

NEW ROSS DISTRICT MUSEUM SOCIETY



Annual General Meeting | Minutes

Wednesday June 19th, 6:00 PM

Hearth Room Café, Ross Farm Museum

In attendance: Chris Atwood, George Broome, Krista Cook, Stacy Corkum, Richard Donald, Tena Elliott, Ethel Feener, Gerald Keddy, Janet Larder, Jackie MacDonald, Ashley Marlin, Jane Morphew, Judy O'Leary, Christopher Reeves, Darren Russell, Jim Sweet, Dana Veinot, Monique Veinott, and Evelyn White.

1. The Annual General Meeting for the New Ross District Museum Society was held in the Ross Farm Museum Learning Centre Hearth Room Café, Wednesday, June 19th 2024.

All participating were present physically. The Chair welcomed everyone. Quorum was achieved and Chair Gerald Keddy called the meeting to order at 6:05PM. All present introduced themselves,

2. **Dana Veinot moved approval of the Agenda, seconded by Judy O'Leary. Motion carried.**
3. Gerald Keddy inquired whether all had had the opportunity to read the minutes. **Chris Atwood moved the approval of the Minutes as drafted, seconded by George Broome Motion carried.**
4. Gerald Keddy presented the following President's Report.

Good evening and thanks for coming,

Before I get into my remarks I do want to recognize the hard work of our former and current Board members. Your dedication to Ross Farm is exceptional and the results are obvious, thank you. A perfect example of this is the weeks of volunteer time put into setting up the Hearth Room Cafe'. Janet Larder and Dana Veinotte took on this project and starting with an empty room they stopped 7 weeks later with the Cafe we are enjoying today. I also need to thank Society members Mike Keddy and Colleen Veinotte who were press ganged into helping.

Much of the spring involved advertising for, interviewing and finally hiring our new Executive Director. Thank you to the hiring committee, ED Richard Donald, board Secretary Jackie MacDonald, Board Treasurer Chris Atwood and farm member Andrew DeAdder. It had been my intention this evening to introduce our new Executive Director Lynette De Montreuil. Unfortunately Lynette could not be with us tonight. She is canoeing in Owen Sound, Ontario. Lynette has a wealth of experience working with the Desbrisay Museum and Wile Carding Mill, part of the Nova Scotia museum family. We look forward to her joining our team on July 12.

2024 has been a formative year for Ross Farm. Our Interim Executive Director Richard Donald has helped the farm through a period of transition. We have had the retirement of our long time Farm manager Barry Hiltz and he has been replaced by his former assistant

manager Darren Russell. Barry thank you for your service and Darren good luck. We all look forward to working with you.

With Richards' help the board has completed our Strategic Plan and we look forward to its implementation. It needs to be noted that Ross Farm staff had input into this plan and the final touch was a joint meeting between the Board and Farm staff followed by a BBQ. The Board has also started a Friends of Ross Farm Volunteer group chaired by Board member Jane Morphew.

There is more to do but a sure sign of positive momentum is the fact that Ross Farm for the first time in many years has Canadian horse breeding stock and we can expect colts in the coming year.

Finally, in closing I want to recognize and thank Ross Farm Staff. You all do an exceptional job everyday, your hard work and dedication makes this living museum the gem that it is.

Evelyn White moved the acceptance of the President's Report, seconded by Chris Atwood, Motion carried.

5. Richard Donald presented the following Executive Director's Report.

It has been almost a year since I joined Ross Farm Museum as the Interim Director, and I would like to start by expressing what a pleasure it has been to have had this opportunity to work with the staff and Board of the Museum, as well as my fellow museum Directors. During this time, I have come to know the community of New Ross a bit more – especially living in the community through the winter. It is a special place with a unique and vibrant spirit of resilience and self-reliance – and an incredibly efficient gossip network!

I would like to quickly review some of the highlights from the past year, starting with staffing, in which there have been several changes.

With the increase in grant funding from the province, we have been able to fill several new staff positions, including a permanent heritage carpenter, horse teamster, and collections/heritage clothing assistant. We have also been carrying an open position in the administration of the farm which we hope to fill shortly.

We said goodbye to Barry Hiltz (who as we speak is panning for gold in the Yukon) this past year – who gave so much to the Museum and knew where 'all the bodies were buried'. Darren Russel has filled his shoes most capably.

We have experienced strong and growing visitor numbers, which is in large part due to a more focused emphasis on social media, thanks to Kim Lenihan, who took over those responsibilities from the former social media coordinator. There have been a couple of viral posts, such as a newborn lamb that garnered close to 200,000 likes.

On the back end, we have been focusing on strengthening some administrative procedures, including refining job descriptions, employment contracts, HR policy review, direct deposits of wages, and changes in RRSP/health plan eligibilities – not exactly glamorous, but necessary tasks.

In terms of health and safety, we passed another safety audit with flying colors, thanks to Darren and the safety committee for all their hard work in keeping our workplaces free of serious mishaps.

The backbone of the museum is our interpretive program, centered on our skilled historical interpreters. I have never worked with a more skilled and diverse group of people, for whom I have immense respect. Programs support the interpretive work – thanks to all the historical interpreters for their dedication in planning and delivering them.

The elephant in the room is this room: We have launched the Hearth Room Café, thanks to the drive and hard work of Janet Larder and Dana Vienot, and the skill of our Hearth Room Café manager, Jaimee Barkhouse, who is unable to be here tonight. Thank you for your enthusiasm for this project, Janet: you have refined the term ‘dog with a bone’

Working closely with Tena Elliot, we have a full slate of exhibits in the learning centre. Soil and Body opened at the beginning of May with a kickoff attended by 150 people. That will be with us for another week. We have an “Every Child Matters” exhibit coming up shortly, followed by a Climate Change Exhibit from the Ontario Science Centre. Finally, the Nova Scotia Mastodon exhibit will be with us for part of the winter months.

I am leaving you to retire in Margaree in a couple of weeks, and I will be succeeded by Lynette de Montreuil, who will be an exceptional leader at the Museum. Reflecting on why I felt excited about taking on this job a year ago, I see the enormous potential of Ross Farm Museum in contributing to the important discussions that we are having as a community and which we must continue to have. The lessons of fortitude and endurance that we take from the first settlers of New Ross will and must contribute to the important contemporary discussions we are having related to climate change and sustainable agriculture, heritage skills and sustainability, reconciliation, and immigration, to name a few. In all these themes, there are elements of the Ross Farm story that can help shape the perspectives and discussion of these important issues.

Apart from contributing to change through our programs and skills, we also need to look at how we use our infrastructure, particularly this learning centre, as a support to a broad community. This past year, we opened our kitchen to a winter supper program in conjunction with the Family Resource Centre; we host at-risk students from Highbury School who come to the farm for practical hand elements of their program; and we continue to host community meetings for a variety of community groups.

Increasingly in the future, the funding for Ross Farm Museum will be determined by the extent we are able to demonstrate our value in contributing to societal challenges, both local and international, and how we partner with other government-funded organizations to leverage our grant funding. I hope that the new strategic plan will provide the framework for this.

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to lead this exceptional Museum.

Judy O’Leary moved the acceptance of the Executive Director’s Report, seconded by Jane Morphew. Motion carried.

6. In the absence of our accountant Beth Crosby, Treasurer Chris Atwood presented the Review Engagement Financial Statement for the Year ending March 31, 2024 from Kent & Duffett Chartered Professional Accountants. Chris noted that New Ross Farm ended the year with an expected operational loss of \$116,000 and a net cash position of \$326,114. Operationally, the Farm’s Provincial grant was up 38% over the previous year and wage expenses was up by 25% for the year as well due to salary adjustments.

Chris Atwood moved acceptance of the financial report, seconded by Judy O’Leary. Motion carried.

7. Gerald Keddy introduced and explained the two Special Resolutions included on the meeting agenda, noting that this year, the first of these motions replaced appointing accountants for the coming financial year, before asking all in attendance to waive the 21-day notice period specified in our by-laws.

Chris Atwood moved that the 21-day notice period be waived, seconded by Dana Veinot. Motion carried unanimously.

I. Audit of Financial Statements

Judy O’Leary moved approval of the following Special Resolution re: Audit of Financial Statement, seconded by Chris Atwood. Motion carried unanimously.

Ross Farm Museum Annual Financial Statements will be examined through an Audit Engagement at least once every three years. If not Audited, RFM Annual Financial Statements will be examined through Accountant Review Engagement.

II. Ross Farm Museum Board

George Broome moved approval of the following Special Resolution re: Ross Farm Museum Board name, seconded by Dana Veinot. Motion carried unanimously.

The New Ross District Museum Society Board of Directors may adopt for informal use the shorter, clearer name “Ross Farm Museum Board”. New Ross District Museum Society

will remain the name registered with the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stocks (NSRJS) and used for banking and all other legal and business purposes.
Gerald Keddy noted that use of Ross Farm Museum Board would also be protected through NSRJS registration.

8. George Broome confirmed his intent to retire from the New Ross Museum Board.

Gerald Keddy presented Stacy Corkum as willing to serve as a Ross Farm Museum Board Director and shared details of Stacy's background.

Jackie MacDonald nominated Stacy Corkum as a Director of the New Ross District Museum Society; Evelyn White seconded the nomination.

Gerald Keddy called three times for further nominations from the floor to the Board of Directors; no further nominations were received. Gerald then read the names of 2024-2025 New Ross District Museum Society Board of Directors, as follows, and called for approval.

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| 1. Chris Atwood | 4. Janet Larder | 7. Judy O'Leary |
| 2. Stacy Corkum | 5. Jackie MacDonald | 8. Dana Veinot |
| 3. Gerald Keddy | 6. Jane Morpew | 9. Evelyn White. |

Judy O'Leary moved approval of the 2024-2025 Directors, seconded by Jane Morpew Motion carried.

Gerald Keddy thanked George for his years of service, noting he will be missed, and presented George with a Ross Farm Museum cribbage board. George spoke briefly about his work with Ross Farm Museum, its staff and Directors, with special thanks to Gerald and Richard for their work.

9. Jane Morpew moved the meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

On behalf of Ross Farm Museum, Richard Donald accepted the Municipality of Chester's 2024 Best Farm or Forestry Business award, presented by Ashley Marlin, Community Economic Development Officer, Municipality of Chester.

Respectfully Submitted:
Jackie MacDonald, Secretary, New Ross District Museum Society.