

**MINUTES OF THE 146th ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
OF THE OTTAWA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB**

January 8, 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

(draft)

Chairperson: Jakob Mueller, President

70 people attended part or all of the Zoom meeting.

The minutes of the previous ABM, the financial statements, Treasurer's Report, and annual reports of OFNC committees for 2023–2024 had previously been available on the Club's website. The meeting was called to order at 7.44 pm. During the meeting, relevant documents were projected on the screen for the audience's reference.

Before the meeting, the Zoom host, Ken Young, explained how the Zoom meeting would work.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

It was **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Lisa Chamney, that the Agenda be adopted as distributed.

CARRIED

2. Welcoming Remarks – Jakob Mueller, President, welcomed the attendees

3. Minutes of the Previous Annual Business Meeting (ABM)

It was **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Diane Lepage, that the minutes of the 145th Annual Business Meeting be accepted as distributed and published in the *Canadian Field Naturalist* (CFN).

CARRIED

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

None

5. Treasurer's Report by Ken Young

It was **moved** by Ken Young, seconded by Ann MacKenzie, that the Financial Statements be accepted as a fair representation of the financial position of the Club as of September 30, 2024.

Ken Young, Treasurer, presented the Financial Statements for the year ending September 30, 2024 as prepared and reviewed by the accounting firm, Welch LLP. Copies of the complete statement as well as the written Treasurer's Report had been available on the Club's website.

Ken advised that the Financial Statements show our revenues, and our expenses, during our fiscal year - the period from October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024.

We take the savings that we had on October 1, add the revenues, subtract the expenses, and we have our "net worth" on September 30.

Every year, particular factors affect the overall results. We didn't hold a Pelee trip in 2024. Only 3 issues of the CFN were published, which lowered our net expenses. The Research grant program was suspended. We made a donation of \$10,000 to Ontario Nature to support their acquisition of land in Eastern Ontario. Finally, interest revenue increased. For the future, Ken noted that the budget for the current fiscal year (2024-25) has a deficit of about \$36,000. This is large, but the Club's actual results are normally better than the budget. Still, the recent history of positive net revenue is likely to change to negative net revenue.

Members asked a number of questions about the financial position of the Club:

Ken advised that we're addressing one area of budgetary concern, by increasing CFN subscription rates.

Should Trail & Landscape be offered on-line or even published entirely on-line? Annie Belair, the Editor, advised that reducing the number of print copies would not be cost effective as the major cost is the printing plates which would have to be prepared anyway. Jakob was of the view that the print copy has advantages that outweigh any financial considerations. The print copy is good advertising when seen elsewhere. It improves engagement and increases exposure. We do not currently have a website that can restrict material to members only, so T & L would no longer be a benefit of membership.

Should we be exploring fundraising? It was noted that the Plant Sale and the Pelee Trip are fundraisers and there are some sales at meetings. There may be options to increase fundraising.

Should we be seeking outside sources of funding? It was felt that our current financial position is such that this is not necessary.

Is the Budget approved at Board level? Yes, and it is appended to the October Board Meeting Minutes which are posted on the web-site.

Does the Board make the decisions about donations? Yes, donations are approved at Board level.

Fenja Brodo asked about the status of the Research Grants program. It is being reviewed and will likely be re-established this year.

CARRIED

6. Review for the FY 2024-25 of the Financial Statements

It was **moved** by Ken Young, seconded by Ann MacKenzie, that a review, rather than an audit, of the OFNC's accounts be conducted for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025.

A number of members inquired why a review rather than an audit was recommended.

Ken advised that audits are used when a high degree of scrutiny is warranted. That is not the case for the OFNC. We rely on external bookkeepers, accountants and investment advisors, as well as a team of volunteers, to ensure the security of our financial system. We separate banking and investment responsibilities. So we have a system of checks and balances to ensure the integrity of the OFNC's finances.

A major issue is cost and time. An audit would cost twice as much as a review. (We currently pay about \$6,000 for our review.) As well, an audit would require much more volunteer time, particularly from a number of key volunteers who already give very generously of their time.

Members discussed the trade-off between the cost of an audit, relative to the increased security it would provide.

In response to an inquiry as to when we were last audited, Ken advised that this was in 2009 when it was done by a club member. In response to a question as to whether there could be any legal liability if the Club was not audited, Ken advised that there is no legal requirement for medium-sized organisations such as ours to be audited, as long as a motion to approve a review is passed by a vote of at least 80%.

The motion was **CARRIED** by a majority of >80%

7. Nomination of the Accounting Firm

It was **moved** by Ken Young, seconded by Ann MacKenzie, that the accounting firm of Welch LLP be contracted to conduct a review of the OFNC's accounts for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025.

CARRIED

9. Committee Annual Reports

It was **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Owen Clarkin, that the committee annual reports be accepted as circulated.

Janette Niwa presented an illustrated slide show of some of the highlights of the work carried out by the various committees over the past year.

CARRIED

10. Adjournment

It was **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Beverly McBride, that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

After the meeting was adjourned, a natural history quiz was presented by Diane Lepage

Elizabeth Moore
Secretary