

**Friends of the Central Experimental Farm
Amis de la Ferme expérimentale centrale**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 7:00 pm

The meeting was conducted virtually

ATTENDANCE

The members present constituted a quorum - forty-three people were in attendance.

CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY

Dianne Caldbick, President, served as Chairperson. Bill Joyce, Member and Office Manager, recorded the minutes.

OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Dianne Caldbick welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. She welcomed the following invited guests:

- Jay Parsons, Director, Ottawa Research and Development Centre, Science and Technology Branch, AAFC
- Yasir Naqvi, Member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre
- Riley Brockington, Ottawa City Councillor, River Ward

She asked that only members vote and do so by raising their “Zoom hand” only if they did not agree with the motion. Motions will be passed by a majority vote - except where otherwise indicated. Questions can be raised by making an entry in the Zoom chat or by raising your “Zoom hand”. Links to the agenda, minutes of the 2024 AGM, financial statements, and other meeting documents were sent in advance to all those who registered.

The meeting is being recorded for the purpose of creating the minutes. The recording will be used for no other purpose.

Approval of Agenda - MOVED by Christina Fiedorowicz and seconded by Lois Burrows THAT the agenda be approved. **Motion carried.**

Minutes - MOVED by Heather Webster and Seconded by Linda McLaren THAT the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for May, 2024 be approved. **Motion carried.**

Message from AAFC - Dr. Parsons started his remarks by outlining the close relationship between AAFC and the FCEF and thanked the organization for their work. He discussed the upcoming speakers series and noted that AAFC was preparing some interesting presentations by scientists which will highlight their research. Dr. Parsons reiterated the important work of the network of experimental farms across Canada. He noted, as an example, the success of the joint project supporting the “Bug Day” event last year. He mentioned that it was important to maintain the CEF as a research site and explained the creation of a joint working group with the City of Ottawa and

the NCC in order to mitigate or reduce the impacts of future development on the research activities at the CEF.

Message from the Member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre - Yasir Naqvi began by thanking the community for their support in the recent election. He expressed his ongoing support for the CEF and the FCEF. He described the Farm as a jewel both for the City of Ottawa and for the entire country. He talked about the need to protect the CEF forever and his intention to ensure that it is never developed. He has toured the CEF with the Minister. He discussed Bill C -23 from the last Parliament and expressed the government's intention to reintroduce this legislation. He promised to continue to engage and consult with all relevant partners to ensure the continued legacy of the farm.

Message from the Councillor for River Ward – Riley Brockington thanked the Friends of the Farm for all the volunteers and contributors who love and work at the Farm. He noted the increased development in the area including the parking garage for the hospital. He talked about a City of Ottawa study which will look at ways to link the hospital grounds with the transit station on the north side of Carling at Preston. He also mentioned the upcoming work along Baseline Road to establish a rapid bus corridor. He talked about proposals for tall buildings along the edges of the farm and the impact of shadows. With this in mind a working group with AAFC and the NCC has been created. He also reiterated the need for federal legislation.

A question was raised about the new developments/shadows and if the working group had produced a report. Dr. Parsons indicated that a report is planned for some point next year.

Treasurer's Report - Heather Webster reviewed the unaudited 2024 financial statements. Numeris completed a review and found no issues. Their full engagement report can be found on the FCEF website.

She reviewed the Statement of Financial Position, The Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets and the Statement of Cash Flows.

The cash flow outlook includes a third Celebritree program in 2025, book sales and memberships. Planned expenditures for the year include funds for two new projects in collaboration with AAFC.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors as prescribed by the Canada Not-for-profit Corporation Act.

The organization is in a strong financial position.

Panel Discussion: Highlights of 2024

Each panelist was asked to discuss the progress of work in the Arboretum and Ornamental Gardens along with their expectations for work in 2025.

Jeremy DiZazzo, Chief, Ground Maintenance at AAFC began the discussion. He explained that he and his team rely on the dedicated work of the FCEF and is thankful for their contribution and the wealth of knowledge that they bring to the farm. The relationship between AAFC and the FCEF is of great reciprocal benefit. Much was accomplished in 2024 but he mentioned that there was still very much to do. Major accomplishments include working together on the Celebritree program, the Canada Post peony stamps, and the relentless efforts required to combat invasive species. One new challenge was the need for structured communication as we no longer share the same office space and the turnover of key people in both organizations. Both teams, however, do not shy away from hard work and the joint approach can be summed up by the expression: “life is a garden - dig it!”.

Linda McLaren, Gardens Director at FCEF, mentioned that there are 13 volunteer teams now working in the gardens and the Arboretum. 5,387 volunteer hours were recorded last year. Also last year, a new Health and Safety Policy was implemented to ensure that volunteers are well cared for. The Shelterbelt team finished the major planting in that location so that is a huge accomplishment and their work can now turn to more maintenance. The Heritage Rose Garden team tamed some over-exuberant roses and in so doing so, rediscovered some other varieties that had been feared lost. Japanese beetles did major damage to the roses last year and this pest remains a real challenge. New planting continues in the Rock Garden - a very successful collaboration between the volunteer team and AAFC staff. Nine tours of 5 different gardens were carried out last year in addition to special tours for specific groups. This year, work starts on a major revitalization of the Perennial Gardens. Some new Canadian bred roses have been procured. A gift of some Preston Siberian irises is being arranged to a garden that is being established at a hospital in Hamilton in memory of Isabella Preston.

Debra Hauer, Co-team Leader of the Macoun Gardens, mentioned the great work of a team of about 25 volunteers supporting this garden. The challenge has been to catch up after the pandemic and to understand better what is still growing and, to this end, a mapping project has been initiated. The team begins with pencil and paper maps and has successfully mapped out about three quarters of the garden. These maps are then handed over to the AAFC team to upload this information to their auto CAD program. At the same time, the team has been searching for historical information on the specific varieties of plants. This information was transferred to electronic format and also shared with AAFC. Work continues to match the historical files with what is actively growing in the garden space. For each plant that has been identified, detailed data such as height, preferred growing conditions and bloom time are being added. Plans for this season include the completion of the mapping project and identification of plant varieties, which will continue as things change.

Eric Jones, Project Director at the FCEF, talked about the “dreams and deeds”, or aims and accomplishments of the arboretum teams. The first dream for the Arboretum is for it to be a nature school. To this end, the Pathways book was published and tours are being conducted to help the public learn about the space and

the varieties of trees found there. The second dream is for the environment to be a health booster. There are many health benefits of trees, and the volunteer teams, under the direction of the AAFC staff, help keep the trees healthy and free of invasive species. The third dream is to be a heritage keeper. This entails the conservation of the important heritage site and giving people a sense of ownership of the site. The tree donor program is one component of this. New signage is also being considered. The fourth dream is to be a change agent which is important in light of climate change. The hardiness of specific trees is being monitored and the Bloom Time project was restarted to record data on when trees are actually flowering in our changing environment.

A question was raised about the mapping project and whether it will be extended to other gardens. Linda explained that an extensive list of the peonies exists and that it would be easy to convert this to a map. A map does exist of the redesigned Explorer Rose Garden from 2014 and a map of the perennial gardens will be part of the upcoming redesign. Inventories have been completed for the Heritage Rose Garden and the Hosta Garden. Jeremy complemented the work of the Macoun Team for mapping and talked about the challenge of using different methodologies. Peonies and lilacs, for example, are all identified, but these lists are not compatible with the AAFC mapping software. The task at hand to consolidate these maps in one system is a considerable challenge but an important goal. Debora added that the Rock Garden has a detailed paper map and that a Google map of all the legacy donor trees was just completed. Dianne discussed the fact that one of the challenges of this work is how to make this data available to members and the public at large.

Another question asked panelists to recount something new or surprising that they have learned about the farm or Arboretum this past year. Eric mentioned that he was always seeing new trees in the Arboretum - for example, the Fringe Tree was blooming this year and this is an example of species that are technically borderline hardy in this area - it is always a pleasant surprise to see them thrive. Debra explained that the efforts to amend the soil in the Macoun Garden with compost has really paid off and has resulted in plants that are thriving like never before. Abundant rains last year also helped. Jeremy talked about the “quilt of ownership” of the land in and around the farm. The Rideau Valley Conservation Society, Parks Canada, The NCC, AAFC, The Department of Defence, the City of Ottawa and OC Transpo, among others are all players who hold a “piece of the pie”. This was a revelation to him.

The status of enhancement projects was raised as a question, including the topic of accessible pathways. Jeremy indicated his support for this initiative, but reiterated that the challenge is large. It remains a priority but it is one priority among many.

Recognition of Long-Service Volunteers

Christina Fiedeorowiicz, Volunteer Director at FCEF, recognized volunteers with five, ten, fifteen, twenty and over twenty-five years of service. She first explained that the FCEF has over 200 dedicated volunteers who contribute about 9,000 hours of work in the gardens, the shelterbelt and the Arboretum. They also help with events. She thanked these dedicated volunteers. Special recognition was given to Donna Pape, Volunteer Coordinator and former Director and to Randy Taylor, past Treasurer and current Bookkeeper, who are both leaving their present positions. Christina closed with this motto: Volunteers: The Value of One, The Power of Many. A list of the names for the long service awards is attached to these minutes.

Special Resolution to Amend the FCEF By-laws

Lois Burrow, Director and Chair of the Governance Committee, began by thanking the other members of the Governance Committee for their help in re-writing the Bylaws.

Changes included the following:

- Formatting, updates from last AGM, edits
- New Procedures:
 - Elimination of Director Compensation
 - Electronic Voting
 - Execution of Documents
 - Setting compensation for Employees, Agents, etc
 - Review Engagement vs Audited Financial Statements
 - Change to Rules and Regulations
 - Amending Formula

The revised bylaws are found in full on the FCEF website.

Lois Burrows moved the motion to approve the proposed draft By-law Changes and it was seconded by Linda McLaren. A two thirds majority was required to approve this motion. **Motion carried.**

Special Resolution to Appoint Numeris CPA Professional Corporation to Conduct a Review Engagement for 2025

As background, FCEF is a not-for-profit charitable organization under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. As a soliciting corporation, with gross annual revenues between \$50,000 and \$250,000, the default financial review requirement under the Act is audit. A special resolution (requiring 2/3 approval by members) is required to conduct a review engagement instead of an audit for 2025, as permitted in the By-Laws.

Heather Webster moved that Numeris CPA Corporation be appointed to conduct a review engagement for 2025, instead of the default audit requirement for FCEF. The motion was seconded by Bill Joyce - **motion carried.**

President's Report – Looking Forward

Dianne Caldbick, President, began her remarks by looking at the mission statement of the organization: the FCEF maintains and enhances the Arboretum, the Ornamental Gardens and the Shelterbelt in partnership with AAFC and raises public awareness and knowledge about the farm's history and its tree and plant collections.

Regarding maintenance, Dianne highlighted the ongoing work of our teams of volunteers in the gardens, Shelterbelt and Arboretum.

For enhancement, she discussed two special projects. The first is the replacement of the wooden structures in the rose gardens including the arbor, the structure with benches and an arbor within the hedge. In addition, the wire fence will be replaced with a wooden fence and the pergola in the heritage rose gardens. Durability and heritage will both be considered. A master design will be created but the implementation will take place in stages. The on-the-ground work is expected to begin this fall. AAFC will replace the rose arbor and FCEF will replace the structure with the bench.

The refurbishment of the perennial beds is the second project. This will be implemented over the next two to three years in collaboration with AAFC. The creation of a master plan is the first step and then implementation can take place in stages.

On the public awareness front, tours will continue and a speakers series will be introduced. The focus will be on the farm - both its history and the ongoing research taking place there. Scientists from the farm will give some of the presentations along with Blaine Marhand, a volunteer who will speak about the history of the farm.

On the topic of the health of the organization: in 2024, although family memberships were up but individual and senior memberships were down. We are now tracking 2025 and a new membership director will put a new emphasis on this topic.

Further engagement with volunteers will also be a priority moving forward.

For the Board of Directors, Lois Burrows is chairing a governance committee to ensure we are operating effectively and efficiently.

Election of FCEF Board Members

Lois Burrows explained that the current secretary of the board was reaching her term limit of three consecutive terms. A resolution is required, and permitted under the bylaws, to allow her to serve one more term.

Lois moved that a one-time exception of My-law 7.3 be allowed so that a current board member may exceed the term limits by one three year term, as passed by the Board of Directors at the board meeting of February 19, 2025. Linda McLaren seconded - **motion carried.**

Christina Fiedorowicz presented the motion to approve the returning and new members for the the FCEC Board of Directors:

Proposed Returning Members of the Board of Directors of FCEF:

- Dianne Caldbick: President
- Heather Webster: Treasurer
- Shirley Ewen: Secretary
- Elizabeth Atkinson: Programs Director
- Lois Burrows: Member-at-Large
- Christina Fiedorowicz: Volunteer Director
- Eric Jones: Project Director
- Linda McLaren: Gardens Director
- Mark Vigder: Operations Director

Proposed New Members of the Board of Directors of FCEF:

- Liz Lumsden: Communications Director
- Yves Garcia: Membership and Donations Director

Christina moved that this roster of proposed Board Directors, including both the returning and new Directors, be approved. The motion was seconded by Elizabeth Atkinson - **motion carried**

Adjournment at 9:05 p.m.

Dianne Caldbick, FCEF President

Shirley Ewen, FCEF Secretary

Recognition of Long-Service Awards

5 Years of Service:

Janet Buske-Wichser; Jill Jensen; Jo-Anne Laundreault; Mary McGrath; and Steve Reid.

10 Years of Service:

Annie Creighton and Susan McGregor.

15 Years of Service:

Indu Arora; Izabel Dabrowski; Diane Roeske; David Roeske; Martin MacLeod and Bernadette Walker.

20 Years of Service:

Shirley Ewen and Carol MacLeod

Over 25 Years of Service:

Polly McColl