

Vancouver Poetry House

January 9, 2022 Time 4pm Meeting

Board attendees:

Amanda Eagleson

Holden Wall

Max Sumner (*present only at start of meeting)

Leslie Stark

Lisa Webster *arrives 10 minutes after start time

Guests/Staff:

Colleen Brown

Brad Morden

Chair:

Holden Wall

Regrets:

Meeting Began: 4:09PM 16:09

Meeting End: 6:39 pm (18:39)

Motions:

- Motion to Approve the December Minutes Made and Seconded Motion passed unanimously
- Motion made: Pending confirmation with the criminal records review program the board recommends the GM obtain vulnerable records checks for the following positions; Word Play Poets, Hullabaloo workshop leads and programming staff, and Active Listeners Motion seconded and passed with majority.

- Motion to adjourn unanimously passed

Action Items:

- Further discussion on reporting procedures to take place on Basecamp – Holden has discussed with Alex (reporting procedures for active listeners) Board conversation needed
- Leslie to be cc'd into Colleen's conversations with the Program Officer (Canada Council Grant)
- Holden to contact the criminal records review office regarding Vulnerable Persons checks
- Colleen to start and onboarding spreadsheet
- Holden to send out a doodle poll for a meeting to discuss the AD position and overall structure
- Amanda to send out tier one contracts (for reference)
- Board to meet again before next official board meeting to iron out AD position
- Holden and Amanda to look into checklist / spreadsheet board calendar

Agenda Item 1: Minutes and Action Items

Land Acknowledgement : *As we gather for this meeting physically dispersed and virtually constructed let us take a moment to reflect the meaning of place, and doing so recognise the various traditional lands on which we do our meeting today.* - Holden gave land acknowledgement

Compassion acknowledgement: *"For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?"*--Bell Hooks

Max Sumner announces resignation (followed up with a formal email) as unable to give to the organization the attention/time needed. Open to volunteering in other capacities.

December Minutes. Amanda makes a motion to pass December minutes. Leslie Seconds Motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Action Item Updates:

- Amanda to review documentation on minute taking. Lisa will share Island Trust link and any recommended books on minute taking with Amanda – This is done (plus looking into taking course)

- Lisa will meet with Colleen on December 15th regarding policy and HR – Done
- Holden Max Leslie will check in with each other regarding anti-racism materials / learning (books, lectures, podcasts etc) – While there has been no checkin. There has been work done. Podcast: A Seat at the Table is recommended. Email thread to be started
- Amanda will share email to new board members (and re-share for old) sent to Janice and Sonya as community oversight committee – Share same day (as meeting) done
- Amanda to ask for further statement input/discussion in Basecamp – Put up in Basecamp (no discussion yet)
- Further discussion on reporting procedures to take place on Basecamp – Holden has discussed with Alex (reporting procedures for active listeners) but there has not been discussion within board. This action item to carry over.

Agenda Item 2: Financial Report

P&L Comparison 2019-2021 .XLSX

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Revenue is up for grants but in the red for the year by about \$40,000. Admin costs are up (necessary but impactful).

The fees from the anti-racism audit are included in the admin cost, hence the substantial increase. The Grant covers the majority but we are over by \$8,000 so operational money was pulled from to cover the difference (noted: the cycle on that grant money will be completed soon).

*It was noted that VPH hasn't received the instalment from the grant with Canada Council yet. Delay related to CADAC year end requirements (generally submitted after we receive something back from the accountants in May but they are asking for it to be completed now).

Leslie to be cc'd into Colleen's conversations with the Program Officer.

Agenda Item 3: GM report

A copy of the entire Policy Manual has been made and “track changes” used to note changes . Vulnerable Sectors Check. Will have an agreement signed by those working with youth (inclusive of code of conduct). Some consensus on the Vulnerable Sectors or Criminal Records check needed (which one of these would we be asking for and who would we ask it of).

Discussion as to if Vulnerable Sector checks are limited to youth. Documentation indicates it can mean “vulnerable at the time” and not necessarily a vulnerable identity (like youth).

Categories considered: Active Listeners, Volunteers , Word Play Poets, Hullabaloo workshop leads. Discussion about balancing staff/volunteer privacy with responsibility to vulnerable persons. Initiation of checks also discussed.

- Issue first arose when we wanted to teach outside of the school system (making poets the sole adults in charge of youth)
 - This expanded the conversation to poets not wanting these checks due to minor offenses (drug charges etc) or not wanting to engage with the police in any way whatsoever

Questions asked: What is our liability? Regarding the above point highlights the importance of having conversations in advance. We are not interested in what minor offenses may arise but the protection of vulnerable persons.

A vulnerable sector check is a police information check plus a check to see if a person has a record suspension (pardon) for sexual offences.

Vulnerable sector checks were created in 2000 to protect children and vulnerable persons and is governed by section 6.3(3) of the Criminal Records Act.

Active Listeners, Word Play Poets, Hullabaloo workshop leads would be the area of focus (not general volunteers)

Motion put forward by Lisa as; The board supports the GM requesting vulnerable records checks for Active Listeners, Word Play Poets, Hullabaloo workshop leads perscuent to confirmation that positions meet the criteria for vulnerable records checks.

Active Listeners were the biggest question mark in terms of the necessity for this role (and the categorization of a vulnerable person).

Holden volunteers to contact the criminal records review office.

Lisa started motion: Pending confirmation with the criminal records review program the board recommends the GM obtain vulnerable records checks for the following positions; Word Play Poets, Hullabaloo workshop leads and programing staff, and Active Listeners.

More discussion specifically regarding active listeners. Leslie puts forward motion (listed above). Amanda seconds.

Further conversation regarding Staff and Policy Manuals “if the policy manual was complete the staff manual would be”.

Johnny and Amanda completed interviews with poets and hiring. Going into PD now. For coaching sessions this year teachers will be asked to ensure another adult is present.

January 29th (live) event will not happen but now trying for February 14th.

Holden and Colleen met with Trish from synergy and started the process of a workshop for us (will be in Verses).

Pivot Grant in process. Arts Impact Grant Colleen Holden and Amanda met, looking at it as an organizational strengthening grant. Possibilities: working with synergy for AD hiring, further payment/expansion for Janice and Sonya’s roles, continuing work on HR, PD funding for board and teaching poets, Canadian centre for diversity and inclusion (membership \$3000), Board training

Canada Heritage grant received.

Further details requested regarding the work Dena is doing. The Liability Insurance application handed over (in terms of what we are missing) and the sections of the policy manual dealing with staff (and youth).

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BVx2Pc4u40-LGwQn2WG54rIHFJ7YVyc22vi2YSCSMvQ/edit>

Agenda Item 4: Anti-racism work: Review Statements/Commitments Made

Holden: Group check in was done, has obtained books (previously on hold) from the library (topics covered anti-racist practice on boards and virtue signalling social just vs. working towards real change)

Leslie: Continuing “A Seat at the Table” recommended. Book: So you want to talk about race. Looking forward to looking into policy (and addressing policy)

Lisa: Delving into Nonviolent communication. A couple more of the webinars from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

Amanda: Policy work-wise Code of Conduct focusing on recommendations. Past minutes added from 2018 and looking to have 2017 up by next week

Colleen: The more we get clear procedures for staff we will be better able to include people more fairly (this is the focus).

- Discussion of free training options. And strongly suggest/recommend free training <https://www.ihollaback.org/bystanderintervention/>

Could add to hiring contract/process “have you had such training//are you willing to have this training” (future forward onboarding)

Plan to Protect meeting (Colleen to report back)

Onboarding process spreadsheet suggested: Roles on vertical axis and role/training/onboarding/ requirements on the horizontal

This is being put into agreements but a spreadsheet would be good.

Agenda Item 5:AD Hiring

Note: Discussion ongoing in Basecamp.

Discussion on combining the role. The different skill sets , balance of power, diversity were points made against such a combining of role(s). Noted: the AD did used to do grant writing as part of their duties.

Uncertainty of the vision in combining roles. Organizations use different models (see Basecamp).

The combining of the roles was suggested because the roles as they stand really aren't part time. In this sense a single Full Time role is more honest (in terms of what is actually being done). Noted: that People should be put on payroll for the next year (and taxes will be paid). A person dedicated to a role makes sense given this. And proper hiring and training practices counteract much of the hesitancy in combining.

There has been hesitancy from the community in the past regarding changing the model. It's important to analyze why.

See: <https://verseottawa.ca/> (suggested by Brad) point of reference.

Questions/concerns about funding (that funding tends to be geared toward the artistic vs. administrative side of things).

Would this limit funding opportunities? Would a permanent salary be included in funding?

Questions need to be asked: Does the board want to have employees? Do they want a FT General Manager position? / Which positions should be (officially) employees (vs. contract)?

History as to why the organization's structure is the way it is. Would need to account for salary (which is different from contract payment). What is our role as board/as employers?

Staff perspectives: From Colleens' perspective is job secure (as will need to step out of role if it changes). And general questions from staff about the AD.

- As an AD needs to be hired anyway this seems a good time to reconsider the structure.

Noted: It takes 3 months to hire someone.

We need an AD for 2023. They must be in place by September but ideally earlier to get to know the grant calendar/structure. Ideally in time for this years' festival (to see it in action).

Suggested: That the board meet up regarding this issue taking into account all of the information

Holden to send out a doodle poll for a meeting to address this.

Agenda Item 6: Policy

Holden will add Naomi's recommendations to the policy as comments

Amanda wanted to focus on the board code of conduct (Naomi's recommendations)

- Community input should be provided before anything passed

Language needs to be considered (and edited) more technical than poetic

Lisa will look into anti-bullying/ harassment policy (and reading over the policy manual)

Agenda item 7: Training Opportunities for Board and Staff

Covered in Item 4 (plan to protect and hollaback)

Agenda item 8: A board calendar / checklist

Colleen has sent a template. Suggested for longterm a yearlong checklist/ calendar.

Lisa put forward motion to adjourn. Amanda Seconded. Motion passes unanimously.