

Vancouver Poetry House

November 7th 2021 Time 4pm Meeting

Board attendees:

Amanda Eagleson

Holden Wall

Max Sumner

Leslie Stark

Guests/Staff:

Colleen Brown

Chair:

Max Sumner

Regrets:

Lisa Webster

Meeting Began: 4: 11PM 16:11

Meeting End: 17:51 (5:51pm)

Motions:

- Motion to Approve October minutes made by Holden. Seconded by Amanda. Minutes approved

Action Items:

- Lisa will share the harassment and bullying policy she has worked on
- Holden will look into different ways to do anonymous feedback

- Colleen to pass along Alvin's contact information to Holden regarding the anonymous feedback option
- Group input on updated post

*Agenda Items 2 and 3 were held until near the end of the meeting

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: *Skip the religion and politics, head straight to the compassion. Everything else is a distraction.* Talib Kweli

Approve Minutes:

- Motion to Approve October minutes made by Holden. Seconded by Amanda. Minutes approved

Edit: Add Leslie's name to Internal Election for board Roles (this is missed on the results page)

Action Items updates

- Continue (and expand on) the rewording of the "affirmative action" part of the policy to make it more accurate and applicable to what is and will be done.=Completed
- Lisa will share the harassment and bullying policy she has worked on.= moved to next month
- Leslie will complete and send Colleen the final report on the raffle.= Completed
- Amanda will send Lisa relevant minutes (related to board conflict).=Complete
- Colleen will share with Lisa the link to the policy she shares with new hires.= Completed

Agenda Item 2: Financial Report

Colleen to meet with Laura Nov. 19 to prepare for year end. Should be ready for Review Engagement in mid-January.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zZpuumcpIDOKeUbONdezdkYSBwDTDR3J9SMjUxJBDGU/edit#gid=7614054>

Amanda: It looks bad (that year end).
Some discussion on the challenges of fundraising.

Max: Will that mean cutting back?

Leslie: Probably, that has had to happen in the back. Keep in mind we did the payout for 2020 Verses artists, which was the right thing to do but we've not been in a comfortable position since then.

Holden: In the revenue for grants is it approved only or total expected?

Colleen: You need to compare 2019 for 2022 (for an accurate comparison).

Amanda: And to clarify that would be because there's much more government funding in 2020/21 and then the subtraction of live events.

Colleen: Regarding 2019, there had been this thing where the Canada council funding had always been taken into consideration a year behind. So in 2019 we essentially combined two years to straighten this out moving forward. But that accounts for why there is that large number in 2019.

One of the things that is scary in how I've recorded things (as I haven't talked about this with the accountant) in 2021 we received \$100,000 in a project grant that we will not receive again. This comes in 2021 and about half of that goes out in 2022.

Leslie: Wouldn't that fall under deferred revenue?

Colleen: Yes. I think the correct thing to do is put half as differed

Leslie: So really the \$70,000 deficit is more like a \$20,000

Colleen: There will be some small expenditures that unaccounted for.

Leslie: And does this take in to account Joseph's salary and that a replacement will not be put in place immediately?

Colleen: It does. Other things not recorded include PD for the WordPlay poets (that's around \$1000) and there was more, but nothing huge.

Holden: In the expenses 2021 are the extra hours for Naomi included?

Colleen: They are (at \$12800) I'm going to ask the accountant about moving this out of admin and into community education. I have a meeting with Laura on the 19th and I'll have a better idea after that.

Leslie: We should consider a contingency fund.

***Colleen arrives 17:00*

Agenda Item 3: GM Report

Daniella resigned she felt there was not enough work for her at this time but has agreed to support the MOSAIC partnership if that goes forward. Lucia has agreed to do PD for the new/returning word play poets. Nico, Isabella, Sean have been added to the roster. Ida and Brad were hired to stream the Legends of Slam. I'm hoping some board members can attend to support staff.

Leslie: I'm there (I'm competing)

Colleen: The door should be fine (there's little to sell).

Verses meetings start soon. I've had some brief conversations with Brad, Trevena, and Johnny T. Johnny has agreed to mention the new CIPS director, Brad has great workshop ideas, Trevena has been generous with ideas and time, and RC is always together.

RC would like to work with Lisa on hiring the Hulla support person. Joseph had started to develop a theme for Verses on truth and reconciliation, but now that he is stepping away the conversations I've had with programming staff indicate they do not want to proceed with that theme (without Joseph). And I wanted to let you know about that. I don't see how we could pursue that theme but if there's anything you want to hang onto regarding that you will need council us.

Leslie: I had a really good conversation with Joseph about the concept of Truth and it was really interesting.

Amanda: I agree with the staff that Truth and Reconciliation is not something that we should move forward with without him but I think, yeah, if there's something we could do.

Colleen: One thing is ask Joseph if he would be interested in leading that discussion at Verses

Amanda: I was going to suggest that

Colleen: Is that what you would like me to do?

Board agrees they would all like this.

Colleen: I can put this forward to the programming staff as an *idea* from the board (and myself).

Amanda: That is how I would prefer that be done.

Colleen: I've stated our event insurance is complete but we haven't paid for it yet so that's another expense not included in the budget. It'll be about \$2500. We have an HR contractor moving through the policy manual moving towards getting us abuse and liability insurance. The policies we have look OK, it's just very thin. The interim report for Canada Council Grant. And we were given \$9000 (as part of the "reopening").

Alvin and I finished fixing the website. We had backups going “somewhere” and it’s been combined (4 to 1) so we are now down to one site and it’ll be easier for a designer to make it pretty now. I’ve started the staff manual but just finding things.

Amanda: I think you’ve done amazing work. You’ve had a lot thrown at you this month.

Holden relays the conversation about the “Feedback” discussion for the website.

Colleen: Let's do that.

Colleen to pass along Alvin’s contact information to Holden regarding the anonymous feedback option. Keep in mind that the cost is \$100 so if it is complicated it might be better to pull the plug.

*Some conversation regarding “expanding the reach” for the cips position (Holden’s idea of Hulla alum is popular, Leslie started outreach during the meeting)

Agenda Item 4: Revisit the responses that came out of the survey and re-evaluate where we're standing and our progress thus far

Holden relates the survey information to Max. Survey was about social justice at VPH and asked people to share experiences. There were 8 responses (with at least one from staff). Discussion about resending this with some input as to progress.

Max asks about us having a system regarding regular feedback.

Amanda: There’s the admin email but no anonymous method. And I do think there’s issues with lines of communication.

Max: Would this have value?

Holden: I believe so

Max: My company has a “comments concerns questions” button (it’s clarified that this is not completely confidential in that we need an email to respond to).

Holden: Maybe a google form to link to the admin email. And responses would prompt (us) to the admin email.

Max: What about a link to the survey? Working in a similar way. We don’t want people to feel an AGM is the only place to get an issue addressed.

Holden: There is one question I think was worth reviewing. There’s one question I think is really worth the review and that asks people to rate what is important to them.

One of the priorities was to hire an external consultant to complete an audit (which we've done). The other have board/staff/volunteers complete an internal audit of procedures involving equity, accessibility, and anti-oppression, the other was to have an online form for anyone to submit anonymous feedback at any time (which we just discussed) and the other was to create an oversight committee to hold the board accountable to their work on anti-racism.

A lot of people said their first priority was an oversight committee, and then an external consultant, and then the online form (it was the first priority for a lot of people), and then last was the internal audit.

Max: We could make this anonymous "if you choose". So if you want us to address something directly we need your info to respond but if you just want to share. We could read those, and then in the minutes (of board meetings) you would have your answers.

Agenda Item 5: Regarding Increased Hours for Naomi/Where to pull money from programming "can ask Naomi to prioritize one aspect of her work over another?" (appropriate? Could this impact the quality of the final report or her investigative process?)

Too late for this conversation, already done.

Amanda: I'm committed to seeing that through because we should have an outside perspective and so much has not been dealt with.

Agenda Item 6: Hiring: new AD and the verses hiring (hullabaloo assistant director, CIPS director)

Amanda: I assume what was meant here was Colleen's email that RC had requested a "wide net" so to speak for applicants so she was looking for input (other than the "usual places" on the list).

Leslie: There's also the fact that it's a \$1500 contract (so not the most lucrative)

Amanda: That was why I kind of brought up schools. I feel I was not very helpful there.

Holden: I suggested former Hullabaloo poets? Not sure how doable that is (I've reached out to a few).

Leslie: I think that's good, it's important to reach out to people who know why it's important. I can reach out to people at my school

Some discussion on how it should be on the Hullabaloo Facebook page.

Agenda Item 7: Discuss Updated post on VPH site

Was this: <https://www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com/values/>

Link to Updated post draft:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VithjMgxJC0o8yEys_VCU9F2iKegqCTQW6kUkKFB-BU/edit?usp=sharing

When we had our meeting with the accountability committee this was brought up. Sonya was helpful. It had been brought up by Johnny M at the last AGM that the previous statement wasn't in depth enough.

I added a few things (and we should probably do a bit of an update as things have changed). If people want to help I think it would be better as a collaborative effort. I'm struggling a bit to be honest.

Discussion on IBPOC (in terms of the increase in usage especially within Canada)

Amanda: In terms of dates/details I may reach out again. I feel like that just gets a bit long for a blog post and I would be more interested in trying to trackdown associated minutes and making sure they are posted.

Agenda Item 8: Training session with Eli Mina - <https://www.elimina.com/> on how to conduct a good meeting;

Take minutes and generally, how to be a good board member.

Amanda: This was provided by Lisa. She's had a lot of government roles.

Max: So what was the suggestion?

Amanda: The suggestion was a training session (and as someone to train board members).

Max: I definitely see the benefit as the board grows.

Holden: I wouldn't want to ask right now (I know there is a lot of stress about money). But I will be reading up on this (there are a lot of board books) once school dies down and I can share recommendations.

Amanda: I thought it was worth bringing up as this was Lisa's response to my sending previous minutes (where there was conflict). I thought that was telling.

Leslie: I think this is important but not the most immediate.

Agenda Item 9: Other business

During the Audit process Max has gained more knowledge as to how extensive the problem (in terms of how far back it dates) of racism/the lack of addressing racism is within the organization. I think anyone who joins the board needs to be really aware of the history behind this. I had more the impression that there was this this big incident which was mishandled.

Leslie: I don't this VPH is unique in this, I think this throughout arts organizations.

Amanda: I see what you're saying. And it is important. The meeting with Sonya and Janice is going into a file. And with Lisa I've been giving a lot of the background. This historical context is important and does need to be made clearer at the outset for new members. It's not enough to say "we are doing this work" the background is very important for preventing future mistakes (the same mistakes). And I would say a lot of my own mistakes as a board member tie into a lack of historical context. In terms "one big blowup issue" that was the *result* of issues accumulating.

Max: It did make me reflect on what the board looks like (our make-up). I think there needs to be more people of color on this board.

Colleen: Naomi has great ideas on this. Outreach with Synergy on "how to be on a board" as well as working with Synergy for the purposes of forming committees.

Max expresses concern in even being involved at all with conflict that occurs (between people of color) "it's not my place".

Colleen: Our job is to minimize conflict via policy

Amanda: With reference to what you're saying Max there *has* been a lot of lateral violence and I was appreciative of Sonya bringing that up because the flaws within the organization have prevented resolution. What I'm looking for (to get out of this) is to have that framework there.

Leslie brings up the mass resignation and how that affected the ability to move forward.

Colleen: One thing I think I would like to express is I would like for the community to have more a sense of separation of what is occurring in their friend group and what is happening within the organization.

Amanda: I think I understand what you're saying in that there have been other instances where a personal/intimate relationship is brought up in the context of organization and I'm uncomfortable with that as well.

Colleen: We should not be policing intimate relationships. Or rather there should be some sense of healthy separation.

*Amanda confirms that the board is OK with the post she had written up for Joseph.