

# Supporters Association 6th Annual General Meeting, Toronto, ON, April 26-28, 2019

## **Minutes**

Present:

Committee Members – Rebecca Shaw (Interim Chair), Justin Warner (Interim Secretary, Communications Director)

Members/Guests – Lee Howey, Jennifer Carrie, Joanne Warner, Jamie Bachurzewski, Martin Bates, Richard Johnson and guest, Derek McLaughlin, Valerie Miyata, Larry Miyata, Jason Pichette, Colin Dixon, Andy Cooke, Marci Cooke, Marielle Jackson, Kevin Turnbull, Stephen Mearman, Richard Sharp, Steven Sibbald, Nikki Terebenec and guests, Ken Hughes, Nicole Brebner, Ian Smith, Simon Telfer...

## **Welcome, Introductions & Apologies**

NASA Interim Chair welcomed members and guests to Toronto, Ontario.

Committee members [Justin, Interim Secretary, Communications Director], apologies from David Hyre (Treasurer) and Graeme Pritchard (Membership Director).

Regional Reps [Rebecca Shaw, Region 1A, Ontario/Quebec/Manitoba; Andy Cooke, Region 5, Delaware/Maryland; Jason Pichette, Region 3B, Maine; Kevin Turnbull, Region 9, Los Angeles, California; Stephen Mearman, Region 6A, Georgia]

Members in attendance additionally represent Region 6, Florida and the South East US states; and Region 7, Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky and surrounding states.

Special guest Lee Howey.

Notable absentees mentioned, including many of our members who travelled to Wembley for the Checktrade Trophy final.

## **Opening Comments from the Interim Chair**

Interim Chair thanked all in attendance, recognising that it involves a time and cost commitment from all. Additional thanks were given to the 2018/19 committee, the Regional Representatives, Honorary Life President (Ritchie Pitt) and our SAFC NASA UK Ambassador (Steven Whillians).

Special recognition was given to outgoing Chair, Derek 'Degsy' Aspinall who decided to step down from the role after almost 6 years in post. Degsy was instrumental in the formation of the association, and has since dedicated significant time and effort to advancing the interests of NASA and its members. The Committee members would like to place on record their sincere thanks the Degsy for his endeavors and leadership during his time in office. Degsy will be taking up the regional rep role for Wisconsin for the 2019/20 season.

Region 7 member Todd Jenkins offered these words on Degsy's decision to step down: 'Degsy was inspirational throughout his tour [as Chair]. His leadership and passion for taking care of fans showed in everything he did. He has made NASA what it is today, energizing the fanbase with many great team- and fan-building events showing our international devotion to Sunderland...'

A notable mention is also given to Jim Gardner, who has been in the role of regional rep for Region 7, based in Columbus and covering Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania West and Tennessee, for a number of seasons. Jim has been the recipient of the regional rep of the year award for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 seasons and has provided leadership to a region which has typically seen the greatest number of members and number of events. Jim is stepping down from the Region 7 rep role, and the Secretary role, due to his upcoming relocation. We thank him for all of his efforts and wish him well for the future.

Todd Jenkins also noted that 'Jim made impressive membership and ambassadorial strides for the Ohio region and built a wonderful SAFC regional family. He has truly left a great mark'.

We would also like to place on record thanks to Chris Waters, Head of Supporter Engagement at SAFC, and James Wallace, Supporter Engagement Coordinator, for welcoming SAFC NASA members to Sunderland over the course of the season. While the impact of the club's International Membership on overseas supporters' branches has been a topic of discussion this season, Chris has reaffirmed that the Supporter Engagement team is there to represent all fans, whether members of the International or UK membership schemes or otherwise. NASA will continue to connect members travelling to Sunderland with the

Supporter Engagement team, and has indeed done so in recent months, with members from Region 1A (Ontario), Region 6 (Florida), Region 9F (San Diego & South California), and Region 6A (Georgia) being connected to the club.

Finally, thanks go to our AGM venues for accommodating us this weekend, including Craft Brasserie and Bar, Betty's on King, and Scotland Yard.

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### ***Secretary/Communications Director report***

Interim Chair commented on activities in the current season. With the club's streaming service being brought in at the start of this season, we have seen an increase in regional activity as compared to 2017/18 when streaming the games was only possible through other clubs's subscription services. Feedback has been provided to the club as to how its current streaming service can be enhanced: for example, time and score shown on the stream, the addition of commentary and replays.

A key aim for the NASA committee for 2019/20, regardless of which league the team competes in, is to grow our network of regional reps, and to further support the less active regions. In the latter months of the current season, we have added reps in Region 9H (Utah), Region 7W (Wisconsin), Region 6B (North Carolina), Region 9C (Oregon, Montana and Idaho), and Region 8A (Texas, South of Houston), and are in discussions with another potential rep in Texas (Dallas area), to complement the existing Region 8D rep in Austin. We also welcome back John Ellington to the Region 4C rep role in Pennsylvania East.

The release of the Netflix documentary, Sunderland Til I Die, has undoubtedly raised the profile of the club in North America. A number of requests were made of NASA to support the club's North American marketing drive on the back of the Netflix release. We'll continue to evaluate any new requests from the club against NASA's aims of connecting fans within and across the USA, Canada and Mexico. NASA was proudly able to support the Bradley Lowery Foundation with the sale of Bradley shirts in the US. Members in Canada – we hope to have an update for you on the ability to make a donation by purchasing some of our remaining shirts currently held in the US, once our new merchandise director is in place.

On the field, I think we'll all agree that it has been a more enjoyable season than many in the past. We're at a key point of the season and today's result will be critical for our automatic promotion chances. The team's trip to Wembley was a highlight of the season so far, and we had many NASA members in attendance,

including strong showings from Region 1A (Ontario) and Region 7 (Ohio), as well as members from Region 1 (Atlantic Canada), Region 8c (Wyoming), Region 6 (Florida), Region 9B (Arizona), Region 4 (New York/New Jersey) and elsewhere.

A question was raised in respect of the club's International Membership scheme. The Interim Chair confirmed that NASA members are free to join the International Membership scheme should they choose, and indeed a number of NASA members already have done (and were required to do so to purchase a Wembley ticket). The Interim Chair further commented that NASA's aim is to connect fans within and across North America through events such as regional gatherings and the AGM, which the club's International Membership does not seek to do.

### **Membership Director's report (MD)**

*Interim Chair delivered in absence.* Membership numbers have trended upwards since last season, standing at 229 at the end of March 2019, versus 172.

Notable regions in terms of membership numbers are:

Region 7 (Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Pennsylvania West, West Virginia): 57

Region 1A (Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba): 23

Region 6 (Florida and the South East US states): 17

We held a prize draw for members who were signed up before March 1, 2019. Winners (named below) were unfortunately not present at the AGM and in their absence will be sent a signed copy of Lee Howey's book.

Corey Donaldson, Region 9 (California)

John Bretz, Region 7A (Michigan)

Mike Grady, Region 4 (New York)

Our membership drive for 2019/20 will take place shortly after the AGM, with the aim of further increasing our membership base and engaging new and former members.

After a number of seasons of keeping our membership fees static, we will be setting our fees at \$12.50 for individual members and \$25 for families beginning from the start of next season. Early bird renewals purchased between now and the start of the season will remain at the existing price of \$10/individual and \$20/family. The additional membership fees will be used in supporting regional reps in their roles to facilitate connectivity between members in their areas.

## **Treasurer Report**

*Available upon request.* The Association continues to cover its costs through membership fee and merchandise revenues. Key costs include the travel and accommodation costs of the AGM special guest.

## **Results of 2018/19 Season Awards**

SAFC 1st Team Young Player of the Year – Lynden Gooch (30), Lewis Morgan (5), Denver Hume (3)

SAFC 1st Team Player of the Year – Aiden McGeady (20), Jon McLaughlin (14), Luke O’Nien (5)

## ***Association awards....***

2018/19 SAFC NASA Supporter of the Year is Martin Bates (Region 1A)

Martin’s enthusiasm for all things SAFC is really second-to-none, and he has helped to raise the profile of NASA through his recent interview with SAFC’s Supporter Engagement team, as well as on social media. Martin has made two trips to the UK this season for Sunderland games, flying the NASA flag. Although his record this season is ‘attended 4, drawn 4’ in normal time, so he is barred from any future live games until we’re sure that we don’t need a win!

2018/19 SAFC NASA Regional Rep of the Year is Andy Cooke (Region 5)

While we have recognized in recent years the regions with largest membership and number of events, this year’s award recognizes commitment and activity in one of our smaller regions over a number of years. Andy Cooke, and of course Marci, have hosted events over the seasons in their own home, and have been regular attendees representing Region 5 at each one of NASA’s AGMs. We thank Andy, Marci and Region 5 for their continued commitment to SAFC and to NASA.

## **2018/19 Committee Results**

As noted in an email communication to members on April 6, 2019, nominations were invited for all NASA committee positions, including the newly constituted Director for Regional Reps.

Incumbents indicated their willingness to stand for the 2019/20 season in the positions of Chair, Treasurer, Membership Director and Communications. No nominations were received for these positions, and the incumbents will continue in these roles.

Nominations were received and seconded for the positions of Secretary and Merchandise Director, and no ballot was required. The position of Director for Regional Reps (to support regional reps in identifying opportunities and locations

for events in their areas) remains open and any members interested in the position can contact the committee for further information. Opportunities for growth of membership base and increase in frequency of events is noted in Region 6 (Florida), Region 4 (New York/New Jersey) and Region 2 (British Columbia).

Your 2019/20 NASA committee members are confirmed as follows:

Position	Name	Region and location
Chair	Rebecca Shaw	1A Ontario
Secretary	Gavin Frater	4 New York/New Jersey
Treasurer	David Hyre	7 Ohio
Membership Director	Graeme Pritchard	9B Arizona
Communications Director	Justin Warner	1A Ontario
Merchandise Director	Ian Scott	7 Ohio
Director for Regional Reps	OPEN	

Honorary Life President position does not change (Ritchie Pitt). Steven Whillians remains the SAFC NASA UK Ambassador.

### **2019/20 AGM**

We invite your suggestions for location of the 2019/20 AGM, which should be in a location with good air transport links and preferably with an MLS team. A date will be pencilled in once EFL fixtures are released in late June, and confirmed once the MLS schedule is released in early January 2020.

### **Talk-In w/Lee Howey**

We sincerely appreciate Lee taking the time out from his work and personal commitments to join us here in Toronto and are honoured to have him speak as part of our event.

### **Toronto FC vs. Portland Timbers**

It was a cold and windy game at BMO Field, and we were glad to get back to the warmth of the pub for more socializing and a quick visit from Steven Caldwell.

Thanks to everyone who made it such a successful weekend!