017 this should best be done interactively with FDAO. It was noted that the summer star parties are the primary outreach effort of RASC Victoria Centre—including the notable lecture series organized by David Lee. A suggestion was made that there should be few days and that the focus be on quality, not quantity for 2017.

e. International Astronomy Day (April 29, 2017)

- Preparations—need to connect with the Royal B.C. Museum and the Centre of the Universe.

Action: Nelson will provide information to Ken, and will go with Ken to an appointment with RBCM.

Action: Chris will make a special effort to coordinate with FDAO on the same day summer Saturday star party.

f. VCO Equipment Replacement – Les

- Motions

Les, seconded by Matt, moved motion i:

- Be it resolved** that the RASC Victoria Centre establish a capital reserve fund, to be known as the “Victoria Centre Observatory Replacement Fund”, to fund major repairs and replacement of the VCO telescope and imaging systems further to proposals from the Technical Committee and subject to Council authorization.*

Discussion included noting that the motion was a clear expression of the aspiration of the Centre, and this may encourage more members to offer their skills and participation. Having \$14K in our Centre’s free balance is problematic and tends to lead to more ad hoc desires to spend the free balance, rather than following a more strategic and purposed approach. *Motion carried.*

Les, seconded by Bruce, moved motion ii:

- Be it further resolved** that the VCO Replacement Fund be set initially at **\$97,000.00** and that this amount be transferred from the Centre’s free balance; said amount to be reviewed periodically (at least annually) for changes subject to availability of Centre funds or targeted fund-raising in accordance with demonstrated needs and plans.*

There was discussion on the Fund amount, with the Treasurer finally suggesting it should be \$7,000 rather than \$9,000. This was accepted as a friendly amendment by Les and Matt, and the *motion carried.*

g. RASC 150th Anniversary – Jim, Chris and

h. CASCA 2018 Meeting—Jim, Chris

Jim noted the RASC sesquicentennial is to occur in 2018. An RASC National Committee has been struck to propose events to be conducted. Many events have been proposed and rejected as infeasible, but some have been tentatively adopted, including having an astro-imaging contest. A Committee meeting in London last June, a suggestion that the imaging context be very open to encourage even new comers was welcomed. Jim and Lauri are on a subcommittee to explore this idea, which in part was supported by subsequent feedback from an RASC Victoria Centre Astro-Café meeting. A Committee teleconference on Sunday led to approval to formulate a specific proposal by the subcommittee.

2018 is also the centennial of the first light for the Plaskett Telescope. Dennis Crabtree has proposed that at the 2018 Canadian Astronomical Society meeting to be held in Victoria, there be a daily event

with respect to the history of Canadian astronomy—radio astronomy, the DAO, etc., etc.. Consideration is being given to coordinating this with the 2018 RASC Astronomical History Book. A member of the RASC Victoria Centre is welcome to participate on the Local Organization Committee. Occasional meetings are occurring now, without any onerous time commitment—but the pace will pick up. *Action: Chris is to appoint an RASC Victoria Centre representative after seeking volunteers.*

i. Fundraising 2017 – Chris

- Including the Hobby Show at the CanWest Town Centre: Do we want to participate given that it has been the best means of selling “Raffle Tickets”

Decided above.

j. Summer Star Party in Metchosin – Chris

Chris noted that Nelson and Sherry have organized this star party in the past. In 2017, it can't be on the weekend nearest the August 21 solar eclipse day—but what about a week later, or possibly the July 23 weekend? Whoever leads must take a proposal to Metchosin Council.

Action: Reg will confirm date to Chris of the star party scheduled for Parliament Hill for Canada 150, which is to be simultaneous with regional star parties to make a national star party.

Action: Chris will ask Sherry to lead a proposal, including arranging dates, with Metchosin Council.

k. Budget for 2017 – Bruce

Action: Bruce to look into changing fiscal year to calendar year instead of September-August.

Bruce presented a proposed budget. There was a decision to table this budget until the next Council meeting.

Action: Bruce to revise proposed budget to account for Council decisions and Budget tabled until later Council meeting.

Deb, Matt moved to adjourn at 9:36 p.m.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 4, 2017 7:30 p.m. Fourth Floor Lounge, Elliot Building, University of Victoria.