

# Minutes, Fundy Shores Branch 65

## Board Meeting

November 29, 2023

Present: Geoff Howson (President), Mike Power (Vice President), Donna Bovolaneas, (Treasurer), Roly MacIntyre (Secretary). Directors: Catherine O'Leary (Membership) Howard Pearn, Myles Ross, Christine Hoyt, Mary Losier-Roderick, Paul Toner. Lorraine Scott (Past President) attended part of the meeting before leaving for another appointment.

### **1. Call to order.**

President Geoff Howson chaired the meeting. He called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. Geoff thanked everyone for attending this important meeting. The agenda was circulated and he stated his intention to keep the meeting focused and productive.

Geoff also thanked members of the Board for responding to the survey and thanked our treasurer Donna Bovolaneas for her efforts in developing the survey and compiling the results. President Geoff said the results will be a good start on our annual plan of action for the Board for 2024.

Geoff noted with sadness the recent passing of Megan Williams, a retired Atlantic District director on the National Board. He also asked if any member had any special concerns or needs they wanted to discuss. Cathy O'Leary mentioned that she knew of a family in desperate need of furniture. Members could contact Cathy for more information.

### **2. Purchase of Computer equipment for President Geoff Howson.**

The Board had tentatively approved the purchase of the computer and printer by email. At today's meeting members needed to formalize these decisions.

Moved by Christine Hoyt to approve up to \$2600.00 for the Purchase of a computer for President Geoff, seconded by Paul Toner. Motion carried.

Moved by Mike Power to approve \$449.00 plus HST for a laser printer. and Apple support for the computer at a cost for of \$350.00 in total for 3 years. Seconded by Myles Ross. Motion carried.

President Geoff also wished to settle the question of whether tablets were needed for new Board members. Newer members were polled and no need was identified.

President Geoff raised the need for a Board meeting early in 2024. As the Annual General Meeting is normally held in April, members agreed to hold a January 10th in-person meeting (weather permitting) focused primarily on planning for the 2024 AGM for January 10th. In the event of poor weather, the meeting will be held by Zoom.

### **3. Strategic Planning Discussion**

In his opening remarks, President Geoff made two key points. First, the branch's financial management and governance functions are under good control and do not require priority attention. Second, advocacy is a key national priority and should be the main focus of the Branch. The board should also recognize that National Office provides branches with very strong support to address this priority.

Seniors Advocacy.

In addition to protecting federal retiree pensions and benefits, NAFR needs to address the social determinants of health such as income security, ageism and elder abuse and social isolation. For this reason, National is in the process of connecting with other National Seniors groups to deal with issues of common concern such as long-term care.

Geoff noted that major changes are coming to the Prescription Drug program. Mandatory generic drug substitution will be in effect for all drug prescriptions under the Canada Life PSHCP after December 31, 2023. The new Canada Life Dental Plan coming into effect on July 1, 2024 may also include changes that could affect retirees.

Because of upcoming elections, National is requesting branches to meet with Federal MP's and MLAs. One strategy would be to organize Town Hall meetings for candidates. Members recognized that on matters such as health care, the federal focus is on setting policies and standards but provincial governments are responsible for program delivery, e.g., program security, transportation, delivery close to home, etc. Geoff noted that through its 338 program National can provide branches with briefings on relevant issues and scripts to support local discussions.

Christine noted that changes to federal riding boundaries in the greater Saint John area might need to be considered in any planning for town hall meetings. Lorraine noted that Fredericton branch had held a number of successful town halls and could be a helpful resource. Roly raised two points. First, there is a greater challenge engaging with candidates for provincial seats given the potential large number of candidates in each riding. Second, local groups such as Boards of Trade have seniors' issues on their agendas, so rather than duplicate efforts such as town halls the branch might benefit more from collaborating with these groups.

It was agreed that a sub committee of the Board would be established to assist with developing a plan for these initiatives.

Membership Recruitment

President Geoff informed the board that membership recruitment is also a challenge and another key priority for National. The board expressed their concerns about access to Federal Government offices in our area. Members noted that in past, branches could hold workplace meetings to introduce pre-retirees and other employees to NAFR and the benefits of NAFR

membership but this access appears to have been lost. Geoff mentioned the Spark Advocacy project as a possible way forward, but had not been informed about the scope of this project (i.e., will its recommendations include ways to approach members in the workplace or not.) Members agreed on the need to obtain clarity around what branches can and cannot do in this space.

#### Communications

The board also discussed the best way to contact members at the Branch level. Cathy O'Leary advised that National office now has four updated handouts (pamphlets) that may be very helpful to use in recruiting new members. Donna noted National sends out monthly communications to all members by email as well as more tailored communications to volunteers so it is important to align any board communications with these other streams and find ways to add value through relevant local information.

Finally, Mike noted the need to focus on greater use of e-blasts, social media and the branch website. He suggested we might want to identify a reserve and budget for recruitment and communications.

#### Training

The strategic planning survey included several comments around the need for new member orientation to the roles of the branch, National Office and local board members. Geoff committed to sending links to webinar training around finance and governance to members.

#### Next steps

President Geoff will contact National for an update on what is happening. He will raise the issue of recruitment, the problem of providing pre-retirement presentations, the need for orientation support for new Board members, and the need for a closer relationship with other Branches in New Brunswick. He will also ask for an update on the findings of Spark Advocacy, including whether a renewed strategy for outreach to active members is being contemplated.

#### **4. Report from Lorraine Scott, Past President and Regional Branch Coordinator**

Lorraine advised members about the next Regional meeting in Halifax on April 24 and 25, 2024. The branch can send the President and an observer from the Board with approved costs paid by Regional.

One of the potential topics is Artificial Intelligence and its effects on seniors doing both business and travel. If experts in AI and travel can be recruited, there will be a presentation and a Q and A on this issue. The annual Mega Recruitment Drive will be reviewed and other topics may include ageism. Finally, since there are four new Presidents in New Brunswick, Lorraine is recommending intensive board governance training.

## **5. Review of the November 8 2023 Board meeting minutes**

Moved by Secretary Roly MacIntyre that the minutes of the November 8 ,2023 be approved as circulated with minor amendments, seconded by Donna Bovolaneas. Motion carried.

### **Part 2.**

#### **Survey of Board Member Skill Sets.**

President Geoff suggested it would be a good exercise for members of the Board to consider what their strengths are as this will help develop and execute an effective work plan for 2024.

**Roly MacIntyre.** He can assist in organizing events and could still do presentations if needed. He would prefer not to take on a big workload but has a strong network of contacts at the political level and can provide advice or guidance if needed.

**Christine Hoyt.** In addition to being an expert in fraud detection and cybersecurity, Christine has a strong accounting and governance background and would be an obvious replacement for Donna. However, she will still be employed full time for the next eighteen months.

**Donna Bovolaneas.** Donna has served as Treasurer since 2020 but will be leaving the board in April 2024. President Geoff commented that Donna will be leaving the Board with excellent processes and controls in place but that a transitional plan will need to be developed.

**Mary Losier-Roderick.** Because of her background in dealing with the public and hosting events she could contribute in areas such as public forums and town halls. She could assist in organizing and presenting pre-retirement seminars and other similar events.

**Mike Power.** Mike is an organizer by nature. He was part of the Charlotte County (Southwest NB) branch until its collapse and merger with Fundy Shores. He is currently involved in organizing a number of events and activities in the St. Andrews area and currently operates several websites and Facebook/other social media pages. He has well-developed computer skills and is more comfortable as a background person.

**Paul Toner.** Paul does not consider himself to be a social person. He is willing to participate in Board meetings and will assist with recruitment and other initiatives, play a role in event planning and support strategy development for the Board.

**Catherine O'Leary.** Cathy was a part of the previous board at a time when membership and dues were collected at the local level. As this is now done by National, the branch has lost contact with some members. However, she enjoys her membership role and could also assist in organizing events such as town halls and membership recruitment drives.

**Myles Ross.** Myles has a computer background and experience in testing software. He also has a teaching background and can do public presentations on behalf of the Board. He is comfortable with technology and can assist when needed.

**Howard Pearn.** Howard has been a church trustee for a number of years and is familiar with financial statements and working with contractors. He was also a union president for the PIPSC . He would be interested in presenting pre-retirement seminars and willing to assist in other presentations.

**Geoff Howson.** Geoff is a retired Anglican priest and was a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada for 6 years. He was appointed due to his advocacy work around refugees in the late 1980's with the Federal Government while he was a parish priest in Ottawa. He is very familiar in dealing with mediation and conflict resolution. He has also dealt with numerous volunteer organizations, likes working with diverse and gifted people and is a strong communicator and go-between. He has passion for dealing with seniors' issues.

Geoff also mentioned how lucky we were to have Lorraine Scott as a member and former leader of our Board. She has a wealth of information and experience in dealing with National and local level issues.

**The Board agreed that the next meeting will be January 10, 2024 at the same time and location.**

Meeting adjourned at 11;30 am.