

## **MINUTES**

### **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO BOARD MEMBERS - CATHERINE RAHEY, BOARD VICE CHAIR**

Catherine Rahey introduced herself as Vice Chair and acting Chair of the meeting as the Board Chair, Dave Nicholson, had to send regrets.

Catherine called the meeting to order and welcomed members and friends to the Annual General Meeting of the PAC Autism Nova Scotia Society (Autism Nova Scotia). She acknowledged that the event was being broadcast in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. Catherine also acknowledged and thanked the elders and knowledge holders for sharing their stories.

Catherine welcomed virtually present Board Members: Ian Sutherland, Greg Smith, Sarah Boyne, Ally Garber, Stephanie McGrath, Dr. Robert Strang, Bill Lahey, Janean Marshall, Ronda Faulkner, and Tracey Avery.

#### **Also recognised:**

Joan Craig – Honorary Board Member and Founder, Members of the Craig Foundation. The trustees of the Craig Foundation-John Roy and Danny Graham.

**Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs):** Honorable Ben Jessome- MLA for Hammonds Plains Lucasville, Honorable Keith Irving- MLA for Kings South, Claudia Chender - MLA for Dartmouth South, Tim Houston- MLA for Pictou East, and Alana Paon- MLA for Cape Breton-Richmond.

Cynthia Carroll the Executive Director of Autism Nova Scotia and the staff of Autism Nova Scotia.

Catherine provided a procedure overview for the Annual General Meeting. All members were invited to register for the virtual meeting via Zoom webinar. All registered attendees were recorded during registration.

Copies of the Agenda, 2021 Annual Report, and 2020 Annual General Meeting minutes were made available to all attendees via email.

All members were able to vote on Motions using the Zoom poll. Questions or comments were submitted using the Question-and-Answer function in Zoom.

No proxies were submitted to the Vice Chair.

### **2. NOTICE OF MEETING AND REGRETS**

Notice of Meeting was duly given on Tuesday, May 11, 2021.

**MOTION: Ian Sutherland moved to forego the reading of the Notice of Meeting, seconded by Tracey Avery.**

**MOVED: Motion carried by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a Zoom poll.**

Catherine delivered regrets from the following Board Members: Dave Nicholson.

Catherine declared quorum, and the Meeting was duly called to order.

### **3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: Janean Marshall moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Sarah Boyne.**

**MOVED: Agenda approved by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a Zoom poll.**

### **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 09, 2020**

**MOTION: Ronda Faulkner moved to approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on July 09, 2020, seconded by Ian Sutherland.**

**MOVED: Minutes approved by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a Zoom poll.**

### **5. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2021**

Discussion of the Financial Statements ending March 31, 2021, were presented by Autism Nova Scotia Treasurer, Greg Smith.

**MOTION: Greg Smith moved to approve the Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2021, seconded by Ally Garber.**

**MOVED: The Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2021, were approved by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a Zoom poll.**

### **6. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR 2021-2022**

**MOTION: Greg Smith moved to appoint Levy Carter Casey McLean as Auditors for 2021-2022, seconded by Tracey Avery.**

**MOVED: Levy Casey Carter MacLean were approved as Auditors for 2021-2022 by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a zoom poll.**

## **7. NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT AND THE ELECTION OF DIRECTORS**

Catherine called for a motion to approve the re-election of the Board of Directors identified on page one of the Annual Report.

**MOTION: Reece Cheng moved to re-elect the members of the Board of Directors identified on page one of the Annual Report, seconded by Mariann Peters.**

**MOVED: The Board of Directors as read by Catherine Rahey were approved by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a Zoom poll.**

## **8. BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT – CATHERINE RAHEY**

The Board Chair's Report was provided in full in the Annual Report, and Catherine read it into the record (see below).

### **Board Chair Report from Annual report:**

As we began to reflect on our 2020-2021 fiscal year, a theme of courage clearly emerged for us.

Just as we began to settle into 2020, our worlds changed suddenly and dramatically. Navigating COVID-19 demanded huge changes for people, communities, businesses, and non-profits.

While much of our community infrastructure shut or slowed down in those first weeks and months, Autism Nova Scotia mustered up the courage to continue. We immediately realized that the community we support would not only require a continuation of supports but that the isolation and anxiety surrounding the pandemic would result in increased and unique needs.

Our staff, volunteers, clients, families, and caregivers bravely adapted to the remote nature of Autism Nova Scotia's programs and services and together we ensured that, to the best of our abilities, the needs of our community were met.

In fact, we were awarded the 2020 Invisible Champion Award from the Bhayana Foundation, the United Way, and the Province of Nova Scotia in recognition of our transition to online programming during the pandemic.

Looking back, we're proud that we have not only pivoted and adapted effectively throughout COVID-19, but in many ways, we also thrived.

We continued to deliver programming in new ways, launched a number of pilot projects and initiatives, and completed the organization's new five-year strategic plan. Luckily, much of the in-person stakeholder engagement took place prior to the arrival of COVID-19 and we were able to use the remaining months of 2020 drafting the 2020-2025 strategic plan which was formally adopted and launched to the public in Early 2021.

Our reimagined vision and mission expand on our hopes and dreams for Nova Scotia's autism community – and for autistic people around the world. If we needed a second word to describe 2020-2021, it would be collaboration. None of our successes and initiatives would be possible without partnerships, shared knowledge and resources, and financial support.

On both the national and provincial stages, Autism Nova Scotia is increasingly called upon to lead vital pilot projects and is entrusted with public funds to spearhead support programs for persons with autism from right across Atlantic Canada.

Whether it was collaborating with organizations such as the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance (CASDA) and Canucks Autism Network; partnering with companies such as Ubisoft; or stewarding provincial and federal funds, Autism Nova worked closely with other non-profits, businesses, and governments to best serve the autism community.

With a provincial mandate, Autism Nova Scotia offers in-person or virtual programs for autistic individuals, families, and caregivers in communities from Yarmouth to Sydney, and, in some cases, throughout Atlantic Canada.

Although many of our chapters are located in towns and municipalities hours of driving from the central office, Autism Nova Scotia operates as one organization and keeps connected through weekly rounds meetings, program development, and a shared commitment to our strategic plan, vision and mission.

On the program front, our established programs continue to be successful, and we are working to meet the evolving and emerging needs of the autism community with new and innovative programming. We are committed to increasing the presence of first voices in program development and delivery.

Despite the drastic changes in workplaces during COVID-19, our employment programs have been able to continue by adopting necessary

adaptations. We are excited that our program growth over the last several years allows us to support autistic individuals throughout their lifespans.

From QuickStart Nova Scotia programming for toddlers right through to Person Directed Planning, Autism Nova Scotia helps people with autism build the tools needed to define their goals and to achieve whatever success looks like to them.

Whether an individual is seeking post-secondary support; needing help with navigating healthy relationships; searching for guidance with employment, or simply needing a place to connect, our organization acts as their embassy: a place to belong and safe, empowering environment.

We are so grateful for the tremendous generosity of the community, volunteers, donors, businesses and corporations, foundations, and governments who have supported our work. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for supporting our mission and creating real change in the world for neurodiversity.

Our signature fundraising event, Walk YOUR Way for Autism, was held in 2020 thanks to the commitment and creativity of event coordinators, volunteers, sponsors, and participants. We look forward to seeing our province rally together once again for our second virtual Walk in support of autism in September 2021.

For nearly two decades, Autism Nova Scotia has worked to build understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. This year's annual report reflects on so many of the highlights that took place between 2020-2021, but the stories and successes we share is really a

snapshot of the enormous amount of work accomplished by staff, volunteers, and the autism community in Nova Scotia.

Last year was not without significant challenges. But in the spirit of the courageous and resilient autism community whom we support, we met these challenges fearlessly and proudly moved closer to realizing our vision of a world where everyone can enjoy their lives fully in a society where autism is understood and accepted. Thank you.

## **9. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – CYNTHIA CARROLL**

Cynthia thanked everyone for joining the Autism Nova Scotia's 2021 Annual General Meeting.

Cynthia shared that Autism Nova Scotia is fast approaching its 20-year anniversary as an established organization. Since 2002, staff and volunteers across the province have worked tirelessly to provide programs and services to Autistic individuals and their families in their communities.

Cynthia announced that Autism Nova Scotia's founder – Joan Craig—made a generous donation of \$1 M to the Cynthia Carroll Endowment for Autism. She noted that the gift will have a massive positive impact on the programs and services offered by Autism Nova Scotia not only today, but for many years to come.

Cynthia encouraged community members to continue to lead with courage, and continue to overcome barriers to make Nova Scotia the inclusive province everyone deserves.

## **10. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

**MOTION:** Ally Garber moved that the 2021 Annual General Meeting now be adjourned, seconded by Ronda Faulkner.

**MOVED:** The adjournment of the 2021 Annual General meeting was approved by a majority of the attendees of the Annual General Meeting by a Zoom poll.

## **11. SPECIAL VIRTUAL PRESENTATION – AUTISM NOVA SCOTIA: A PLACE TO BELONG**

The first presentation was a special feature video which highlighted Autism Nova Scotia from the perspective of self-advocates- Danielle Griffin and Matt Walsh, the Executive Director – Cynthia Carroll and Autism Nova Scotia's founder – Joan Craig.

## **12. SPECIAL VIRTUAL PRESENTATION – CELEBRATING CHAPTERS OF AUTISM NOVA SCOTIA**

The second presentation highlighted the Autism Nova Scotia's Chapter Regional Program Board members, Chapter Chairs, Co-Chairs, Past-Chairs, and trailblazers.

## **13. SPECIAL VIRTUAL PRESENTATION – LEADING WITH COURAGE – A COLLABORATIVE PRESENTATION BY THE AUTISM COMMUNITY**

The third presentation highlighted Autism Nova Scotia from the perspective of the autism community. The video consisted of messages, stories, and testimonials from Autistic individuals, family members, caregivers, board members, volunteers, staff, and community members from across the province.

#### **14. CLOSING REMARKS – CYNTHIA CARROLL**

Cynthia shared that June 2021 marked the 10-year anniversary of Autism Nova Scotia’s social enterprise: The Pearl.

Cynthia concluded the meeting by thanking the autism community and supporters of Autism Nova Scotia, including self-advocates, advocates, board members, staff at all chapters, volunteers, students, donors, participants, and everyone who worked tirelessly to support individuals and families on the autism spectrum.

She gave a special thank-you to vice-chair Catherine Rahey for chairing the Annual General Meeting and Founder and Honorary Board Member, Joan Craig, for her ongoing support and dedication to bettering the lives of Autistic individuals.

#### **15. MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

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