Ottawa Public Education Retirees Association
Executive (special) Meeting on: Thursday Nov. 18/21
Via Zoom

Item	
Call to Order	By Horst at 10:05 am
Executive Members Present	Horst Dannehl, Chris Borzecki, Shelley McDonald, Margaret Bryan, Jan Hynes, Rick Chataway, Vikki Zulpo Regrets: John Harding, Cheryl Cavell, Robin Dunbar
Approval of Agenda	No agenda, as this was a special meeting to discuss only changes to the present website and communication methods, with guest web developer Stuart Fraser
Reports	There were no regular reports from the Secretary, Treasurer, Social Committee, Membership, or House Convenor.
Opera Online Report	Rick Chataway began discussion introducing Stuart Fraser, who has built websites for charitable and not-for-profit organizations, including RTAO. The general consensus is that our present public website is not user friendly nor easily searchable. Our name, OPERA, elicits music related sites only. The private website, Toolbox is not turning out to be used by many members as a tool for communicating. With evolving technology and many easily used social media methods for retired teachers to use, the executive feel that we need to change and/or modify our existing methods of communicating. We also feel it is essential to make enough changes so that John Harding, who has worked tirelessly and for years running the technology on a volunteer basis is able to "retire" from this task! A number of questions had been submitted to Stuart prior to the meeting. The following are his answers, which summarize the meeting's discussions.
Questions for Stuart re a new OPERA website: info as of November 3, 2021	**Q: How often would he upload information?**
	A: Information can be emailed at any time for me to post. This could be in the form of text within an email and/or attachments such as PDFs, photos, etc.
	I want to add that I can easily create a highly secure password protected page (or pages) where sensitive information such as minutes and/or member contact information can be stored. Only those with the password would have access.

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	Q: Would he want said information to come from only one person, or would he accept it from 4 or 5 people?
	A: I can accept information from a variety of people. In my experience with other organizations, however, I generally receive website updates from one key contact person. This simplifies the process and avoids confusion. It's up to you to decide.
	Q: Re advertisements for our various activities......do we still prepare it, and he just posts as given to him?
	A: Advertisements can be emailed as text with attached pictures, which will be added to a given webpage as per instructions.
	Q: Or could he prepare the advertisement as well, once given the blurb and a few pictures?
	A: For me to prepare ad layouts is time consuming and would incur an additional fee. Perhaps someone in the organization could prepare ads using desktop publishing software. The ads could be sent to me as image (jpeg) or PDF attachments that would be posted.
	Q: Does he charge for each upload? By time? A flat annual contract fee? By number of times he has to go to our site to upload?
	A: We can decide whether there is a per-upload fee or an annual flat fee. A per-upload fee would be calculated on the time it takes to compose, post, and publish to the website. My rate is $50 per hour. So, for example, a posting that might take 0.3 hours to do would incur a fee of $15. A posting that might take half an hour to do would incur a fee of $25. Alternatively, you can opt for an annual flat fee to be determined. I usually charge a flat fee of $200 in the first year, and negotiate the following year according to the amount of work that was involved in the initial year.
	Q: Is it better to have a monthly deadline by which info must be sent to him so that he only has to access site once a month.
	A: Should you choose to have only monthly updates to the website, your organization risks delaying the posting of time sensitive information. This, in my opinion, is not a good option.
	Q: Rick suggested groups planning for the year, to post the entire year's programme, however my experience is that "static" website, while costs less, results in less people using it as after a while, as any time they go online to check what's up, it is the same.
	A: I agree that you don't want a static website. Websites should always be dynamic and provide up-to-date information.

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I think it's important to consider that a website is only one element in what I call a "communications triad." The website is the main information hub. Mass email newsletters—using an email service such as MailChimp—are the second means of keeping members informed. A social media presence, such as a closed Facebook group, is the third element where members can exchange ideas in a private forum. A closed Facebook group can have more than one administrator and does not necessarily need to be updated constantly. I'm not sure how new members are vetted.
The three elements are "interlinked." For example, the website could feature a newsletter sign-up button so new members could subscribe automatically. The website would also have a link to the private Facebook group. Newsletters would feature the website address (URL) and a link to the Facebook group. The Facebook group page, in turn, would feature links to the website and to the newsletter subscription service.
Q: What are the annual costs then for these various scenarios.
A: I am unable to offer an estimate at this time. (Nb…this was made prior to the meeting.). Stuart said in the meeting that we would probably be best off taking the annual rate (and as we were Not For Profit he would halve his fee) This would probably result in the $300 range. After one year, the fee would be revisited as be would then have firmer knowledge of exactly how much time and effort is required on his part.

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Follow Up Discussion

Follow Up Discussion	Stuart reiterated his concept of a 3-pronged approach: 1. Public website, which would be a repository for the group's information. Various clubs within OPERA could have their own page/folder (eg. Quilting club, Camera club, Book club). This website should be dynamic, with updates with new information being added and older items being removed on a regular basis. It was noted and agreed that our present name is an issue with regards to being easily searched. 2. A good mass emailing system is needed (eg, Mail Chimp) which is free for Not For Profit groups, This would allow for everyone within the community to be reached and can be subdivided into the clubs. It would have to have an 'unsubscribe" button, especially when the time comes to ask for an annual fee again. Stuart noted that we already have a system, with Toolbox and so we may not need to "reinvent" the wheel. 3. A forum for communicating within the group. Suggestions included Facebook, which does allow for storage of files (eg. Minutes of meetings, constitution) What's Up which can be used also on all platforms (laptops, iPads, phones). It is fully encrypted, private and is not considered social media, which may be more acceptable to our members than Facebook. Google Groups might be an alternative method for communication.
	Stuart then explained that there would be interlinkages between these 3 aspects. On the public site, there would be sign up buttons to join the organization and the email list. The emails sent out would have a link to the website, which would post/advertise the various activities. Whichever social media/communicating tool was chosen would have a link to the website.
	Jan queried about managing membership fees, which we will have to reinstitute at some date in the future, as when we return to in-person meetings, we will have to take on insurance again, as well as the continuation of our social activities will eventually use up our funds. In a new system, how would we coordinate payment of fees to showing paid up members on the mailing list. Those offering presentations need to know who has paid up, or, those who don't pay need to be removed from the mailing list. Stuart suggested that only those who pay can vote at the annual AGM. It was noted that probably isn't an issue for our group. We could use Square or PayPal for people to pay, but they take approximately 3% off the fee. Another option would be that each group would require a password to access the website, and then you have to pay to receive the password. We would still need to have a Registrar to manage fees, which could be done by mailing cheques or e-transferring funds to the registrar, who would maintain a membership list of paid persons. So there are various options still available.

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	Stuart again pointed out that we didn't have to totally re-invent the wheel, that he could take over the existing WIX platform and switch it to a paid platform (we presently use the free version). The paid version presently costs $150 annually, providing 3 GB of storage and 2GB of bandwidth. Wix is an online presence rather than using Stuart's proprietary system.
	A short discussion followed with various suggestions for a more easily searchable name. (Retired Teachers Ottawa, or Retired Educators Ottawa, for example) Registering of a new domain name will cost approximately $25 annually
Rick Chataway proposed some motions:	Moved by Rick Chataway that we hire Stuart Fraser to rebuild the OPERA web presence to included the registering of a new domain name and the purchasing of a hosting plan, not to cost more than $1200 without approval by the executive. Seconded by Horst. PASSED
	Moved by Rick Chataway that we hire Stuart Fraser to set up and maintain a mass email service, or alternately, that he rebuild our existing mass emailing service. Seconded by Chris. PASSED
	Moved by Rick Chataway that 2 or 3 executive members be appointed to advise and comment on Stuart's proposed plans in January/February 2022. Seconded by Vikki PASSED
Action	Chris Borzecki, Jan Hynes and Rick Chataway will work with Stuart. They will suggest a new, more easily searchable name. Jan will coordinate with him with the Wix platform. They will report back to the executive by January/February 2022. Both Vikki and Stuart will research Google Groups.
Adjournment	Meeting adjourned at approximately 11:15 am.