

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 28, 2024; Approved Wednesday, May 21, 2025
Margaret Norrie McCain Centre, Mount Saint Vincent University Halifax, NS

1. Welcome/Call to Order

JoAnn Alberstat, CPRS-NS President, called the meeting to order at 5:08 PM and confirmed for the record that quorum had been met.

2. Minutes of 2023 AGM

The meeting began with a Land Acknowledgment. Hearing no errors or omissions in the 2023 AGM Minutes, JoAnn asked that the Minutes be accepted as presented. A motion was moved by Dan Bedell and seconded by Tiffany Chase; motion carried.

3. President's Report

JoAnn reported the following:

- For 2023-24, the Board made it a priority to engage more with our student members and Public Relations students in general. Examples of this focus over the past year:
 - an increase in membership activities to engage our Mount student members,
 - two in-person PD sessions with a student focus that were well attended, and
 - re-launching the CPRS NS Student Award that will be presented today.
 - In addition, our Accreditation Chair, Charmaine Gaudet, worked with practitioners interested in getting their APR. Charmaine provided insight into ways to build a strong portfolio and prepare for the certification process.
- JoAnn thanked the Board and student representatives, Olivia Ward from NSCC and Tien Pham from Mount Saint Vincent University, for their hard work.
- She also acknowledged the passing of two veteran communicators whose long service and support of CPRS nationally and locally made significant contributions to our society:
 - Tom Peck twice served as President of CPRS NS and was also the Chair of the CPRS national conference held in Halifax in 2008. A portion of the funds that we received as the host society was used to provide scholarships to public relations students for several years.
 - Laura Bennett was associated with Corporate Communications Ltd. for a decade and was a leader in our business community and well known for her non-profit work. Laura received a CPRS Shield of Public Service in 1990 for her many contributions to our profession.
- The Board Chair thanks members for their support over the past two years and expressed her gratitude for the time she served as President.

4. Financial Report

Chris Hansen, CPRS-NS Treasurer, provided a financial report and shared the Balance Sheet and Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024.

In her report, Chris noted:

- This year an accountant was hired to provide professional advice and inject consistency over time as the Treasurer role changes.
- The Chapter is in good shape financially, with small increases in our operations account and our investment account year over year.
- The GIC matures in June and the 2024-2025 Board will have to decide on how to move forward on these funds.
- An accounting adjustment was made this year that resulted in our assets being lower this year. At the same time, the adjustment also reduced liabilities.
- Membership growth projections were optimistic, and we have more work to do.

Chris moved the motion to accept her report, seconded by Mary Barker. The motion was carried.

5. Professional Development/Education Report

Tiffany Chase, CPRS-NS PD Co-Chair with Alison Gillan, noted the 2023/24 professional development program explored trending topics relevant to public relations, corporate communications, and marketing professionals at all phases of their careers. An emphasis was placed on hosting more in-person sessions than in recent years to increase opportunities for networking and to leverage dual-purpose sessions including the Annual General Meeting and the holiday social.

This year, four PD sessions were held: three in-person and one online. These were free of charge for members, including Mount students, while others paid to attend. Sessions were:

May – Annual General Meeting and Keynote Address by Daniel Tisch, APR and Chairman of Argyle, who spoke about communications during COVID and his white paper on the future of public relations, commissioned by CPRS National. (24 attendees)

November – A virtual panel on ‘Adopting AI into PR & Business Practices’ was moderated by JoAnn Alberstat and featured Board Member Katie Feltmate, Halifax lawyer Annalise Benoit and Chris Keevil, corporate communications executive and entrepreneur. (33 attendees)

December – An in-person session was combined with the annual CPRS Nova Scotia holiday social event at the NSCC IT campus. Tim Conrad, APR, Principal at Butterfly Effect Communications, presented on ‘Disaster Communications and Public Trust’ (34 attendees)

February 2024 – An in-person session focused on career paths and options available to public relations professionals was held at NATIONAL Public Relations. It included a panel discussion with practitioners at various stages of their careers and was followed by a Q&A and speed networking session. (34 attendees)

Tiffany thanked committee members Alison Gillan, Katie Feltmate, Charmaine Gaudet, Shelley Murphy (CPRS Nova Scotia Board Vice Chair), JoAnn Alberstat, and Oliva Ward.

6. Communication Report

Sarah Robertson, CPRS NS Communications Committee Chair, presented her report. The focus this year was twofold: to advocate the highest professional standards in PR, and to connect and engage with members particularly around events.

The website was updated at least monthly with events, job postings and board minutes. Regular social media posts were made on LinkedIn and Facebook, with the goal being met to increase LinkedIn followers by 5%. Instagram was launched in May 2024 to help boost student engagement. In addition, five member emails were sent starting after the last AGM.

Key learnings:

- engagement rates may not be the best metric for social media – engagement at PD events is a better indicator
- student engagement must be done on campus/in real life or on channels where they are already active such as Instagram, and
- and a communications audit with membership should be done to guide goals and activities in the coming year.

Sarah thanked committee members Katie Feltmate, Tien Pham, Dawn Delaney, Olivia Ward, Mary Barker and JoAnn Alberstat, and all Board members, for their support.

• Membership Report

JoAnn Alberstat presented the report on behalf of the committee, which included Chris Hansen. This year's membership strategy focused on more deeply engaging student members to demonstrate CPRS's value and build professional relationships. Dr. Amy Thurlow shared her knowledge of how to effectively engage with students, and committee members presented twice to students at the Mount and once at NSCC.

Personalized e-notes were also sent to BPR students in March during Membership Month. Feedback was positive, with students appreciating the support at a busy time of year. Membership at the end of 2023-24 was 48 voting and 84 student members (compared to 42 voting and 77 students the previous year.)

7. New Business

None

8. Nominating Committee Report

Chris Hansen, APR, LM and Immediate Past President, presented the report, introducing the nominations for the CPRS-NS 2024-2025 Board of Directors:

- President: Sarah Robertson, ABC
- Vice President: Alison Gillan, APR, CMP
- Secretary: Lauren Sinclair
- Treasurer: Kate Comeau, APR
- Immediate Past President: JoAnn Alberstat, PRK
- Members at Large: Tiffany Chase, Dawn Delaney, Katie Feltmate, Tien Pham, Lauren Fraser, Ceilidh McMeekin, Remo Zaccagna

JoAnn Alberstat asked for further nominations (x3). Hearing none, the Board Chair called for a motion to accept the nominations as presented. Tom Ormsby moved the motion, seconded by Angela Murray. The motion was carried.

9. Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

The following members were acknowledged for their significant contributions to the Board and to our Chapter's work throughout the year:

- Shelley Murphy – Vice-President
- Chris Hansen, APR LM – Treasurer, Immediate Past President
- Coleen Logan – Secretary
- Charmaine Gaudet, APR, FCPRS – Accreditation Chair

10. CPRS Nova Scotia Student Award

Presented by Iris Communications, the student award recognizes Isobel Taylor, this year's recipient of the CPRS Nova Scotia Student Award. The award includes a cash prize and a mentorship with Iris Communications.

A formal motion to thank JoAnn Alberstat for her service to CPRS-NS was made by Mary Barker and seconded by Merle Emms. They acknowledged JoAnn's leadership as Board Chair and her deep commitment to our Chapter's success.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Angela Murray at 5:38 PM.

Following the conclusion of business matters a professional development session focused on "Communicators as champions of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)" was led by Tracy Rands, Founder and Principal Consultant, Epiphany HR Consulting.