

Swiss Club Toronto

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2023

Location: Parkview Manor, 55 Barber Greene Road, Toronto

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 24th, 2024 at 7:00 pm

Attendees: 65 members including board members

Present:

President and Swiss Social	Charlotte Mariller
VP and Membership Chairperson	Benjamin Wuethrich
Treasurer	Augustin (Auggie) Werner
Tell Tale	Heidy Lawrance
5-Pin Bowling	Simone Hohn
Men's Section	Arno Sigrist
Women's Section	Paula Rico
Theatre Group	Maggie Hess
Amicale Romande	Cedric Daros
Social Jass Section	Erika Tieche
Events	Corinne Jakob
Social Media	Gabriel Hilty
Canadysli	Philippe Moser
Secretary	Alexia Moser

Absent: N/A

Minutes taken by Alexia Moser

Special Guests: Ambassador Olaf Kjelsen
General Consul Line Leon-Pernet
Honorary Consul Alexandra Soriano

Welcome

- Swiss Club Toronto President Charlotte Mariller opened the meeting at 7:10 pm.

Introduction of the Board Members

- Charlotte introduced the board members:

Vice President, Website & Membership
Secretary
Treasurer
Tell Tale Editor
Social Media & Tell Tale Designer
Event Director

Benjamin Wuethrich
Alexia Moser
Auggie Werner
Heidy Lawrance
Gabriel Hilty
Corinne Jakob

- The following Section Heads were also present:

Women's Section
Theatre Group
5 Pin Bowling
Amicale Romande
Social Jass
Men's Section
Canadysli

Paula Rico
Maggie Hess
Simone Hohn
Cedric Daros
Erika Tieche
Arno Sigrist
Philippe Moser

Minutes of the 2023 AGM

- Printed minutes for the 2023 AGM were available on each table. No members raised their hands to suggest that changes be made.
- Motion: Philippe Moser moved that the minutes for the 2023 AGM be accepted. Susan Sigrist seconded.

Swiss Citizen of the Year Award

- Rene Waelti was collecting nominations for this year's Swiss Citizen of the Year Award. The winner will be announced & the award will be handed out at the 1st of August celebration this summer.
- Ballot forms were available on the tables alongside a list of previous recipients.

Minute of Silence

- The AGM held a minute of silence to remember the members who passed away in the past year.

President's Report (Charlotte Mariller)

- Charlotte discussed the Swiss Club's activities and future plans.
 - In 2020, all events were cancelled or moved online where possible.
 - In 2021, a few in-person events were held and then in 2022, an AGM was held for the first time since 2019.
 - In 2023, the club celebrated the National Day free of charge.
 - The board is trying to streamline expenses and boost revenue. Many board meetings now take place virtually, in-person board meetings are no longer expensed, and the club is saving money on the Tell Tale thanks to Swiss Print.
 - In 2024, the board will try to ensure that events are financially sustainable by reviewing pricing in light of inflation and rising costs and charging for the National Day celebration.
- Charlotte noted that in the longer term, the board will suggest that the membership fees be increased. She also drew attention to the board's plan for the club to become a registered charity and indicated that Philippe would discuss this later.
- Charlotte spoke of the club's commitment to increasing its membership and making better connections with other Swiss organizations.

Section Reports

Social Jass (Erika Tieche)

- Erika took over the section about two years ago.
- It is now a social club – championships are no longer held. New members are always welcome. Jass is a game that you learn by playing it.
- Social Jass meets at Finch and Warden. This location is accessible via TTC and free parking is available. The club meets on Sunday afternoons once a month from September through April.
- Erika drew everyone's attention to the pamphlets on every table and encouraged anyone who was interested to contact her any time.

Amicale Romande (Cedric Daros)

- Two events had been held in 2023: a raclette in the park and a fondue at the end of January. Both events went well, with lots of cheese served and sold.
- Cedric will be stepping down as Section Head but he will still help out if he can. Nicholas Meyer will be taking over.
- Cedric thanked Jean-Marc Velen very warmly for all that he has done for the Amicale over so many years.

Canadysli (Philippe Moser)

- The Canadysli is now part of the Swiss Club.
- The Canadysli held a dinner dance on March 3rd and will hold a similar event in March next year.
- The band needs more players – they only have 12 at present. Band members don't need to know how to play or read music.
- Philippe encouraged everyone to come and listen to the Canadysli at the 1st of August celebration this summer – especially those who might be interested in joining the band. He encouraged any potential new members to come and see him.
- The Canadysli can teach new members and they also have extra instruments.

Theatre Group (Maggie Hess)

- The group has been going since 1969. They have put on a play in Swiss German every year except 1971 and between 2020 and 2022. For the last few years, they have held their plays at the Latvian Centre.
- The Theatre Group has many seasoned players and last year's performance in April was very successful.
- They practise in their homes and store their materials in basements.
- Although costs are going up, they plan to continue to perform.
- They have about 25 members now (active and passive) and practise for 3-4 months every year.
- Everyone is welcome to join the Theatre Group for lots of fun and laughter.

Men's Section (Arno Sigrist)

- The section has weekly Kaffeeklatsches every Monday morning at Bayview Village.
- They also meet virtually on the third Wednesday of every month.
- The Men's Section AGM was held in February at St. George's Golf and Country Club.
- They plan to hold a BBQ at Egger Dairy Farm on June 26th. It is open to all members. Coffee and sausages will be available for sale and attendees can bring other drinks, too.

- They will also hold a Swiss Movie Matinee at the library and gather at Christmas, too.

Women's Section (Paula Rico)

- Paula has been a member of the Women's Section for more than 50 years. Unfortunately, membership has hit an all-time low. Although on paper, the Women's Section has 70 members, only half participate. This is partly due to the fact that some members live in retirement homes and can't go out as easily. They have sadly also lost some members.
- In 2023, the section went to Village players on Bloor twice to see a performance.
- Their AGM will be held in October at Jolly's Italian but no elections will be held.
- The Women's Section began in 1944 and was founded at the Old Mill. It is the longest running section of the club. In October, they will celebrate their 80th anniversary with a High Tea at the Old Mill.
- In December, they will meet for a luncheon at St. George's Golf and Country Club.
- The Women's Section has to decide by the end of the year – will it continue?
- Paula will retire as Section Head at the end of the year.
- Paula thanked Dorothy very warmly for all of her support for the Women's Section. For 26 years, Dorothy has called Women's Club members who don't use email to let them know about all section events.

5-pin Bowling (Simone Hohn)

- The group bowls about once a month on Sunday afternoons from September through April/May. They meet at Parkway Mall Bowling Alley.
- There are no age limits – their youngest member is 4.
- No knowledge is required – everyone is welcome to come and have fun.
- They often have dinner at a restaurant after they bowl so that they can continue socializing.
- The group will be meeting this Sunday and then they will meet up one more time in May.
- They also gather for a trophy celebration at the end of the season.

Membership and Website Report (Benjamin Wuethrich)

- Benjamin informed everyone of the membership numbers of the past year.
 - In 2023, 10 individuals and 7 families joined the Swiss Club. 10 individual members and 8 families did not renew their memberships. This means that we have 408 members today, of which 298 are part of 149 families, and 110 are individual members.

- Compared to one year ago, we have about 3 more members. Membership in the club has hovered around 400 members for a few years.
- The number of members that are part of family memberships isn't quite clear as a family membership can include 2 adults and 2 children under 19th. In essence, though, the trend in membership is quite flat.

Members with single memberships	110
Members with family memberships (149 family memberships in total)	298
Total Members	408

- Benjamin noted that about 50 members are behind with their payments.
 - Per the by-laws, members are to be expelled after 90 days if they are behind.
 - The club used to expel members automatically after about 180 days, but then it turned out that some members had just missed emails about their membership. Now, Benjamin emails/calls first to make sure that they want to leave the club. Normally, people either settle their accounts or explain that they are moving away.
- Overall, membership numbers are quite steady.
- Next, Benjamin discussed cost savings. He noted that a proposal to increase the membership fees is likely next year, especially as inflation has increased by 50% since the fees were set in 2004.
- Benjamin explained the need to be clear about the value that SCT membership offers. Everyone at the AGM gets their membership's worth by attending this event. The club needs to be more consistent about (1) offering different prices for events (cheaper for members); (2) making some events members only; and (3) limiting our newsletters and emails to members. To that end, newsletters will only be distributed to members going forwards and only members will have access to new editions of the Tell Tale for the first month or so after they are published.

Website (IT) Report (Benjamin Wuethrich)

- The club's website is hosted for free on GitHub Pages. We pay only about \$15/year for the domain name.
- The club's website receives around 1,000 visitors per month (which works out to about 30 per day). Most of the website traffic is tied to our emails (announcements).
- The board currently uses shared personal Google Drive folders. Benjamin is in the process of applying for a Google Workspace for non-profits so that the board will have more space, we aren't reliant on donated space, etc.

- In the future board members will have true @swissclubtoronto email addresses instead of the current (unreliable) email forwarding.

Financial Report (Auggie Werner)

- Auggie became the Treasurer in 2019. At that time, the club had quite a bit of money even though 2018 had been an expensive year. The club's full coffers were a legacy of its previous plan to have its own clubhouse.
- In the last few years, efforts have been made to return this money to club members by running events and activities at a deficit. The membership fees haven't been increased in 20 years and there are also free lifetime memberships. The club has also held events that are free for everyone (including non-members).
- As a result, costs have gone up. As an example, this AGM costs the club about \$80 per person while a family membership is \$40. That means that the club would continue to lose money even if membership went up exponentially.
- That being said, the real club life is in the sections. The Treasurer's role is to maintain the books, to facilitate payments, and to report on financials.
- Any expense is signed off by two people (Auggie and/or Benjamin, and/or Philippe) – the Treasurer is not the decision-maker.
- A printed copy of the 2023 financial statement was available on every table.
- Some events are held by sections that use their own accounts (e.g., Canadysli, Theatre, fondue, raclette).
- Auggie drew attention to inflows such as events, membership dues and donations. He also noted that the club's assets grew when the Canadysli joined the club (about \$3,500). Auggie went through many of the purchases/expenses as well as the starting & ending balances and the section totals.
- Auggie explained that in effect, with this kind of spending, the club can continue for six years and then that will be the end financially. This means that we need to engage in some serious discussions.
- Motion to accept: Paula Rico, Rene Waelti and Arno Sigrist. All approved.

Council of the Swiss Abroad Report (Suzanne Schurmann)

- Speaking on behalf of Antoine Belaieff, Suzanne Schurmann provided a report on the March 15, 2024 meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) in Bern.
- She noted that Antoine Belaieff (delegate from Ontario) and Thomas Arn (delegate from British Columbia) attended the March meeting in person and Philippe Magnenat (delegate from Québec) joined online.

- Suzanne went through many of the issues presented at the meeting, such as e-voting, E-Government/E-ID, the importance of the consular network, the importance of independent and high-quality information for the Swiss abroad, webinars offered to Swiss Abroad, banks offering accounts to Swiss Abroad with no minimal deposit, plans for more democratic elections of the delegates of the Council of the Swiss Abroad, and increasing the political participation of Swiss Abroad.
- Suzanne noted that Antoine had asked Ambassador Grichting to ensure that the mobile passport office would visit Ontario this year. She also mentioned that more webinars will be offered in 2024, with a focus on Swiss Abroad returning temporarily or for good to Switzerland.

Elections

- Cedric will be stepping down as Section Head for the Amicale Romande.
- Three board positions were proposed:
 - Gabriel Hilty – Social Media and Tell Tale Designer
 - Corinne Jakob – Event Director
 - Alexia Moser – Secretary
- Arno led the election & voting for these board positions. The election of these three board members was finalized by a general raising of hands. No objections were made.
- Charlotte reminded the group that positions are usually for two-year terms.
- It was noted that the Counsel of the Swiss Abroad report that Suzanne provided is available on the Swiss Club Toronto website and can be re-read there (see <https://swissclubtoronto.ca/2024/04/14/aso-meeting/>).

Lifetime Swiss Club Toronto Memberships

- Those who have been members in good standing for 30 or more years are eligible for lifetime memberships.
- The following new lifetime members were proposed:
 - Bischof family
 - Hildenbrand family
 - Madelaine Muller
 - Elisabeth Walder

Other Business (Philippe Moser)

- Philippe advised everyone of an upcoming proposal to change the by-laws and corporate structure of the club. He noted that no changes had been made to the by-laws for many years. Next year, a number of changes will be proposed so that the club can be recognized as a viable non-profit organization in Ontario and Canada. Changes to the by-laws will touch upon

- transparency, modernization, accountability, conflict of interest, complaints, etc. Members should expect to see a proposal for major changes to the by-laws in 2025 so that the club can continue to be a non-profit.
- Philippe also noted that if the club were recognized as a registered charity, it would be able to issue contribution receipts to both corporate and individual donors.
 - Philippe shared his hope that these changes will result in more revenue and more value for members and encouraged anyone with questions to speak with him.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm