

Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace
Steering Committee Meeting

October 12, 2021
7:00-8:30 pm
Online

Present: Mark Ballard, Mary Ballard, Jack Beaton, Bronwen Cooke, Harry Daemen, Marla Gaudet, Lucille Harper, Sheila Sears
Regrets: Othman Soufan, Peter Wade

Minutes

Agenda Item: Minutes and Business Arising

Discussion:

Minutes from previous meeting were not available to approve. Bronwen will distribute as soon as available.

Agenda Item: Treasurer's Report

Actions:

Sheila moved the adoption of the April financial report.

Seconded by Harry.

All in favour.

Addition on October 8: An e-mail discussion resulted in the approval by all members of the Steering Committee of a motion to transfer \$13,512 to a Term Deposit for the Almashhoud sponsorship.

Agenda Item: Sponsorship Requests, Overseas Family Updates, and Pending Family Arrivals

Discussion:

-Walaa Hadhad family arrival—expected soon, waiting for word from embassy

-Husam and Adnan Sulaiman—expected soon, waiting for word from IOM

-Alaa Abo Al Hawa—cancelled request.

-Mahmoud Almasri Family (Tri-Heart/SAFE sponsorship)—received confirmation of travel and COVID quarantine plan sent. No news since.

- Azaiza Family—Mark spoke with Diane Farrell in Sean Fraser's office. She reports that the baby's medical is complete but the rest of the family's has expired.

- Rana Ghentawi Family—had their interview at the embassy today.

-Al Hariri Family—Bronwen, Pete, and Lucille met with Esmaeel regarding change in funds needed for his brother's sponsorship.

We discussed the gap in time between the request for the quarantine plan and the confirmation of travel. This creates a very difficult situation when finding housing.

Actions:

As a result of the cancellation of the Abo Al Hawas' family sponsorship request, Harry moved that SAFE pay the remainder owing on their IRCC immigration loan (\$2856.77) from the term deposit of \$4418. And any remaining funds would be returned to the Alaa Abo Al Hawa family to compensate for previous payments made on the loan, an agreement previously made between Tri-Heart and the Abo Al Hawa family. These funds were held in trust by SAFE for Tri-Heart on their dissolution.

Seconded by Jack.

Majority in favour.

Sheila will recalculate amount needed for the Al Hariri sponsorship and communicate that to Esmaeel.

Agenda Item: Meeting with ACALA re Clarification of Responsibilities

Discussion:

ACALA offers a variety of programming, including drivers ed test prep, ASL. Many volunteers are available and Shayla is happy to work to match people with particular interests as conversation partners. ACALA is willing to organize workshops with community groups (eg. Nova Scotia Works) as the need arises.

Agenda Item: Ghentawi and Altaieb Family Updates

Discussion:

Mary expressed concern that Abed's dental work will not be complete before IFHB expires in November. Mary will pursue all options of funding, including IFHB, Blue Cross.

Miyada is employed part-time as a childcare provider. Abed is working at the Wheel.

Marla has discovered that the new housing supplement program is very restrictive, with not a lot of financial support available for some families.

Actions:

Update on October 13: It was agreed by the Steering Committee, through e-mail discussion, that SAFE will pay for Abed's dental work to help move him through the process before the expiration of IFHBs.

Agenda Item: Meeting with Town and County

Discussion:

At the meeting it will be important to emphasize the benefits of newcomers in our community and to demonstrate how they fit into community and rural growth.

Actions:

Lucille will send a letter to the Town and County councils, requesting a meeting.

Agenda Item: Policies and Procedures

Discussion:

- SAFE Volunteer Interpreter Policy—deferred to next meeting

- Recruitment for Research Policy—we reviewed the policy in the context of a request from Caitlin Ryan, a PhD candidate at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. She is looking to interview previous Syrian refugees. Our policy states that we will not recruit for the purposes of research. Some options were suggested:

- It was suggested that Othman (StFX) could act as a research partner
- we can offer our experiences but not recruit

Actions:

Lucille will respond to Caitlin to explain that our practice is that we do not recruit research participants. Defer approval of Recruitment for Research Policy our next meeting.

Defer discussion of Timeframe for Holding Unoccupied Apartments to our next meeting.

Agenda Item: Meeting to Discuss Sponsorship Requests and Selection Criteria

Discussion:

Meeting will be held October 26.

Included in discussion: Can we provide spaces to other groups that need spaces but are well organized and ready to receive families?

Agenda Item: Support for Pictou County EMPP

Actions:

Sheila had a discussion with Sarah MacIntosh (Pictou County) and a representative from Shapiro Foundation. There are 55000 Afghanistans on bases in the US, with 10000 more to come. They will be in the US for two years, without official documentation or status. They will receive 3 months of support and then will be on their own. Members of the Shapiro Foundation are interested in how support for refugees is organized in Canada.

Agenda Item: Charitable Taxes and Financial Review

Discussion:

It was suggested that SAFE put out an RFP to find an accounting firm for our taxes and financial review for 2021. It is our wish to stay with a local firm.

Actions:

Sheila will begin putting together an RFP.

Agenda Item: Next Meeting

October 26—Discussion of sponsorship requests and selection criteria. By Zoom.

November 9—Monthly Steering Committee Meeting, in person.
