

# Ecology Action Centre

Annual General Meeting 2022

Thursday September 15, 2022 – 6:00-8:30pm

Location: Virtual: Zoom & In person: Zatzman Sportsplex, Nantucket Room

## AGM MINUTES

Chairs: Christina MacDonald and John Crace

Secretary: Virginia Olsen

Members in Attendance: 60 in person and 40 virtual

### 1. Welcome

David Hodd, Director of Operations and Development welcomed members to the Ecology Action Centre's first hybrid Annual General Meeting. David outlined how in-person members and those joining virtually can participate in the meeting. In-person member voting will be done by a show of hands, virtual attendees will vote by a Zoom poll.

### 2. Land Acknowledgement & Moment of Silence

Christina MacDonald, Co-Chair of the EAC Board provided a land acknowledgement. Christina reflected on our shared love for the land and how it is a source of healing, especially during times of distress like the COVID-19 pandemic; as we seek to return to normal, we must remember that the norms of our society rest heavily on a system that has sought to destroy Indigenous people and their culture and thrives on inequity. As members of the Ecology Action Centre, we all must work to decolonize ourselves through our words and actions and support one another in this process so we can continue to contribute to our collective and meaningful impact.

### 3. Acceptance of Agenda and Approval of Minutes of 2021 AGM

- a. Agenda: Moved by Anne Marie Dalton; seconded by Rhiannon Davies (informal motion)
- b. Minutes: Moved by Grant MacDonald; seconded by Michael Sime; unanimously approved

### 4. Board Report

Christina MacDonald and John Crace, Co-Chairs of the EAC Board, collaborated to provide a Board Report

John Crace welcomed everyone to the 51<sup>st</sup> EAC Annual General Meeting.

John presented some highlights of the recent accomplishments of the EAC and changes to the organization including the following:

- 3 years ago, EAC changed the EAC governance model from a triumvirate model led by three senior directors to an executive director model where a single person oversees the entire operation and is responsible to the board for carrying out the mission, vision, and values of the Ecology Action Centre

- Maggy Burns accepted the position as Executive Director in June 2021. Her many accomplishments include overseeing a solar power plant installed on the roof of EAC's building this past summer.
- Senior Leadership Team of EAC welcomed David Hodd in 2021 as Director of Operations and Development
- Appreciation was expressed for long serving Marla Macleod, Director of Programs, and her collaborative leadership style
- Grant MacDonald, chair of the Governance Committee, is leading the governance committee to revamp, rewrite and re-imagine the EAC policy documents
- In a bold experiment the Governance Committee also re-structured the board meetings. Instead of monthly meetings that covered almost everything, the board now meets quarterly to review and discuss specific and significant EAC related subject matter.
- Change includes passing the torch, and after about 76 months of service, John's term has expired, and is stepping down from "official duties".
- John expressed gratefulness for the privilege and experience of working with current co-chair Christina MacDonald and past co-chair Anne Marie Dalton, and the many board members he has gotten to know and work with over the years. John also expressed thankfulness for working with so many of the EAC staff

Christina MacDonald provided some reflections on the year ahead. Christina spoke about the importance of creating a space where the new Board will flourish in performing its duties effectively and work with the EAC staff to push for systemic change. Over the past year, the Board has helped shape the update of the organization's Mission, Vision and Values which will guide us in the coming years; a key takeaway has been the importance of 'broadening our tent' through new partnerships and learning from and being guided by others. The Board contributes to the work of the EAC by bringing diverse perspectives and experiences, and as members and supporters we all have the opportunity to spread awareness of the work of the EAC within our communities and support the organization through volunteering and membership fees.

## 5. Executive Director's Report

Maggy Burns, EAC's Executive Director shared her thoughts and reflections with members. She began with the following:

"We were made for these times." This is the title of an essay by [Clarissa Pinkola Estes](#). And it came to mind as I was thinking about this speech and the times we find ourselves in.

This is the moment we've been working for. There have never been so many individuals on so many different fronts who are passionately concerned for our planet. No question these are scary times. But it's also an amazing moment. And one that EAC is built for. We inspire. We bring nuance and fierce clarity and deep compassion. We mobilize community action.

To quote further from the essay: "Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. ....What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing."

This is what we do as EAC

After sharing her reflections, Maggy continued by drawing attention to the milestones and successes achieved by EAC during the past year including the EAC's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Maggy encouraged members to continue their support and action in the face of challenges to come.

The EAC 2021-2022 Annual Report is available on the website at [2021-2022 Annual Report](#)

Motion to accept Directors' Reports and Executive Director's Report

Moved by: Hannah Minzloff

Seconded by: Michael McFadden

Unanimously approved.

## 6. Financial Report

Rhiannon Davies, member of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee, delivered the financial report on behalf of the Treasurer Ayo Makanjuola, who was not able to attend the meeting. Rhiannon began by thanking Ayo on behalf of the Board for his hard work and dedication in his role as Treasurer.

The following are some highlights from the financial report. For more detail, please see the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

- We ended the year with an operating surplus of \$414k. This is higher than last year's.
- The reasons for the operating surplus are:
  - revenues were up significantly on last year
  - we received \$551k more this year than last year. A total of \$3.3M.
  - Continued Covid subsidies from the Federal government amounted for \$123k
  - We also saw an increase in project funding by approximately \$350k.
  - Also notable was the increase in individual donations as people support our 50th birthday
- expenditure has increased to \$519k. These increases are largely driven by increases in project funding - \$1.76M this year, compared to \$1.41M last year. We have also seen a resumption of many normal working activities so travel and office costs have increased. Our largest increase is in staff costs. Attracting and retaining staff is crucial for the organisation to work effectively and remain competitive and live our values. This large increase of \$444,000 includes not only new staff members but also wages increases following a salary benchmarking and equity exercise.
- project funds and donations have increased, but our membership income revenues have not. This reflects the continued economic uncertainty the pandemic has brought. We trialed a return of the canvass team last year but found people hesitant either to work as a canvasser, or to respond on the doorstep. This meant it was not cost effective at the time. Despite the ongoing economic uncertainty facing many of our supporters, and the impact on recruitment, last year's decline in revenues of 4% compares favourably to the previous year's decline of 8%. Membership remains a strong and crucial part of the Ecology Action Centre, and the lessons learnt through last year are already proving effective for the 2022/23 fiscal.

- Our income for projects is earmarked for that work, and if not needed in year, is counted as deferred revenue, and used in the subsequent year. Our deferred revenue at the end of the year is up significantly: from \$1,667k to \$1,835k. This does not fund all we hope to achieve through our projects in 2022/23 but it does put us in a strong position for the year.
- The operating surplus will be used as follows:
  - The board has approved the transfer of \$30k to our Fern Lane Fund, to be used for the installation of a solar photovoltaic system on our roof. As well as continuing to showcase green building principles, this provides a small but dependable income stream over the next fifteen to twenty years. The board also approved the transfer of \$365k to our Strategic Fund. This fund is to be used for strategic projects or operational initiatives. Over the last 12 months we have been developing a new strategic plan for the organization. With that work nearly complete, we can use these funds to grow our support, increase our impact and strengthen the organization over the next few years.
  - Our Emergency Fund remains untouched.

#### Questions

Q: Why has government funding decreased?

A: Reduction in federal government pandemic support

Q: What is the Emergency fund used for?

A: Nothing yet. It is there for emergencies such as legal action, hurricanes etc.

Motion to approve the 2021-2022 Financial Statements

Moved by Rhiannon Davies

Seconded by Michael McFadden

Unanimously approved

Motion to appoint BDO as EAC's Auditors for 2022-2023

Moved by Rhiannon Davies

Seconded by Michael Sime

Unanimously approved

## **7. Appointment of Volunteer Board of Directors 2022-2023**

Christina MacDonald spoke about the successful recruitment of new Board members. With terms expiring for 3 current members, it was important to add new Board members. The Board's Recruitment and Nominations Committee received a lot of interest from community members to join the Board. After completing an application process, the committee is recommending 6 individuals join the Board. Aside from the 3 individuals stepping down, the other Board members will remain the same.

Motion to accept list of proposed 6 new Directors to the existing Board

Moved by Lisa Lee Steckler

Seconded by Ray Plourde

Unanimously approved

## **8. Recognition of Board Members' Retirement**

Christina MacDonald thanked the 3 Board members who are stepping down because they have completed their terms:

Ayo Makanjuola - Treasurer

Anne Marie Dalton – former Co-Chair

John Crace – Co-Chair

Christina spoke of the individual strengths and contributions of each retiring board member. The time and quality of service and commitment to the organization will be missed.

Heartfelt Thanks

## **9. Recognition of milestone years of service of EAC staff**

- Julia Pollack- 10 years with EAC, currently Accounting Manager. David Hodd spoke of Julia's tremendous skills and contributions as a member of staff. David said Julia was like a "Swiss army knife with a finance module upgrade".
- Rowan Swain- 10 years with EAC, currently Communications Officer. Marla Macleod thanked Rowan who has worn many hats during his time with EAC. Marla spoke of his talent as a communicator and his overall contributions to the team.
- Raymond Plourde – 20 years with EAC, currently Senior Wilderness Coordinator. Marla read a few stories that EAC'ers shared with her about Ray and his influence and impacts on EAC and Nova Scotia. Ray makes things happen.

Heartfelt thanks to Julia, Rowan, and Ray.

## **10. EAC Annual Awards**

Joanna Bull, Community Engagement Manager

- Announcement of a new fund, The Madeleine Grant is a new fund that has been gifted to us by an anonymous donor.  
It is a \$5,000 grant that will be awarded annually to an EAC project whose work will strengthen and support Nova Scotia grassroots community advocacy in the fight to protect the communities and natural spaces.  
Our donor was inspired by the work of Kip McCurdy, who devoted a great deal of time to stewarding the return of the Peregrine Falcon to the Bay of Fundy area 25 years ago. Madeleine was the name of the first Peregrine Falcon that Kip found.  
This year, the grant is going to support the work of the Healthy Bays Network, which is a network of local groups who have been organizing for several years around getting polluting open net-pen finfish aquaculture out of Nova Scotian bays.  
Members wishing to support EAC's community-based partnerships can contribute to the Madeleine Fund.
- EAC Annual Awards has been a tradition at our AGM since the early 80s – to recognize the best and the worst of the year when it comes to the environment. Our staff and board members submit nominations for each award category, and then vote on who they think are the most deserving.

The following are the award recipients

**TARRED DUCK AWARD:**

THIRD PLACE: Peridae Energy

SECOND PLACE: Cooke Aquaculture

FIRST PLACE: Atlantic Gold

**DANIELLE MOORE SUNSHINE AWARD**

THIRD PLACE: Last Hope Camp

SECOND PLACE: Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition

FIRST PLACE: Save Owl's Head group

**BUBBY MOOERS AWARD**

SECOND PLACE: Karen Robinson

FIRST PLACE: Joe Dennis

**TOOKER GOMBERG AWARD**

This year we are dedicating this award collectively to a group of organizations who have all been on the front lines of the housing crisis:

Out of the Cold, Halifax Mutual Aid, the P.A.D.S. Network, Adsum House, and other members of the affordable housing movement

**11. Keynote Speaker** - Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed, Associate Dean of Serving and Engaging Society for Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine

Dr. Watson-Creed spoke about lessons from the pandemic: what environmentalists can learn from public health regarding individual and collective resilience and the work of systems change. Some of the key things addressed during her presentation were:

- Intersection of public health and the environment
- Addressing the ecological determinants of health
- Like the pandemic, environmental problems can only be solved by collectivism not individualism

**12. Members' Forum**

There were some questions following Dr. Watson-Creed's presentation. The following are some of the questions and answers (paraphrased):

Q – What can we do to increase our understanding of the complexity of the problems we face?

A- Recommend reading The Ingenuity Gap by Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon

Q- Concept of “no off ramp”, how do you stay motivated? Hard to see the end goal.

A-Stop worrying about the “end goal”, focus on what is in front of me and what follows

Q-How do we keep leaders motivated? How to keep people motivated once they recognize “the ugly truth”?

A-Look for the “in”. Look for the “angle”. Look for shared common ground and look for champions.

The following was a question regarding EAC operations:

Q-When will EAC staff be back working in the office?

A-Hybrid work is becoming the norm. Staff are working from the office 1 or 2 days a week. The office will be open to the public half days Monday to Thursday.

**13. Adjournment 8:30 pm**

Christina MacDonald motioned the meeting was adjourned