

Minutes of the Membership Meeting held on Monday, April 22, 2024 at 7 pm in the Cobble Hill Hall at 3550 Watson Avenue in the Cobble Hill Village.

Those present: Roger Painter – President, Roy Davies – Vice President, Robin Brett – Treasurer, Jeff Shaw, Jayne Shaw, Dorothy Sjostrom, Terry Harrison, Scott Robertson, George Baird, Gord Dickenson, Jim Southwell, Russell Dann, Shirley Cooke, Irene Evans, Heather Witt, Betsy Burr, Bernie Dinter, 1 Guest and Gerry Giles – Secretary.

President Roger called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and welcomed everyone to the first membership meeting of the year. He explained he will give an overview of what has been transpiring with the Farmers Institute and the work being done on the Fair then Robin Brett, the treasurer, will provide a financial report. He said he would appreciate questions at the end of each presentation. After Robin's financial presentation we will be fortunate to have Bernie Dinter speak to us tonight on gardening in the South Cowichan area and perhaps what we can do to wake our gardens up after the winter season.

Roger then provided an update on the following:

- The work done on upgrading the WiFi system for the Fair and the recent underground electrical extension line from the building out to Fisher/Holland Avenue to accommodate power at the gate during the Fair. This work is being done with grant funds.
- Enhancing our volunteer and sponsorship experience by hosting an appreciation dinner in September to congratulate and thank both our sponsors and volunteers for their ongoing support.
- The Farmers Institute held another very successful Seedy Saturday that saw happy vendors and well over a thousand visitors to our two sites.
- Our Easter Egg Hunt has grown in size thank always to our loyal sponsors Bill and Dee Motherwell. They continue to sponsor and stage one of the best Easter Egg Hunts in the Cowichan Valley.
- Our Pot Pie program has been very successful and has kept the Farmers Institute in the black financially. The volunteers who work on that program are well organized and enjoy the time spent making this product.
- We are building a very good reputation for our catering program and have delivered some top-quality meals to the Legion and others like the Vintage Car Club of Canada. We hope to grow this program more in the future.
- Have recently had a work party cleaning up and repairing the grounds around the hall where they have been disturbed for the new addition and for the underground electrical work. We will either seed or hydro seed this area in the near future.
- Our most valuable asset is our volunteers... we are a volunteer organization. This is a society owned entity and it only exists because of the volunteers who drive it. It is not owned or operated by government.

A question came from the membership about the distribution of meeting minutes. The secretary clarified the minutes are emailed to all paid members on a monthly basis. In addition, the minutes, along with a lot of other pertinent information, are posted on the Farmers Institute website under the 'Download' tab for anyone to see and access.

Fair Report: Roger said the following items are under consideration for modification, enhancement or reintroduction.

- Enhancing the parade to make it more child oriented
- Improving our recycling program
- Having an Open Poultry show
- Looking for horses for the children's horse rides
- Enhancing the KIDS ZONE
- Bringing back WELLY WANGING
- Possibly bringing back HAY BAIL TOSSING – depends on the price/availability of hay
- Hopefully the Kerry Park Islanders & the Cowichan Capitals Hockey Teams to help us
- There is no conflict with Nanaimo fair this year.

Robin Brett provided an overview of the financial situation of the Farmers Institute indicating funds now exist in reserve for the Insurance, the Fair, a new floor and we a contingency fund. This picture is very different than when we entered Covid-19 those few short years ago when we were more than 30,000 in debt and thought we would have to close our doors within two months. It goes to show what a very determined group of volunteers can do over a relatively short two-year period to turn a debt into a situation where our books are now fairly healthy. Especially when you consider our halls were closed to the public at the time.

Questions were asked and answered.

Moved/second

The treasurer's report be accepted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED


President Roger then welcomed Bernie Dinter to the meeting. Bernie gave a very knowledgably and visually stimulating forty-minute presentation on gardening in the Cowichan Valley. His talk covered a variety of topics from over wintering, gardening in raised beds, types of greenhouses, varieties of seeds and seed producers. Bernie is always willing to share his extensive knowledge and we were delighted to have him at our meeting.

Roger thanked Bernie on our behalf.

Next meeting is at the call of the President.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm

Submitted by,



Gerry Giles, Secretary