

Telecommunities Canada

Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting
2019-2020

Zoom conference
November 18, 2020
2:00 - 3:00 EST

Attendees: Garth Graham, Kathryn Carruthers, Fred Campbell, Chris Cope, James Van Leeuwan, Tracey Axelsson, Brian Beaton, Peter Frampton

1. Approval of minutes of the 2018-2019 AGM

Motion: That the minutes of the 2018-2019 AGM be approved
moved: James Van Leeuwan
seconded: Fred Campbell
Motion carried

2. Financial Report

Chris Cope, TC treasurer, reported that we currently had \$5, 272.18 in the bank. Our only expenses are the minimal bank account charges. There has been no activity on the Paypal account

Motion: That the financial report be accepted
moved: Garth Graham
seconded: Fred Campbell
Motion carried

Discussion: We have not chased people for membership fees. It is possible. Paypal actually generates invoices. Kathryn can set up a system that can generate invoices. Marita Moll suggested that we have to show more value before we can actually ask people for money. This discussion was deferred to a future zoom call.

3. Appointment of auditor

Chris Cope, TC treasurer, suggested that limited activity on the account means we can waive an auditor

Motion: That the need for an auditor be waived
moved: James Van Leeuwan
seconded: Tracy Axelsson
Motion carried

4. President's report

Marita Moll noted that every year this report shows that we do indeed have lots of activity over a year, although sometimes we need to remind ourselves of this. Some highlights are:

- As representative for TC, Marita has been elected for a second 2-year term on the ICANN At Large Advisory Council (ALAC). This group advocates on behalf of end users on the Internet in the ICANN multistakeholder model.
- Items undertaken by ALAC this year include supporting discussions within ICANN to better address the problem of DNS abuse, negotiating the rules around the allocation of geographic names at the top level in any future round of new generic top level domain name (gTLD) applications, the special status of community applications in any such round, and maintaining the protected status of .org as a domain name maintained for and by the non-profit sector
- Marita has been on the steering committee of the Canadian Internet Governance Forum. She also noted the TC signed on to OpenMedia's Connected Canadians agenda seeking better broadband connectivity in unserved areas. There has recently been a federal roll out of broadband funds in recognition of the essential role connectivity is playing for everyone during the pandemic.
- The full report was shared with the community before the meeting.

Motion: That the President's report be accepted

Moved: Chris Cope

Seconded: Tracy Axelsson

Motion carried

5. Director's reports:

James Van Leeuwen explained that he was working with a private investment firm called Digital Ubiquity Capital which is interested in investing in rural off the fiber broadband -- 2000 subscribers needed to attract their attention. There is a lot of private capital out there to drive broadband projects. It is seen as a secure investment with a utility rate of return. Reality is that governments don't have any money. This is Canadian money -- chartered banks behind it. They do want communities involved. Ideal scenario is that communities end up with majority ownership. More network development in rural Canada is coming. The initial push will be to rally communities to aggregate their needs to get at this money and still retain control of their network. The coop model could serve as the solution. In Alberta there is a legacy of coops but not a lot of historical memory. Maintaining the initiative is difficult as governments work on election cycles. Patient capital investment is needed. Community needs to take the lead -- leadership crisis makes it more difficult, but co-vid has changed everything.

Brian Beaton expressed some discomfort with investment bankers going after community networks. They are not invested in the place -- often foreign owned.

Garth Graham noted that telecommunications policy for governments must be market based whereas TC's approach has always been outside that framework.

Tracey Axelsson informed the group that the Vancouver Community Network (VCN) would need to discontinue being an internet service provider. It is not bringing in enough money to keep up the dial-up lines, parts and components for the equipment that is currently used is no longer available. Canadian based ISP TekSavvy may be taking over this function. Teksavvy has been helping the Seattle community network which is doing well. VCN could continue as a host, but is no longer certain that it can reliably host e-mail. Donations to VCN have decreased to almost nothing. People are not willing to go for slow and cheap when it comes to Internet service. VCN is considering other services that could be offered like a service that enables people to manage their "digital desks".

Chris Cope informed the group that the National Capital Freenet (NCF) still has some dialup customers. DSL is paying the bills but it is still a struggle. Promised funding from CRTC has still not arrived. Some transition with Teksavvy has enabled NCF to regain footing. Other programs are underway serving community and affordable housing units. NCF is also working on a project using white space covering low income folks to get them broadband internet. Providing connectivity is still a challenge.

Chris also noted that even in Ottawa there are still many areas that do not have optimum broadband. He outlined some of the requirements around the new federal funds available for broadband. Ottawa is looking at ways to capitalize on this program to fill the current gaps.

Marita Moll suggested that Tracey, Chris and NCF Executive Director Shelley Robinson could share some info re: the transition through Teksavvy to DSL.

Peter Frampton is concerned with community building through internal communications. He mentioned experiments with online communities sharing experience with other communities, giving local communities a place to connect beyond Facebook.

Brian Beaton is working with 1st mile connectivity and is also in touch with K-net. Brian is thinking about succession planning especially due to his current health challenges. How can TC grow and bring on new people. TC might engage with some of the 1st mile group who have been involved with some interventions at the CRTC. Penny Carpenter, executive director of K-net might be a contacted re: membership in TC. Brian also notes that there is fibre everywhere that is not being shared. It is being suggested that that fibre belongs to communities.

Garth Graham Victoria Freenet no longer exists. Kevin Battersby is maintaining domain names and paying out of his pocket. The files are on his own servers. Garth pointed out that the domain name tc.ca is owned by Victoria Freenet.

Marita noted that we should be passing some funds to Kevin and asking Garth to intermediate. Chris Cope notes that TC could migrate to NCF when the time comes.

Garth also mentioned that Mark Surman, currently CEO of Mozilla Foundation and keynote speaker at this year's Canadian Internet Governance Forum, was one of the speakers at the early Telecommunities Canada conference. He also helped draft an early cancap proposals.

Fred Campbell discussed some community network history and how some of it is coming back -- internet as utility, etc. In rural Newfoundland connectivity is getting worse. Fred is working with Memorial University which is moving out into rural Newfoundland setting up e-hubs in rural communities, where students could come to a space and university could deliver programs. The challenge is how to use the university service to also provide service to community. Fred would like to see some of these e-hubs take on some of the services that Telecenters and CAP sites once delivered. He is working with Richard Fuchs. Also seeking ways to get federal funding out to communities and indigenous groups.

Introducing Kathryn Carruthers: For many years, Kathryn has been assisting non-profits with internet services. Currently helping people in her rural environment do basic things like banking as well as managing websites and domain names for various nonprofits.

6. Election of directors

Proposed slate of directors for 2020-21

Clarice Leader (Man)
Chris Cope (Ont)
Garth Graham (B.C.)
Fred Campbell (Nfld)
James Van Leeuwen (AB)
Marita Moll (Ont.
Tracey Axelsson (B.C.)
Brian Beaton (N.B.)
Kathryn Carruthers (Que.)

Motion: That the suggested slate of directors be accepted

Moved: Chris Cope

Seconded: Fred Campbell

Motion carried

7. Any Other Business

Garth noted that privacy legislation coming out under the head of consumer legislation is not a consumer issue -- it is a public interest issue. Marita Moll suggested that TC could send in a comment if there is a public consultation.

Garth noted that future meetings need an agenda. Chris noted that meetings should target this time slot.

Garth Graham wishes to congratulate Marita for keeping TC going.

8. Adjournment

Motion: That the meeting be adjourned

Moved: Tracey Axelsson

Seconded: Garth Graham

Motion carried

Marita will file for the year for non-profit corporations. The deadline works to keep us on track.