

Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace

Annual General Meeting

March 10, 2020

6:30-8:00pm

Community Room, People's Place Library

Present: Anas Aldouri, Yasser Almashhoud, Ibrahim Almohamad, Christene Almon, Najlaa Alzaanin, Esmaeel Al Hariri, Omar Al Kaderi, Rabiaa Al Soufi, Majd Al Zhouri, Toufic Al Zhouri, Mark Ballard, Mary Ballard, Jack Beaton, Bronwen Cooke, Annette Daemen, Michel deNoncourt, Zane deNoncourt, Fahed El Imam, Hatem Ghouma, Isam Hadhad, Tareq Hadhad, Sami Hodhod, Ammar Hud Hud, Kerstin Mueller, Heather Murphy, Sheila Sears, Norine Verberg, Peter Wade

Regrets: Lucille Harper

Minutes

Welcome

It was acknowledged that we are holding our meeting in Mi'kmak'i, the ancestral land and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw people. We recognize that we are all treaty people. We thank the Mi'kmaw people for caring for and nurturing their lands and waters and for sharing with all people who live here.

Agenda Item: Agenda Approval

Hatem Ghouma

Discussion:

The agenda for the 2020 SAFE AGM was presented.

Agenda Item: AGM Minutes 2019 Approval

Hatem Ghouma

Discussion:

Minutes from the 2019 AGM were presented.

Action:

Norine Verberg moved to approve the minutes as submitted from the 2019 Annual General Meeting.

Mark Ballard seconded the motion.

The 2019 AGM minutes were approved unanimously.

Agenda Item: Financial Review Engagement Report

Sheila Sears

Discussion:

Sheila introduced Heather Murphy from the accounting firm of MacDonald and Murphy Inc. Heather was hired to perform the Financial Engagement Review.

Heather briefly described the Financial Review Engagement process and explained that all financial statements from SAFE present fairly and appropriately according to accounting standards. Heather reviewed the Revenue and Expenditures for 2019. She explained that the Term Investments are funds that have been set aside for families for whom SAFE has submitted an application already.

Action:

Sheila Sears moved to adopt the Financial Report and Review.

Peter Wade seconded the motion.

The Financial Engagement Review report was accepted unanimously.

Sheila Sears moved that we appoint MacDonald & Murphy Inc. to perform the 2020 Financial Review Engagement.

Jack Beaton seconded the motion.

The appointment of MacDonald & Murphy Inc. was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item: SAFE Highlights for 2019

Committee Chairs

Discussion:

An annual report was circulated. Mark Ballard provided a summary of the SAFE Annual Report.

Bronwen Cooke presented a report on behalf of the Settlement Committee. Highlights for the Settlement Committee this year included welcoming 3 new families to Antigonish, organizing social events for Syrian-Canadian families and helping families find social opportunities within the Antigonish community. Translators were organized for appointments. The Arabic-English Women's tea continues to be a favourite monthly event. Together with CARE and Tri-Heart, the Settlement Committee supported families to register their children for extra-curricular activities. In cooperation with St FX, the Women's Only Swim was organized, was a great success and has been established as a regular event. The Settlement Committee continues to work to connect families to community resources and to support families in making Antigonish their home.

Jack Beaton presented a report on behalf of the Education Committee. Learners among the SAFE families represent a diverse group of students and a broad range of ages: 21 adult English learners including 3 university students; 14 public school students in grades Primary to Grade 12; 2 pre-primary students; 5 children under the age of 4. The SAFE Education committee is also working with learners from other sponsorship groups. Adult learners are supported by the Y-Reach Program, ACALA and volunteers. SAFE secured a grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Culture and Heritage to support learners in working on skills applicable to the work place and to help pay for childcare when parents are in English classes. It was pointed out that the arrival of new students does not necessarily mean an automatic increase in services. However, the public schools have received all of the children with open arms.

Peter Wade presented a report on behalf of the Housing Committee. A lot of work has been done to prepare homes for two families arriving soon. Thank you to Dan Austen and the moving crew for their work.

Norine Verberg presented a report on behalf of St FX for SAFE. This year St FX for SAFE successfully ran another Songs for Syria fundraiser and an online auction. We are grateful to donors, including businesses and community members, for auction items. St FX for SAFE held an awareness evening at which Lucille spoke to students about the work of SAFE. SAFE continues to influence the academic work at St FX.

Agenda Item: Election of Board of Directors

Hatem Ghouma

Discussion:

The SAFE Steering Committee continues to have two vacant positions. Nominations for the Steering Committee were welcomed from the floor. Mary Ballard was nominated to the Steering Committee. No other nominations were brought forward.

Lucille Harper, Peter Wade and Mark Ballard have agreed to serve a second term (March 2020-March 2023) on the Steering Committee.

Actions:

Peter Wade moved that we nominate Mary Ballard to the Steering Committee.

Jack Beaton seconded the motion.

The nomination of Mary Ballard to the Steering Committee was approved unanimously.

Norine Verberg moved that we re-elect Lucille, Peter and Mark to the Steering Committee.

Zane deNoncourt seconded the motion.

The re-election of Lucille, Peter and Mark was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item: On Family Reunification

Rabiaa Al Soufi

Discussion: Zane deNoncourt introduced Rabiaa Al Soufi as a wonderful community builder. With the anticipation of her sister and family, and niece and family, this month, Rabiaa spoke about the importance of family reunification and what it means to her.

Agenda Item: My Journey: from Syria to Zaatari Refugee Camp to Antigonish Esmaeel Al Hariri

Discussion:

Mary Ballard introduced Esmaeel Al Hariri. Esmaeel provided us with a slideshow and discussion about his experiences of taking his family from Syria to the Zaatari Refugee Camp, and then to Antigonish through a private sponsorship with SAFE.

Agenda Item: Meeting Close

Discussion: The meeting was adjourned with refreshments and a celebration of SAFE members who have recently received their Canadian Citizenship.