



Vancouver International Writers Festival Society

Annual General Meeting

June 13, 2023, at 5:00pm

In-Person (Festival House) and Virtual (Zoom)

Attending in person:

Board: Michelle Blackwell, Kyla Epstein, Allison Felker, Karen Gilmore, Julie Iannacone, Alexia Jones,

Staff: Kaile Shilling, Leslie Hurtig, Leena Desai, Chelsee Damen*, Matt Ros*, Joyce Wan*, Sarah Wang*, April Thompson*

Auditor: Andrew Westman

Members: Sonia Wong, Patt Cumming, Alison Broddle, Richard Hopkins, Maura Keenan, Sandra Jakab, Anna Panzo, Maeve Wells, Charlene De Faye, Shirley Rudolph, Denise Morettin, Doni Gratton, Christine Barrett, Elizabeth McLean, Paul Whitney, Peter Daly, Judith MacPherson, Alma Lee, Lorenz Von Fersen, Ethel Whitty, Louise Hager, Erica Gilbert, Antoine Morris

Attending Virtually:

Board: Robert McLean

Members: 6 online Andie Bjornsfelt, Glenys MacIsaac, Ann McDonell, Steve Tornes, Jill Davidson, Linda Hunt, Starla Anderson, Gerald Joe*

Total attendance: 31 voting members

*** non-voting members:** 6 people

Regrets: Caroline White

1) Welcome from the Chair and adopt Agenda

- a. A Jones brings AGM to order thanks everyone for attending in person and online
- b. A Jones provides Land Acknowledgement
- c. A Jones notes that for this meeting no seconding is necessary as per bylaws
- d. A Jones invites a motion to approve the agenda Moved: Doni Gratton. Opposed: none. Motion passed

2) Approval of the 2022 AGM Minutes

- a. A Jones invites a Motion to approve the Minutes of the Vancouver Writers Fest AGM held on June 14, 2022. Moved: Paul Whitney. Opposed: none. Motion passed.

3) Board of Directors' Report: Alexia Jones

- a. 2022 saw a Deficit at year end brought on by various stressors; investing in digital events expenses, festival attendance numbers, ineligible covid funding.
- b. Prepared for difficult post-covid years, reserve fund was able to cover deficit

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- c. A Jones thanks the staff and team of the VWF for their dedication to provide care and professionalism despite challenges, acknowledges leadership of Kaile and Leslie
- d. A Jones acknowledges the hard work of Lauren Dembicky-Polivka who has left the organization as Development Manager and welcomes April Thompson as Senior Development Manager
- e. A Jones mentions organizational commitment to quality programming year-round, deepening commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- f. A Jones acknowledges board's role in overseeing a strategic plan with stable and diverse audiences, foundational business processes, commitments to equity and justice, and strengthening fundraising
- g. The Board says goodbye to Natascha Kiernan, Robert McLean, Krystal Paraboo, Thomas Woods, Tracy Rogers, Holman Wang, Luan Li. A Jones acknowledges the commitment and contributions of these members
- h. A Jones ends with an acknowledgement of the unwavering commitment of VWF members as dedicated supporters.

4) Artistic Director's Report Leslie Hurtig

- a) L Hurtig thanks the board and members for gathering in person
- b) Acknowledges the board of directors for their governance over the past year
- c) L Hurtig mentions not all publishers last year were ready to invest in author tours again, some authors and patrons also hesitant to return to in-person events etc.
- d) 2022 Festival saw 80 events with about 115 authors around the island
- e) Moving toward the festival again with renewed response from authors and publishers to return to in-person
- f) L Hurtig invites members to Member Preview Event June 27th at Dockside lounge with announcements for authors confirmed

5) Executive Director's Report Kaile Shilling

- a) K Shilling thanks the board for their support for an unpredictable year last year
- b) Colleagues at festivals during 2022 reported a 30% decline in attendance and box office, this guided VWF in pushing hard with marketing before fall 2022 festival. We saw a 10% drop in attendance.
- c) Government Covid funding that didn't come through in 2022 is coming through now in 2023 and we are already making up the deficit
- d) K Shilling mentions that we spent 2022 investing in accessibility; Digital Festival as well as the Accessibility Round Table convening members from the Deaf, Blind, and Disability community to improve our processes and festival events
- e) Commitment to young people by livestreaming all youth events for free

- f) Acknowledges Equity internal work through supporting staff: certified as a living wage employer and instituted a RRSP plan to ensure staff build long term sustainability
- 6) Presentation of the 2022 Audited Financial Statements Robert McLean & Andrew Westman**
- a) Robert McLean summarizes financial highlights of 2022
 - i) Last year was a conscious year of investment despite some public sector funding that fell through; accessibility, technology & a solid foundation into the future for a solid hybrid festival
 - ii) We have paved a stable foundation for this and future festivals through these investments
 - iii) Andrew Westman summarizes 2022 Financial Statements as Auditor
 - (a) Acknowledges the operational and organizational goals
 - (b) Financial statements are the responsibility of VWF; Rolfe Benson LLP as auditors are responsible for conducting the audit in accordance with professional standards and give opinion on financial statements.
 - (c) Audited financial statements are reviewed by management, finance committee, and approved by the Board
 - (d) Statements between 2021 and 2022 are seeing a continued return on pre-pandemic activities as we saw an increase in expenditures in 2022
 - (e) Notes the deficit of the year for the various reasons pointed out by other presenters
 - (f) Results of the Audit: Auditors had full access to accounting records and did not identify any significant internal control deficiencies, received full cooperation from management and staff. Thanks Kaile Shilling and Chelsea Damen for providing them with everything they needed in a timely manner to achieve full transparency.
 - (g) The completeness of revenue in the form of donations is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. This is a common limitation for charitable organizations and is noted in our audit every year.
 - (h) Financial statements present fairly in all material effects etc.
 - (i) A Jones asks if there are any questions regarding the audited financial statements. Only question is for clarification on Charitable donations. A Westman clarifies and notes that being unable to verify the completeness of donations is common for charitable organizations that solicit donations.
 - (j) A. Jones invites a motion to approve the appointment of Rolfe Benson LLP as auditors for VWF for 2023. Moved: Sandy Jakab. Opposition: none. Motion passed.
- 7) Election of the new 2023 Board of Directors**
- a) **Motion: to approve the 2023 Board Slate as circulated**
 - b) New slate of Board of Directors noted
 - c) New Board of Directors in attendance: Sonia Wong, Jaiden Dembo, Patt Cumming, Alison Broddle, Andie Bjornsfelt, Steven Tornes

- d) A Jones invites a motion to approve the 2023 board slate as circulated to a vote. Moved: Judith McPherson. Opposed: none. Motion passed.
 - e) Karen Gilmore and Kyla Epstein acknowledge immense dedication of A Jones as Board Chair over four years and thank her for her leadership in setting the organization up in a strong position to move forward
- 8) **No other questions or new business**
- 9) **Adjournment of AGM**
- A Jones adjourned the meeting at 5:40pm.