

Minutes/Meeting Notes

Annual General Meeting for the College of Paramedics of Nova Scotia Session 4

DATE: May 26, 2021

2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Microsoft Teams Platform

No in-person meeting space due to COVID-19 Pandemic

No sign in sheet available due to COVID-19 Pandemic – Attendance retrieved from Microsoft Teams Platform

1. Call to Order

The President called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm, noting that for the meeting to proceed at least 12 paramedic members must be present at the meeting, per Bylaw Article 20.4.

- Attendance recorded: Noting 51 paramedic voting paramedics and 4 members of the public were in attendance at today's AGM during call to order
- Present at today's AGM according to the Microsoft Teams Platform by category were:

Practicing Paramedics: David Giles, Sheldon Johnston, Karl Kowalczyk, Donald Ryan Brown, Shelagh Wright, Alicia McLsac, Alan Cooke, Brian Oliver, Bruce Sangster, Devin Wright, Travis Anthony MacNeil, Scott Ramey, Robert Malley, Earl Russell, Kevin Timmons, Stephen Crocker, Michael MacKenzie, Robert Sweeney, Geoffrey Mills, Laura Hirello, Barry Tracey, Caitlin McLellan, Sylvia Costain, Michelle Landry, Alex Bromley, Stephen Leadlay, Sandee Crooks, Wayne Canfield, Daniel Jacobs, Kevin Carey, Zachary Fitzsimmons, Leon Bootland, Mark Walker, Steve Menzies, Pamela MacLennan, Christopher Norland, Chris MacKenzie, Michelle Landry, Markus Bruegger, Vanessa Thompson, Stacey Boyko, Steve DeWolfe, Derek LeBlanc, Janel Swain, Tyler MacCuspic, Christopher Carriere, Jerome MacDonald

Restricted Practicing: Dillon Krzwda, Michael Barton, Samantha Thibodeau, Carla-Marie Elliott

Guests: Nick Burke (Public Council Representative OIC Appointment), Elizabeth Mann (Public Council Representative OIC Appointment), Douglas Lloy (Hearing Committee Chair, College appointed Public Representative), Loretta Manning (Fitness to Practice Committee Chair, College appointed Public Representative)

The President noted that the agenda had been previously approved by Council in accordance with College Bylaw 20.1, which indicates Council approves the agenda for the AGM.

2.0 Standing Rules

The President stated that any member who wished to address the meeting do so by introducing themselves, their registration number, their class of license, category of license (Practicing, Restricted Practicing, Temporary or Restricted Temporary) and the geographic district they are from.

President noted that per Paramedics Regulation 33(a) A member who is entered in the temporary roster or restricted temporary roster may attend and participate in meetings of the College as a non-voting member. So, during the voting process any member with a temporary or restricted temporary license and/or guests cannot vote.

During the voting process, a poll will be placed in the Teams Platform chat area for members to respond to. The poll is anonymous and cannot be linked back to a specific individual.

When seeking a paramedic to make a motion or second a motion, the President will call for a motion. Then, will look to a paramedic who has raised their hand at the person who made the motion. Then, will call for another paramedic to second the motion, and will look for another paramedic to raise their hand to second the motion.

For those who wish to raise a question or comment, the President asked them to either raise their hand to be recognized, so they could address the meeting, or type the information in the Teams platform chat and it would be brought forward to the meeting.

- No questions were brought forward from the attendees.

3. Introduction of Council Members Present

The President introduced this agenda item.

The President introduced the Council including those who were outgoing and incoming members:

- Ryan Brown (PCP class of licensure), Travis MacNeil (ICP class of licensure), Jason MacKay (ACP class of licensure), Sean Teed (CCP class of licensure), Kevin Carey (Central Geographical District), Laura Hirello (Northern Region), Ryan Grist (Western Region), Brian Oliver (Eastern Region), Elizabeth Mann (Public Representative OIC Appointment), Nick Burke (Public Representative OIC Appointment), Caitlin Lees (Public Representative OIC Appointment), and Andrew Nemirovsky (Public Representative OIC Appointment).
- Incoming members: Sandee Crooks (Central Region), Kevin Carey (was the Central Geographical representative, re-elected as the Critical Care Paramedic class of licensure representative)
- Outgoing members: Sean Teed (CCP Class of License), Douglas Lloy (Public Representative OIC Appointment and Jim Williams (Public Representative OIC Appointment),

4. Approval of the 2020 AGM Minutes

The President introduced this agenda item, noting the minutes were previously distributed via the College's portal for all members.

Additionally, the minutes were placed in the chat area for all Registrants to review.

After asking if there were any questions or concerns regarding the minutes the President called for a motion to approve the minutes.

- Motion to approve the minutes from the May 27, 2020, Annual General Meeting Session 3.
Motioned: Member Sangster 31324
Seconded: Member Carey 78887
President restates the motion
Vote: Majority in favour. Motion passed

5. President's Annual Report

The President introduced this agenda item, presented their report, noting the following:

- Acknowledged this was their last meeting as President and congratulated the incoming President, Councillor Carey
- The fiscal year began with the College acknowledging that we were in unprecedented times, due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The citizens of Nova Scotia were counting upon us, and all regulatory bodies, to support the healthcare system, while ensuring we met the public's expectation to protect their interests.
- Despite the pandemic, the Council, the College's statutory committees and staff ensured the College continued to function implementing measures to protect the public interest in the practice of paramedicine.
- Late in March, and into early April, of 2020, the Council and Registration Committee implemented processes that permitted non-licensed paramedics to assist during the pandemic and those licensed paramedics who did not meet the College's continuing competency program requirements could be issued restricted temporary licenses, thus, allowing those paramedics to practice.
- Council also reflected upon the College's continuing competency program, recognizing that Registrants were limited in their ability to obtain certain point requirements due to public gathering restrictions put in place under public health orders. Due to this, the Council conducted an analysis of the situation and modified the continuing competency point requirements for the April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021 period to place a heavier emphasis on the program's self-directed learning requirements.
- Council and Committees continued to meet their statutory obligations by attending virtual meetings via the College's secure Microsoft Teams meeting platform. Not one meeting was missed as the result of the pandemic, showing the College's commitment to our public interest mandate.
- Reflecting upon the past year, it is important to recognize that the Council has made significant progress in completing four of the strategic priorities it had established in the three-year strategic plan from October of 2019. Many of these priorities were reached because of the work associated with the College's consultation on the proposed amendments to the *Paramedics Act and Regulations*.
- Operationally, College staff ensured day-to-day business functions continued, with processes only slowing due to external forces, such as postal and courier services and the receipt of criminal record checks. Thanked, on behalf of Council, the College staff for their excellent work during these trying times.
- Thanked all their fellow Councillors and committee members for their dedication to the work of the College, we all had our challenges but made things work to continue to protect the public's interest in the practice of paramedicine.
- Thanked the Registrants for their efforts, no matter what their practice setting was, for their resilience in providing care or supporting those who provide care to the citizens of Nova Scotia.

At the end of the report, the President declared it filed.

6. Approval of Auditors

The President introduced this agenda item and noted that the Council made the recommendation to continue with Grant Thornton as the auditors for the 2021 – 2022 fiscal year.

- No discussion points were raised.
- Motion to approve Grant Thornton as the College's auditors for 2022.
Motioned: Member Russell 20417
Seconded: Member Tracey 30486
President restates the motion
Vote: Majority in favour. Motion passed

7. Executive Director/Registrar Annual Report

The President introduced this agenda item and invited ED/Registrar to present their report.

The ED/Registrar address the meeting noting the following:

- Operationally the College staff continues to support:
 - The Council, as well as all College Statutory, Standing and Ad-hoc committees.
 - Registration and licensing process.
 - Complaint/professional conduct process.
- Executive Director position is supported by the CPNS staff, researching, and preparing work on a day to day basis.
 - Registration and Licensure, we must ensure that we comply with many governing bodies including the Human Resources Act and Canada's Free Trade Agreement.
 - There were 23 meetings this year. Each meeting requires 2-3 days of preparation time by staff prior to the meetings and post-meeting another 1-2 days for final documentation.
 - Attended 42 external Committee meetings on behalf of the College and made 14 presentations about the College to various groups.
- New practice guidelines have been developed in relation to practicing during a pandemic and social media, pertinent documents are all live on the web at www.cpnsc.ca
- Spoke about the College's relationship with the Department of Health and Wellness, the Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre regarding the Centre's progress on developing a Critical Care Paramedic program and their intent to submit a program for Council's consideration early in the 2021 – 2022 fiscal year.
- The consultations consumed a significant amount of staff time during 2020 – 2021, attending meeting with the consultants with the intent of providing an educational piece to those who participated in the consultation process. It was interesting to note that the College held a total of 5 session for College Registrants. Each time there would be around 100 paramedics register for the event with only around 110 paramedics, or approximately 8% actually attending all the sessions. It would have been phenomenal if the College had of had 500 paramedics participate in the consultation process.
- In reviewing the professional conduct process in the annual report, it is important to note that:
 - In the ground ambulance setting when a complaint is brought forward it is usually directed toward both paramedics in the ambulance. Each person is a different and separate complaint that will be processed.
 - The most common complaint is associated with how the paramedic interacted/communicated with the member of the public is the most common complaint, approximately 54% of all the current complaints.
 - Investigations are now costing in the range of \$110,000 annually, if we can reduce complaints, we can avoid fee increases.
 - Fitness-to-practise is going to be another significant cost we will see in the 2021-2022 because we are finally in the College's life cycle where we are going to see paramedics preparing to return to practise after being off for issued associated with capacity and/or competence.
- Reviewed data regarding the College's Registrants found on page 19 of the annual report.
- Year over year there is a decrease in:
 - Labour mobility applicants. This has been attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that public health had put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
 - New to Practice Applicants. This too has been attributed to the shutdown of educational institutions which reduced the number of graduates over the course of 2020 – 2021.
- Of the 1352 +/- registrant who could have renewed in February and March of 2021 only 1250 renewed before March 31, 2021, a decrease of over 100 registrants.
- Last year members geographically by region: 16.3% Northern, 33.7% Central, 25.3% Eastern and 24.7% Western
- Male 788, Female 461, Undifferentiated 1.

The ED/Registrar asked if there were any questions.

- No further questions or discussion.

The President thanked the Executive Director/Registrar and declared the Executive Director/Registrar's Annual Report for 2021 filed.

8. Audited Financial Statements for 2021

The President introduced this agenda item and called upon the ED/Registrar to complete a review of the financial statements and to address any questions.

The ED/Registrar reviewed the financial statements for the members in attendance, referring to the following:

- Finances are managed with a conservative approach. The College cannot fail as an entity because our legislation dictates that we cannot. Do not want to be in a position where the College is forced to use all its reserves and/or apply a one-time special licensing fee. One appeal court process could dry up the finances quickly.
- Three-year budget forecast demonstrates sound financial planning for the College's future, noting that several factors were considered including:
 - the membership fee information from several other healthcare regulators in Nova Scotia.
 - the unpredictability of the College's revenue source.
 - the financial risks associated with the professional conduct process.
 - the volume of complaints the College received in the last year.
 - plans to develop the College's contingency funds in the amount of \$700,000.
 - Considered the surpluses that the College has witnessed over the past 4 years and is allowing for a deficit budget for 2021- 2022 and 2022 – 2023, with a return to a surplus in 2023 – 2024. Fees stayed at \$450 this year but will increase to \$500 next year. There is an intent to closely watch this year's budget to determine if a deficit will be recognized and to what degree, at which time, if needed a budget may be adjusted.
- Executive Director noted, for reference, the audited financial statements start on page 36 of the annual report.
- Spoke to how an audit works. Management puts together the financial statements for the auditors. The auditor's thoroughly review and analyse the statements looking for material errors. The financial statements are taken and validated on whether we are in compliance with the principles looking at risks, internal controls, and the accounting principles.
- Viewing page 40 of the audit statement, the financial position, and the balance sheet: CPNS has money on hand from the audit in 2021 as approximate 1.6 million dollars. On the balance sheet, assets are balanced against liabilities and net assets.
- Council moved some money into a low-risk investment to start generating money for the College. From September 2019 to today's date the \$400,000 invested these made very little return this year the current rate is 0.5%
- Notes the excess of revenue over expenditures \$77,155.
- Investigation fees to cost \$116,000, which has increased from last year which was anticipated and budgeted for because of the number of complaints. Based upon the trends being noted, it is anticipated that we will have up to 30 complaints per year, so we will continue to budget just in excess of \$100,000/year for complaints.
- Professional fees increased significantly this year due to the consultations regarding the proposed amendments to the *Paramedics Act and Regulations*.
- This coming year a new part-time administrative support position will be hired to assist College staff with general application and inquiry processes.
- Statement of cash flow revenue available to us for year end. We will use funds to continue to operate the organization effectively and efficiently.
- In an example of estimating costs: One hearing could cost the College up to \$50,000, are we in a position if we have to go to a hearing associated with complaint application process? We need to ensure that we are.

- Discussed the Fitness to Practice process. There are nine people that may need to go through this process, one case could cost us up to \$8,000 or more. There is enough for one or two a year. We could have potentially eight cases this calendar year. Looking at how to manage these with the lens of protecting the public's interest with the financial resources at hand.

The ED/Registrar asked if there were any questions.

Questions & Discussion:

Earl Russell: In 2023-2024 you are anticipating a new registrant increase what are you basing this on?

ED/Registrar: Throughout any fiscal year Registrants who do not renew by March 31 annual may renew throughout the year and in addition to them we have applicants seeking initial registration & licensing. So, over the course of the past three years we have seen a slight increase in licensed registrants. For example, this year there were 1352 registrants before renewal. COVID-19 pandemic slowed the upward trend of new registrants this past year with travel restrictions, but we anticipate this returning to normal.

Vanessa Thompson: Is the College able to cut costs with banking fees by switching to online banking such as Simply or Tangerine?

ED/Registrar: Most of the banking costs in the financial statement are Merchant Solution fees from credit card processing, these fees are highly competitive and with TD Bambora we have the best rates possible. The College has \$0 interest fees as we do not borrow money. Monthly banking fees are less than \$25 per month.

Vanessa Thompson: Are Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT)s a possibility for the College?

ED/Registrar: EFTs were investigated with TD Bank when the College was formed, and the College was cautioned due to security risks. When money is sent it must be deposited and there are risks to where those funds get deposited. Furthermore, there are significant staffing resources that would have to be pulled from operations as this money would have to be tracked, deposited, reconciled, etc. Currently, our Merchant Solution tracks and deposits funds automatically with no risk or need for staffing resources.

David Giles: Is there another way for the College to generate revenue [other than member fees]?

ED/Registrar: Currently, the College has GICs as investments as a conservative revenue approach as directed by Council. There is .5% interest accumulation. There is no way to generate revenue from education as the College would be in a conflict of interest in requiring/mandating education that it would profit from. The primary way any self-regulating body is funded is with member/registrant fees.

David Giles: What about funding from ambulance fees from the public?

ED/Registrar: Harnessing funds from the public are not possible and would have to be a decision made by government. Currently registrant registration & licensure fees are the primary source of funding.

Stacey Boyko: Saskatchewan College of Paramedics does accept EFTs, I feel it should be seriously looked into.

ED/Registrar: The College is not privy to the staffing or security resources SCOP has at their disposal. As stated previously for staffing and security reasons the risk was too high and resources needed were too great. Staff could potentially put this money elsewhere and operations would have to shift to accommodate the additional workload.

Mike Janczyszn: Auto deposit for business accounts from EFTs is possible and should be looked into.

ED/Registrar: As mentioned previously, in discussions with TD bank when the College was formed, this was not a possibility, but the College may revisit this option if directed by Council in consultation with TD Bank, and the Auditors.

Scott Ramey: [What about providing] regulatory oversight [for] MFR/EMRs to contribute additional revenue?

ED/Registrar: The College is not able to regulate MFRs or EMRs as the current legislation permits the regulation of PCPs, ICPs, ACPs, and CCPs, thus any additional regulation would have to come from government and lead to a major change of the Paramedics Act and Regulations.

President: Regulating MFRs or EMRs is entirely outside of the College's jurisdiction.

Scott Ramey: [There are] MFR/EMRs from 251 Fire Departments in the province. Some MFR/EMRs work on movie sets providing First Aid and with their scope of practice expanded, this could be potentially looked at.

ED/Registrar: As stated previously, the College's mandate is to serve and protect the public interest in the practice of paramedicine, MFRs or EMRs are not in the College's Paramedics Act or Regulations.

Sylvia Costain: Where are we compared to other provinces for licensing cost?

ED/Registrar: We do not look to other provinces for licensing costs as we have completely different variables for operations. The College's licensing costs are based on managing operations based upon our mandate, legislation and registration numbers. We have looked to costs associated with similar sized College's in NS, which is described in the annual report.

Robert Sweeney: [Comment, not for follow up] I know I can't speak to other fire departments in the province, but as Karl stated, with limited funding for operations in my fire department, if we were required to license and pay fees to remain MFR's in NS, I'm 99% sure we would step down from the MFR program, and discontinue the service. I'm sure many departments like mine would follow because of the shoe string budget they are on.

Alicia McIsaac: Perhaps speaking with some of those provinces may give assistance and ideas to cost cutting and managing. Especially with the College being young compared to more established Colleges.

ED/Registrar: Fitness to practice and the professional conduct processes are the cost fluctuations that are concerning currently. Communication issues are the primary complaint issues and drive of the costs of the Professional Conduct process. As far as speaking with the other jurisdictions, we are members of the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators (COPR), where the College sits at the table with all other paramedic regulators in the country. The College is always looking to share costs with other Paramedicine regulators in addition to other healthcare regulators.

Tyler MacCuspig: [Will the College's] virtual presence be staying virtual, or will meetings move back to in person? Recognizing that fees are higher with face to face for accommodations.

ED/Registrar: Whether or not the College continues with meetings virtually would have to come from Council. There have been times when Councillors have expressed in person meetings would be beneficial. It really depends on the matters being discussed and the type of interaction warranted. However the annual AGM in previous years would cost 6-8k, there has been no cost for the College for the past 2 years.

Tyler MacCuspig: Would this [decision] be committee based or Council based?

ED/Registrar: Council is our governing body so this would all be decided by Council. The in person meeting budget is there and accounted for.

President: There is utility and necessity for in person at times, however it is ultimately up to Council.

Chris MacKenzie: For the complaints process, is the paramedic charged fees when they have a complaint? Like Alberta College of Paramedics, Physicians or barristers that are fined?

ED/Registrar: Applying a financial penalty, for legitimately incurred costs, to a member for a complaint would depend on the outcome of the complaint and whether the Committee makes the decision to charge the penalty. The College has 2 Committees that could potentially impose a fee; The Hearing or Appeals Committee. It would be a decision the Committee would make whether or not the College would get reimbursed.

President: It is important to note that these Committees (Hearing & Appeal) are independent of CPNS Council.

Michael Barton: The costs have been raised in New Brunswick a few times as well. This year I believe we paid \$419. There was a last minute announcement for a cost increase just before Christmas. This was again due to public complaints.

ED/Registrar: We cannot speak for other regulators or associations (e.g. PANB), The College uses forecasts in an effort to to identify all costs, so hopefully there are no unexpected costs. Council is trying to avoid any last minute fee increases, and such increases can be avoided based upon Council reevaluating the budget on an annualized basis.

Michael Barton: Thank you, the comment was to assist as a comment earlier regarding provincial size comparison of regulators.

Robert Sweeney: Is there a possibility that if fees are raised and the financial situation of the College improves or creates a surplus, would our licensure fees have the option to be reduced?

ED/Registrar: We don't anticipate licensing fees being reduce, they may not be increase. We have approximately a million dollars in our account presently, which is the reason the Council allowed a deficit for 1-2 years.

No other questions/comments were posed.

The president declared the Audited Financial Statements for 2021 filed.

9. Business Arising from 2020 AGM

The President addressed this agenda item, noting that there was no business arising from the minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting Session 3.

10. Elections for 2021

The President introduced this agenda item noting the following:

- There is no requirement for a run-off vote at today's AGM as there were no ties in any of the elections.
- The Election for a President and Vice President positions on Council took place earlier today.
 - The Incoming President is Kevin Carey.
 - The Incoming Vice-President is Laura Hirello.

11. Resolutions & Motions to be voted upon pursuant to Bylaw Article 22

The President introduced and addressed this business item by noting no resolutions or motions were put forward in accordance with the College's Bylaws.

12. Other Matters as determined by Council

The President noted that the Council had no further matters to bring forward at this year's AGM.

13. Member Forum

The President called for any comments, questions, or concerns from the membership in attendance.

Questions & Discussion:

Janel Swain: [Has there been] any conversation about adjusting education credits due to Covid-19?

President: At the last Council meeting before today's sessions just a couple of weeks ago, Council decided the annual continuing competency program requirements would be adjusted due to the pandemic with something similar as last year.

ED/Registrar: There will be a memo circulated on behalf of Council regarding continuing competency program requirements in a few weeks.

Chad Drover: If a paramedic has a complaint about the College, who do they go to?

ED/Registrar: If a paramedic has a complaint about the College they would bring their complaint to the College. The College conferred with Legal Counsel regarding this potential scenario and the complaint would be brought to the Council.

Chad Drover: That seems like a conflict of interest

ED/Registrar: If there is a concern regarding the College's ability to serve and protect the public interest in the practice of paramedicine it can be brought forward to the College, where it will be brought to Council.

President: As a reminder, there are two sides to consider if someone was considering a complaint regarding the College. The College has day to day operations as well as governance as overseen by Council

Alicia McIsaac: When it was mentioned that to help reduce investigation fees that paramedics should speak nicer and be more kind, is there data on how many complaints turn out to be say unfounded vs requiring investigation?

ED/Registrar: Yes we have this data, please refer to the [annual report](#) for the outcomes of the investigations.

Alicia McIsaac: Do all complaints receive the same level of investigation? Or would there be a tier level that complaints could move up?

ED/Registrar: Every complaint that the College receives is different, not all complaints are alike, they can be dismissed, informally resolved, investigated by the Investigation Committee, or referred to the Fitness to Practice Committee. Please see the [complaints process details on the CPNS website](#)

Chad Drover: Is there some sort of limitation on how long a complaint can linger? If, for example, a member of the public makes a complaint against a paramedic for whatever reason, and then fails or chooses not to respond to investigation questions from the college, how long can that continue? Is there a time limit on how long it can be allowed to continue?

ED/Registrar: When a complaint is made by a member of the public, the College requests a statement to proceed with the complaints process. It can take several months before the College receives an actual statement from the complainant.

Elizabeth Mann (Chair of the Investigation Committee): It is important to note that a paramedic must participate if they are the subject or witness to a complaint. In addition to having a duty to report professional misconduct or conduct unbecoming. If a member complains and the College has no information, it takes time to gather the pertinent details to make a decision. If a member of the public ceases to come forward with additional information when initial contact is made about a complaint, the College may close the complaint as unfounded, however the public can pursue the complaint at any time.

Stacey Boyko: If a complaint comes in about a paramedic and [the employer] EMCI investigates it should it not be handed to the College and not the company? Just curious

ED/Registrar: It depends entirely on the context of the complaint. The College has to consider whether the complaint is an employment issue or is it a public interest/safety issue? It also depends on the severity of the complaint. The College does not regulate employment issues. Professional misconduct or conduct unbecoming of the practice of paramedicine would be related to the College.

Stephen Leadlay: [Comment not for response] When dealing with medical issues or legal claims, it can take years for cases to work through systems. My comment is to provide context to the length of time associated with some investigation processes

ED/Registrar: It is important to note, that Stephen Leadlay is a paramedic member of the Investigation Committee and is involved in Quality Assurance for one of Nova Scotia Health's Zones.

14. Adjournment

The President called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

- Motion to adjourn the Annual General Meeting – Session 4, May 26, 2021.

Motioned: Member Sangster 31324

Seconded: Member Crooks 31397

President restates the motion

Vote: Majority in favour. Motion passed

The AGM was adjourned at 3:33 pm.