

Date: May 20, 2021	Venue: Via Zoom Webinar	Time: 10:48 am
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CALL TO ORDER

President and Chair, Keesa Hutchinson, called the 2021 Member Forum to order at 10:48 am.

The annual Member Forum is an opportunity to discuss various issues facing the professions. There were no formal presentations or set topics this year. Members were invited to share comments or raise questions using the Q&A or raise hand features in the Zoom Webinar control panel.

Jenine Cerny facilitated the Member Forum by bringing forward questions and comments from participants.

COMMENTS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Development Permit Process

Jay Boyce first congratulated all new members of Council and Keesa on her appointment as President.

His question was about the development permit process and extending the member involvement at the rezoning or design panel stages of a project with municipalities, in terms of having seals applied at the submission stages, as was done at AIBC. Municipalities in BC saw the benefit in this, in terms of protecting the public and ensuring projects were submitted according to all required guidelines at different stages.

Are earlier stages of projects being taken into consideration for applying seals, extending beyond the development permit? Or is there a way to include this in further talks with municipalities in moving toward having architect involvement at these earlier stages of projects?

Keesa indicated that the Advocacy Committee is looking into the seals requirement at the development stage and believes will be part of some of the information sessions going forward with the authorities having jurisdiction. Keesa invited members of the panel to weigh in.

Barbara Bruce thanked Jay for his comments and advised that she will bring them forward to the Advocacy Committee.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

Bill Kumlin requested an update on the discussions with the Alberta Government regarding copyright of architects' works.

Keesa thanked Bill for his comment and turned to Barbara Bruce and Gordon Murray as they have been involved in talks with government on some challenging issues.

Barbara indicated that this topic has not been actively pursued in the last little while with government. She stated that this is something the Consulting Architects of Alberta may be working on. There is also an industry liaison committee that the AAA is part of with Alberta Infrastructure and she believes this is one of their parking lot items. Unfortunately, with the pandemic, the industry liaison committee has not been meeting regularly. Barbara stated that she would take Bill's comments offline and get back to him with a little more specific information on where things stand with the various committee conversations.

COMMENTS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Banff Session Revenue

Scott Pickles stated that recognizing the up and down budgeting associated with Banff Session (with Banff carrying forward the benefits to the other year), did that provide any insights on where our revenues are best achieved? For example, if we sit at a loss, is it because fewer people came to Banff Session or because we did not get revenues associated with the surrounding activities?

Keesa indicated that this was a good question and turned to Greg Beck for a response.

Greg specified that the budget is a moving target at times and as far as revenue goes for Banff Session which happened to coincide with COVID, it is both revenue loss and reduced expenses.

Barbara added that we have a pattern: one year we break even or sit at a deficit and in a Banff Session year, we typically see a surplus. Understanding this pattern, we are comfortable with a deficit in an alternate or "off-Banff Session" year. The AAA's budgeting is always very conservative on the revenue side, and we typically do better than what was budgeted for. As well, we always watch expenses throughout the year. Last year, although expenses were incurred in advance of the Banff Session event, it did not happen. This year with great support from members and sponsors, we anticipate doing better than what is forecasted in the budget.

Budget

Gene Dejneka asked Treasurer, Greg Beck, if there are any plans to reduce the budget shortfall of \$125K and preventing any further losses in the future?

In his response, Greg reiterated that the budget is a moving target, and he does not anticipate the deficit will escalate as we move forward. Next year, we should see an improvement with a break-even situation.

Barbara added that we intentionally budgeted for a deficit knowing there was the Banff Session offset. We have plenty of revenues in reserve, if required. The deficit is not escalating, and we are taking a close look at holding the line on expenses while also managing member dues. We have considered the economy and membership and are not considering raising dues to make up the shortfall.

AAA Investments

Kerri Peyton asked what the plan is for the \$2.3 Million in investments that were reclassified as cash? She recalled Gordon saying that AAA was changing its investment approach.

Gordon responded. In the past, we invested very conservatively in GICs with a very low rate of return. Following plenty of discussion, research, and analysis, it was decided to hire an investment firm to invest rainy day funds.

Greg indicated that the assets to be invested will hopefully reap better returns which will help our financial stability, but there are no plans to change the reserves in place.

Barbara added that Council adopted a very high-level investment policy and are working with Mercer Investments on the AAA's specific needs for short-, medium- and long-term investments, various project funds, and rainy-day funds. An investment strategy will be drafted and with review and approval by both the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee and Council before moving forward. The main piece is wealth protection with some growth. We will invest in secure investments and steer clear of anything considered high-risk.

COMMENTS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Advocacy

Stephanie Clancy indicated that Greg Beck mentioned funds for advocacy. She asked if he could elaborate on what the advocacy program looks like and address the age-old debate where regulatory and advocacy cannot exist together for the AAA.

Barbara Bruce provided a response. In typical terms, "advocacy" means to try and impact change. As a regulatory body, "advocacy" is around the topic of scope, protection of title and protection of the public. The work of the AAA's Advocacy Committee is focused on a communication strategy with the authorities having jurisdiction to ensure that professionals are involved at the development permit stage. The small amount of funds set aside for advocacy are to support the consultant working with the committee on the survey that was mentioned earlier and material to be presented to municipalities, mostly virtually, as well as to support presentation travel and information materials.

Nabil Habashy

Farhad Mortezaee congratulated all newly-elected Council members and commented on Nabil Habashy's contributions to Council over the past two years (Nabil is a departing Council member).

CLOSING REMARKS

As the Member Forum had gone beyond the allotted time, Jenine suggested that the forum wrap up and if members had questions or comments, they were welcome to send them to events@aaa.ab.ca.

Any questions or comments not addressed during the Member Forum, would be gathered by administration and responded to in a timely manner. [There were no questions or comments received following the Member Forum].

On behalf of Council, Keesa thanked everyone for their participation at this year's AGM and Member Forum.

The Member Forum adjourned at 11:08 am.