

ATSIKANA PA ULENDU – MALAWI EDUCATION FOUNDATION
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held November 16, 2020
Meeting held via zoom.us

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ATTENDEES: Lori Messer (Chair); Helene Weir (Director); Christie Johnson (Director & E.D.); Lance Shaver (Director); David Stocks (Director); Tricia Timmermans (Secretary); Pat Killoran (Director); Michele Parkin (Director); Dean Rohrs (Director); Dariol Haydock (Director); Donna Johnson (Member).

1: Call to Order

Chairperson Lori Messer called the meeting to order at 6:03 PT/ 7:03PM MT. She confirmed that there was a quorum and that secretary, Tricia Timmermans, was taking Minutes.

2: Adoption of the Agenda.

M/S Michele/Pat that the Agenda be adopted. CARRIED

3. Confirmation of Membership

Christie confirmed that all members received the Notice of Meeting package. Lori welcomed Donna Johnson to the meeting.

MOTION: M/S Michele/ Christie: That the membership is confirmed. CARRIED.

4: Minutes of the November 25th, 2019 Annual General Meeting.

M/S Lori/ Lance that the Minutes of the November 26th, 2018 AGM be approved as circulated, with one correction: David Stocks' term as a board member ends in 2021, not 2018. CARRIED

5. Chairman's Report: Lori Messer

Writing usually comes pretty easily to me but not this year. As I reflected back over the past year, all I could see was loss.

- The passing of Frances Stocks, David's wife and a founding sponsor of an APU student when things were just beginning.
- Larry Johnson, Donna's husband and Christie's Dad, our past Treasurer, our database architect and engineer extraordinaire and a founding supporter of APU;
- The challenges for APU students when a government lock-down meant to protect them from COVID instead exposed them to unwanted marriages and pregnancy;
- And even more challenges for Form Four students when their national exams were interrupted and they learned they would be delayed into next year.

And more broadly in our lives

- The agony of being physically isolated from our families and friends
- The devastating loss of our elders in long term care homes—the threatened safety of our parents and grandparents
- And, globally, an overwhelming sense that the social, political, environmental and health challenges are so profound and so broad that the only thing of which we are certain in the future is that it will be nothing like the present or the past.

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I actually wrote this list out and it was three times this long! But, curiously, as my list grew, another word started to percolate up through my thoughts: **resilience**. If someone had told us in March that in eight months we would still be isolated in our homes, we would have thought we could never do it. But now masks and hand-washing and social distancing have become an almost normal part of our life. We are more resilient than we thought.

In this final year of our program definition as we start to actually live our walkway plan, we've talked mostly about sustainability; our dream that APU will be able to thrive independently and sustain itself into the future. What we haven't talked about is resilience.

The Rockefeller Foundation defines resilience as “the capacity of individuals, communities, and systems to survive, adapt, and grow in the face of stress and shocks, and even transform when conditions require it. Building resilience is about making people, communities, and systems better prepared to withstand catastrophic events—both natural and manmade—and able to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from these shocks and stresses.”

Resilience is understood not only as a response to change but also as a strategy to deal with and shape change. It explains why some international projects succeed when others don't. Resilience enables organizations to bounce back in the face of a threat, to adapt to change and uncertainty and to make transformational change. In North America, we've seen how resilience is helping some businesses to thrive in this time of growing uncertainty, rapid change and unique vulnerabilities. Some have been able to turn on a dime—literally transforming themselves into relevant if not essential services—think on-line social platforms, mask production, and food delivery.

In a year that has brought about so much despair and uncertainty, to think of how resilience is lived every day at APU fills me with hope for the future. Memory and Henry seem to intuitively know how to foster resilience in every aspect of APU and the community surrounding it.

When Bob and I were living at APU, we watched Memory offer unconditional love to students; going far beyond what most people would do to reach out to those who, perhaps through some bad decisions or unfortunate circumstances, have fallen. Tirelessly she repeatedly reached out until that person was standing on their own. In general, there are way more chances for everyone at APU than there would be in our culture – be they students or staff.

Memory and Henry's caring for those around them, be they students, teachers or fellow villagers is evidenced in the curriculum emphasis on volunteering and citizenship that has students involved in weekly activities like moving soil bucket by bucket or planting trees. APU students continue this engagement in community after they graduate.

Memory and Henry have helped to foster resilience in the surrounding community as well through food security initiatives. With help from Christie and Canadian donors, Memory's women's group has distributed food during famine times. When Henry learned how much corn was being lost to rats or spoilage, he worked with local farmers to build a community storage building.

More recently, we saw how strongly Memory and Henry advocated for retaining teachers through the school closure and later heard from Christie what this meant to them. During the time students were not

on campus, students who had access to computers received on-line lessons from their teachers. Students who did not have access walked or biked long distances to the school and picked up custom learning packages at the gate. On-line and distance learning has been challenging for Canadian teachers who have access to and experience with stable and high-speed networks; for APU teachers with slow, unstable and unfamiliar platforms, this was an exceptional feat.

These days the school is learning to manage within unfamiliar COVID restrictions and practices. They seem to have taken it all in their stride, quickly adapted their processes and things are generally going well. If we had needed reassurance that the school is ready for independence then certainly this past 8 months bodes well for their future. When you think about it, sustainability probably actually begins with community resilience.

This has been a challenging year for APU MEF as we have watched revenues drop and eaten away into reserved capital funds to maintain APU through the lockdown. Taking on the full funding of operations felt like such an awkward step backwards; not at all where we expected to be at this juncture. Thanks to terrific directors who agonized at length over how to accomplish this with the least amount of risk and the best outcome. Thank you to our partner directors in Malawi for their due diligence. Thank you to Memory and Henry and all the amazing staff at APU – your tenacity and hard work keep us focused forward. Thank you to Christie for always keeping us grounded in our philosophy of respect for local decision making.

6. Executive Director's Report: Christie Johnson

‘This World Is For The Stubborn’
Memory Chazeza Mdyetseni

(Christie showed photos of some of the graduated girls on her screen.)

Just over twenty years ago, I met a seemingly quiet, shy, gentle young Malawian woman whose experience of life couldn't have been any more different from my own, and yet what we shared, we shared deeply, and that was the belief in the power of education.

As a daughter of two teachers, and a teacher myself, I had grown up believing passionately that education was key to health, happiness, equality, and change. The key to a better life. Then I had the chance to practice my profession in Malawi and discovered that not only was education the key to all of these things, but it was, for the young women I was teaching, a matter of life and death, in the most raw and brutal way. All of a sudden, it became clear that education was all that mattered. It was everything. It was like throwing a life ring to a drowning victim. Life or death. And this young Malawian woman, Memory Chazeza, whom I was teaching alongside, understood this deeply and passionately and to a greater degree than I could begin to fathom. At this time in my life, I was already a highly successful teacher with 8 years of teaching experience in three different schools and with two university degrees to my name. But knowing and working with Memory was, and still is, a humbling and grounding experience for me. Very quickly, I learned that Memory had a will of steel, a strong and

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powerful voice within her community, and the courage to stand against and fight for what she believed in, bluntly refusing to compromise on her ideals or dreams.

Over the twenty years that we have been working together as cofounders of APU, I have come to truly understand the saying that Memory often uses, ‘This World Is For The Stubborn’. Indeed it is. As a little girl, I remember my dad saying to me, each time I couldn’t do something or ran into an obstacle that frustrated me, ‘that’s right Christie, get mad at it, dig deep, fight back.’ Instead of helping me with my problem, he would, much to my frustration, repeat the phrase, ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going’. Encouraging me to solve my own problems. The kind of stubbornness that Memory speaks of, is the kind that makes her refuse to accept less than the best from her teachers, and her students. It is this kind of stubbornness, this kind of toughness, that results in resiliency and the ability, courage and grit to get back up each and every time we are knocked down. And this grit, this resilience, this stubbornness, is at the heart of APU. It is at the heart of each of the 900+ graduates who have made their way through four years of secondary education at APU. It is the reason why I believe that come famine or drought, war or pandemic, APU and its goal of providing high quality education to marginalized girls will persist. Will achieve sustainability. Will both survive and thrive now and for generations to come. This stubbornness is baked into the bricks that house our students.

It is true that this year, with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, our finances took a massive hit. As of December 2019, we had finally raised enough funds to complete all of the buildings that were remaining on our program definition. We were ready to finish the construction and complete our sponsorship program in style and on time. However with the closure of the school, \$80,000 had to be reallocated to maintaining the school and paying the salaries of our employees, during the 5 month closure. This situation was humbling to everyone involved in the governance of APU both in Canada and in Malawi, as we had to face the hard reality that if the lockdown continued, if the pandemic had hit the country as it has in the Western World, we might very well have been in the situation of having to start over from scratch. We might have lost our hard-earned team of teachers at the school, we might have lost our private students, and even our scholarship students might have all given up on returning to school in favour of going into business or marriage.

As it was, it seems we’ve gotten lucky. The worst has not come to pass. In fact when the school reopened all but 1 student returned to school. All of our teachers returned to class. And everyone involved has returned with renewed energy and appreciation for the miracle that is APU. Although none of us truly believe that it is a miracle at all. This is hard work. This is perseverance. This is stubbornness. And come what may, even if someday we have to rebuild from scratch someday due to some other crisis, we know that ‘when the going gets tough, the tough get going’.

This year my ED report reads more like a founders report, largely because, due to the pandemic, very few funds have been raised. We have no major donations or new construction projects or exciting fundraising events to report on. The celebration that we were planning, to recognize the completion of our program definition has been temporarily placed on hold and the official end date has moved forward by 6 months from June 2021 to December 2021. But celebrate we will and I for one am truly looking forward to travelling to Malawi to recognize the astounding success that is APU and to watch as our final 14 girls sponsored by APU MEF receive their high school diplomas. It is my dream that as many of us as possible make this journey to celebrate together next Christmas. And if the powers that

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be allow, we just might be able to share celebratory hugs with each other as well as with our Malawian partners.

It remains to be seen what form the Canadian arm (APU MEF) of this partnership takes, after we complete the current MEF Program Definition next December, but what I do know, is that there is enough wisdom, experience, love, patience, and yes, even stubbornness, within this group of directors, to bring this ship safely into port. I look forward to the end of this journey and conversations about ‘what next’ in the New Year and thank you all for all that you do for APU.

In memory of Frances Stocks and Larry Johnson
For their patience, guidance, energy and support for all things APU

7. Treasurer’s Report: Pat Killoran.

The Financial Statements presented are for the 12 months ending July 31, 2020.

- They have been prepared by Ken Macrae, C.A., who has performed in this service for many years.
- The statements are “Notice to Reader” that indicate they are a compilation of financial statements using financial data provided by the management.
- The balance sheet (page 2) indicates there is \$113,000 in cash this year down from \$240,000 last year as construction projects classified as deferred in 2019 were completed and as fundraising slowed.
- The uncommitted surplus decreased slightly from \$99,678 last year to \$88,022 this year.
- The Statement of Receipts and Disbursements shows revenue of \$225,585, down approximately \$64,000 from last year due to fewer donations.
- Expenditures on School Operations in Malawi have shown an uncharacteristic increase as a Covid-19 support package was put in place during the school’s closure (March 2020 - September 2020).
- New expenditures for Construction are also down as available funds were directed to the Covid-19 support plan. Some of the deferred construction from last year was finished, though.
- Due to the funds required for the Covid-19 support plan the statement shows expenditures exceeding revenue by \$11,656 requiring the use of some of the previous surplus to cover expenditures during the year.

M:Pat/ S: David: That the Financial Statements as prepared by Mr. Ken Macrae C.A. be approved as presented. CARRIED

7. Nominating Committee Report: Lori Messer/Tricia Timmermans

David Stocks was elected as a director to the board of APU-MEF for a three-year term ending December 31st 2021.

At the November 25, 2019 AGM, Helene Weir and Tricia Timmermans were elected as directors to the board of APU MEF for a three-year term, ending December 31st, 2022

At the November 20, 2017 AGM, the following were elected as directors of the board of APU-MEF for

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a three-year term ending December 31st, 2020:

- Christie Johnson
- Pat Killoran
- Dariol Haydock
- Lori Messer
- Lance Shaver
- Dean Rohrs
- Michele Parkin

As all board members have agreed to continue on the Board of Directors, the Nominating Committee will move that Christie Johnson, Pat Killoran, Dariol Haydock, Lori Messer, Lance Shaver, Dean Rohrs, Michele Parkin be nominated to the board of directors APU-MEF for a three year term ending December 31st, 2023.

Lori requested that her term be changed to a one-year term ending in December 2021 as our Program Definition is coming to an end in 2021. After discussion all directors agreed that a one-year term was appropriate for all current directors.

M/Tricia, S/Helene that all board members be appointed to the board of Directors of APU MEF for a one-year term ending December 31st, 2021.

9. Other Business

David offered that the reports from Lori and Christie be retained; Lance will include them on the website. Christie will send him photos to accompany the reports. There will be one more meeting before the end of the year.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 PT / 7:42 MT.

Minutes prepared by: Tricia Timmermans

Approved by the APU-MEF directors at the AGM on xxxxx, 2020
