

Annual General Meeting Minutes

The Vancouver Life Drawing Society (VLDS)

Saturday, May 7, 2022; 2:00 PM

Meeting held via Zoom. (see also attached slide presentation)

Directors present:

Douglas Smardon (president),
Paul Kernan (vice-president),
Alain Boullard (member-at-large),
Nick Jackiw (treasurer),
Jaime T. Jones (member-at-large)
Kelly Talayaco (secretary)

In addition, 4 members were present.

Meeting Chair: Doug Smardon

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 PM.

- The secretary confirmed that a quorum was present (*By-law 3.7 The quorum for the transaction of business at a general meeting is 3 voting members*). There were 10 members present at the start of the meeting.
- The meeting agenda, previously circulated to all members, was adopted.
- The minutes of the previous AGM, available on the Basic Inquiry website and previously circulated to all members, were approved.

President's Report

President Doug Smardon provided a summary of the previously issued report (posted on the Contacts Page of the VLDS Web Site). In brief:

- Due to the pandemic, it has been a tough two years but we approach the coming year with cautious optimism.
- We are back to 6 studio sessions/week and operate with a Safety Plan that limits participant numbers.
- We have completely revised the Session Managers Handbook and look for new volunteers to join the Session Managers cohort.
- We are covering studio costs but will face a rent increase when our lease renews in September.

- The technology systems developed, monitored, and continually improved by Nick Jackiw have been lifesavers – allowing on-line registration; discontinuing cash handling in the studio; booking and paying models; offering BIO (Basic Inquiry On-Line); providing information to members and useful data to support decision-making by the Board.

The President recognized the particular contributions to the Vancouver Life Drawing Society of the following:

- All members who made donations to support the society.
- All Board members, with a farewell acknowledgement to outgoing secretary Kelly Talayco.
- Members serving in volunteer roles such as cleaners and session managers.
- Chieh Huang for her contributions to the implementation of Basic Inquiry Online drawing sessions and to Robyn Taylor-Neu and Alison Taylor for stepping up to conduct BIO sessions last July and August.
- Cyprian Libera for his continued support with iPower email.

Treasurer's Financial Report:

Treasurer Nick Jackiw provided a brief report outlining the financial position of the society:

- Following the major loss of revenue (\$20K) in 2020 due to pandemic closures, the Society sustained a lesser loss (\$4.7K) in 2021.
- Additional income sources have been important during this challenging period of periodic closures and limits on sessions and participant numbers:
 - CERS (Federal Government rent support, which has now been used to the limit available to us)
 - member donations
 - BIO session fees
- In summary, Basic remains sustainable.

The Financial report was adopted as presented with all members in favour.

OLD BUSINESS

Basic Inquiry Online

Nick Jackiw provided a brief report on Basic Inquiry Online (BIO):

- Basic held twenty of these ZOOM-based on-line sessions which yielded a fair amount of revenue. Most of these were co-presented by Nick and Chieh Huang, who brought the idea to Basic.
- Particularly during pandemic constraints, BIO was a positive endeavour. Participants appreciated the sense of community. Models, who effectively

were our partners (receiving 50% of the fees) received some employment. The new on-line registration system was test-driven.

- The sessions were discontinued because additional volunteers with the appropriate technology aptitude were not forthcoming. It was noted that managers at BIO sessions did not have the opportunity to draw because they had to work constantly on camera and lighting setups.
- Feedback indicates interest in resurrecting BIO in addition to studio sessions, but volunteers remain lacking.

Booking Systems

As Technology Manager, Nick Jackiw reported on Robobooker, which has proven reliable as a model booking platform, and a reliable information base for payment of models via e-transfer. Robostrar continues to evolve as a multi-purpose tool essentially designed for on-line registration/payment by participants and now proving to be extremely useful for data management. Robostrar advantages are:

- Safety-mindedness in and beyond pandemic times (eliminating cash-handling, enabling contact-tracing, policing studio capacity limits, ensuring participant agreement with “terms”)
- Simplification and sustainability of operations (handling payment and accounting and collections and banking, ticketing, membership roll and mailing list maintenance)
- Useful evidence for decision-making, with readily available information about numbers of participants, session capacity - whether filled or un-filled, patterns of sales to guide pricing, and so on.

The risks of Robostrar are identified and, to some extent, addressed:

- Potential user confusion - happens rarely, mostly with first-time users
- System instability - has not been an issue in 12 months live operations
- Devolution of skills - as we let autosystems rule, people lose skills, and Basic loses the ability to function without Robostrar. This is a serious risk to be monitored.
- Data loss or security breach - a real risk in today’s world but (1) we have a back-up system; (2) No payment information, no credit card numbers, are stored on Robostrar; these are firewalled in PayPal and Stripe.

Strategic Planning

Vice President Paul Kernan outlined some of the broader issues the Society faces and invited discussion

- **Sustainability and Membership Trends:** A year ago, there was still much confusion about COVID and uncertainties about Basic’s future. Since then, as we made operational adjustments as the pandemic situation unfolded, we have attained more stability and can feel confident that we can maintain the

current sessions and possibly add additional ones over time. A significant portion of members who once attended regularly have not returned to in-person sessions. Paul recently surveyed participants via an anonymous-response on-line survey. Some findings were:- (1) Non-returning participants cited, for the most part, health concerns in their decision not to attend. (2) About 70% of respondents said they would be interested in resurrected BIO sessions. (3) About 70% were in support of maintaining “additional safety measures” beyond those required.

- **Volunteers and added sessions:** Paul noted we need additional new session managers in order to add sessions. And right now, we particularly need technologically unafraid volunteers to back up to Nick and take on some of the many tasks he is already performing.
- **Lease Renewal:** Our lease is due for renewal in September; our landlord is the City of Vancouver. Paul has received preliminary information that we can expect our rent to increase gradually over the next 5-year term. A member in attendance who is familiar with past City attitudes towards cultural spaces has offered to assist in information gathering and negotiations. It was noted that the losses Basic has sustained due to window breakage in this neighbourhood and the water leak in the studio from the residential suite above should be a factor in lease discussions.
- **Reviving a “sense of ownership” among the membership.** General discussion followed, with these points and suggestions made:
 - Some years back there was a real sense of community, with artists’ shows, social gatherings.
 - Is there a way the space could be used for artists to share their skills with others, engendering more community and membership? (It was noted that the City had a past issue to do with zoning for “schools” – which we are not).
 - Past practice of fundraisers, with multiple models - e.g., a 24-hour drawing session.
 - It should be encouraged and made easy for participants to post their session works.
 - “Outreach” – engaging other session participants in conversation - is a proven method to generate community, membership and volunteerism.
 - Could there be special student rates? (Possible but would require documentation)
 - What about long pose sessions? Comment: This is an opportunity to chat up others who might have similar interests; find out if anyone might emerge as a session manager?
 - A real push for session managers is needed.

In conclusion, Paul expressed the general view that we can move ahead with a sense of optimism – getting back to the good stuff Basic has always done and looking forward to trying new things in different ways.

NEW BUSINESS

Call for Nominations & Election of New Board of Directors

(By-law 4.1 The Society must have no fewer than 3 and no more than 7 directors)

Prior to the election of a new board of directors, the five current directors formally resigned. The president indicated that, with the exception of Kelly Talayco, the current directors had indicated a willingness to stand for reelection. The president then called for nominations from the members present at the meeting. In accordance with By-law 4.1 the the following directors were elected by acclamation:

- Doug Smardon
- Alain Boullard
- Nick Jackiw
- Paul Kernan
- Jaime T. Jones

The president noted that the by-laws allow the Board to appoint directors outside the AGM process. Therefore, if any member considers or reconsiders joining the Board, they should contact any Board member.

Free session award

All those who attended the full meeting will be awarded one free session in Robostrar.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Kelly Talayco, Outgoing Secretary VLDS