

DRXC Annual General Meeting Minutes, 2020/21 Season

April 27, 2021, Via Zoom

In Attendance: Bob Donders, Diane Davis, Phil Davis, Adrian Cecco, Dave Rhodes, Christian Kaiser, Helena Rummens, Stuart Craig, Doug killey, Ann Serdula, John McKay, Bruce Heinmiller, Lindsay Dooh.

Regrets: None.

1. Approval of Agenda

Approved.

2. Approval of Minutes from the 2019/2020 AGM

Approved. The Minutes are available on the DRXC website.

3. President report (Bob Donders)

The DRXC had a successful season, although many programs and facilities were affected by the ongoing Covid pandemic.

As always, club volunteers allowed the club to offer a wide range of facilities and programs. On behalf of the members, thank-you, volunteers, for your time and energy.

Our membership was over 400 for the first time since 2012, and our adult membership, at ~350, may well be the highest ever. The Covid situation certainly increased our adult membership, as cross-country skiing was one of the few permitted activities, and many “snow-birds” stayed around this winter because of the travel restrictions. On the down side, the high school racing program was not run, and there was only a very limited Jackrabbit program.

The club had a good year financially, with an operating surplus of around \$10k. We are well positioned to move ahead with some significant capital projects (short term: new bridges, longer-term: grooming headquarters, snowmobile replacement).

Over the past few years, a great deal of effort has gone into preparing and improving the trails so that they are smoother and better drained. This effort extends the ski season, and improves the skiing and grooming. This year, in spite of the relatively low snowfall, the Silver Spoon trails were skiable from late December through mid-March. To help with trail maintenance, the club purchased a new brushsaw and battery powered chainsaw.

We are very fortunate to have a dedicated grooming crew who put in the many hours it take to keep the trails in great shape. It takes about 10 hours of effort to groom the entire Silver Spoon trail system. In addition, there is the effort associated with maintaining and storing the snowmobiles and grooming equipment. These efforts are really appreciated by the members.

In the brief periods when Covid restrictions allowed, the club offered adult lessons in classic skiing (a total of two), and skate skiing. There was also one moonlight ski. Unfortunately we were not able to host the new-member open house.

With the large demand for skiing and snowshoeing, parking on Balmer Bay was often very busy, with as many as 80 cars parked along the road. There are now a total of 6 access points from the road to D loop. New this year is that the snow banks at these points were cleared by a local contractor. Much easier than shoveling by hand!

This season, the club responded to three separate emergency incidents. Two of these were on the Bass Lake trails, and one was on the Silver Spoon trails (B loop). Fortunately, in all cases the injured parties were brought to safety, and are recovering. In each cases, the ski group involved in the incident had cell phones and could initiate an emergency response promptly. The club was also well prepared, thanks to the newly revised emergency plans. These incidents are a reminder that there are risks with nordic skiing, especially in hilly terrain and in the back country. When skiing, please take precautions, and be aware of the club's emergency plan, available on the DRXC website.

This was quite a complicated and challenging year for the club, with a large membership, fast and hard snow conditions, and restrictions on activities imposed by the ongoing Covid situation. It was not always easy, but collectively we put in the effort, adapted to the ever changing Covid situation, and had a very successful season.

4. Financial Report (Dave Rhodes)

Financially, this year was a success. Membership income was the highest ever. Jackrabbits and the equipment rental program functioned at a reduced level. We were able to contribute \$3000 to each of our capital funds (grooming equipment, buildings, and bridges). Expenditures will need to be made in coming years to upgrade the rental equipment, rejuvenate the Jackrabbit program, and replace bridges.

5. Membership Report (Christian Kaiser)

Highlights of 2021

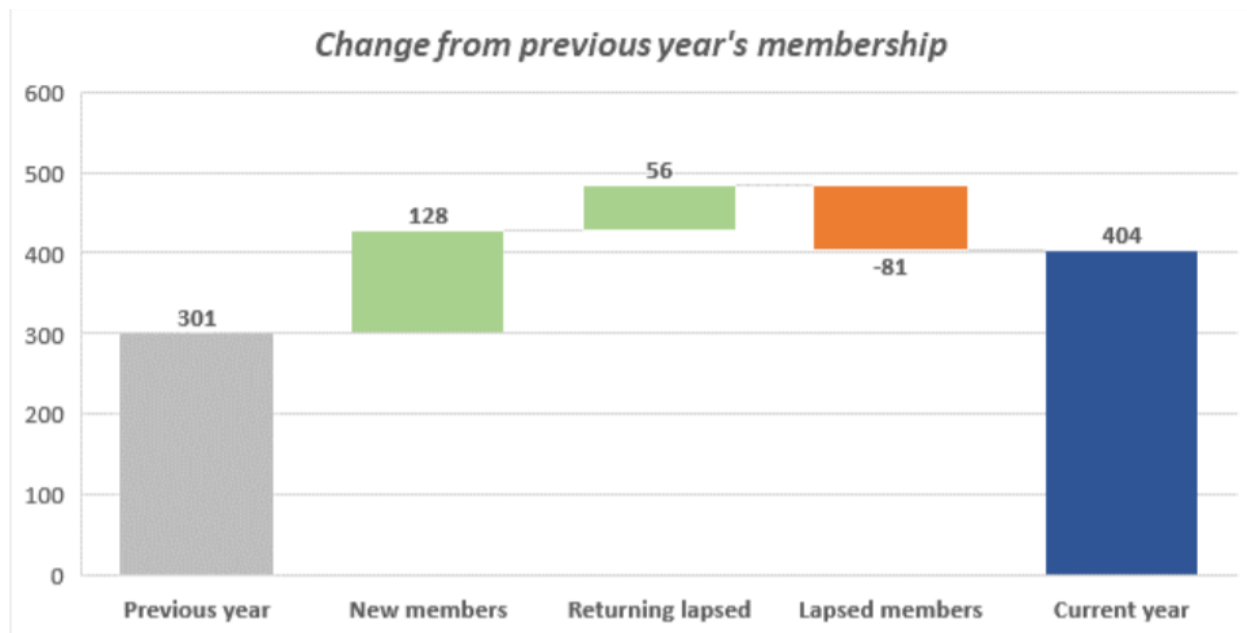
- The DRXC had the highest membership in many years – 404 members.
- We saw a very large increase in 20- to 30-year-olds, and significant increases in 50- to 70-year old members.

- We introduced two new membership tiers: Family and Young Adult (20 to 25 years old):
 - 49 families registered for a total of 136 members.
 - 4 young adults registered – most members in this age group registered as part of a Family.
- We introduced welcome emails which were sent out in the weeks after registration.
- The Zone4 system continues to work well – more than 90% of members registered through it.
- Some areas for development in next season:
 - The new membership tiers made the Zone4 forms more complicated, especially the pricing structure.
 - The welcome emails were sent manually, which meant that they were sometimes delayed or irregularly sent. We need to investigate whether the welcome emails can be automated.

Current membership

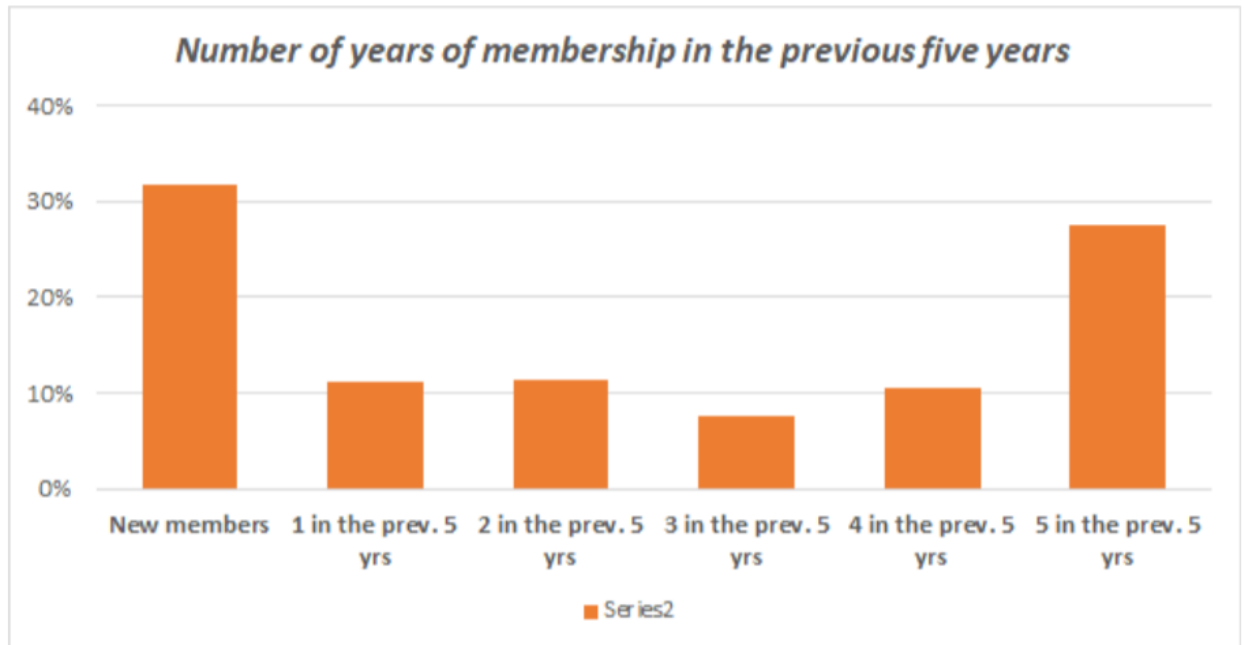
- The total number of members registered for the 2020 / 2021 season has **increased significantly** from 302 to **404 members** (a 34% increase in total membership).
- **128 new members¹** joined the club.
- **73% of the 2019 / 2020 membership returned for this season**, while 27% of the 2019/2020 membership lapsed¹ their membership in the current season (**decrease** from 33% in the previous season).
- **56 returning lapsed members¹** re-joined the club.

Category	Number of Members	Percentage of total membership	Previous season
Adults (20 and over)	348	86%	91%
Youth and children (under 19 years old)	56	14%	9%
All new members	81	32%	2%
Male/Female	217/187	54% / 46%	55% / 45%



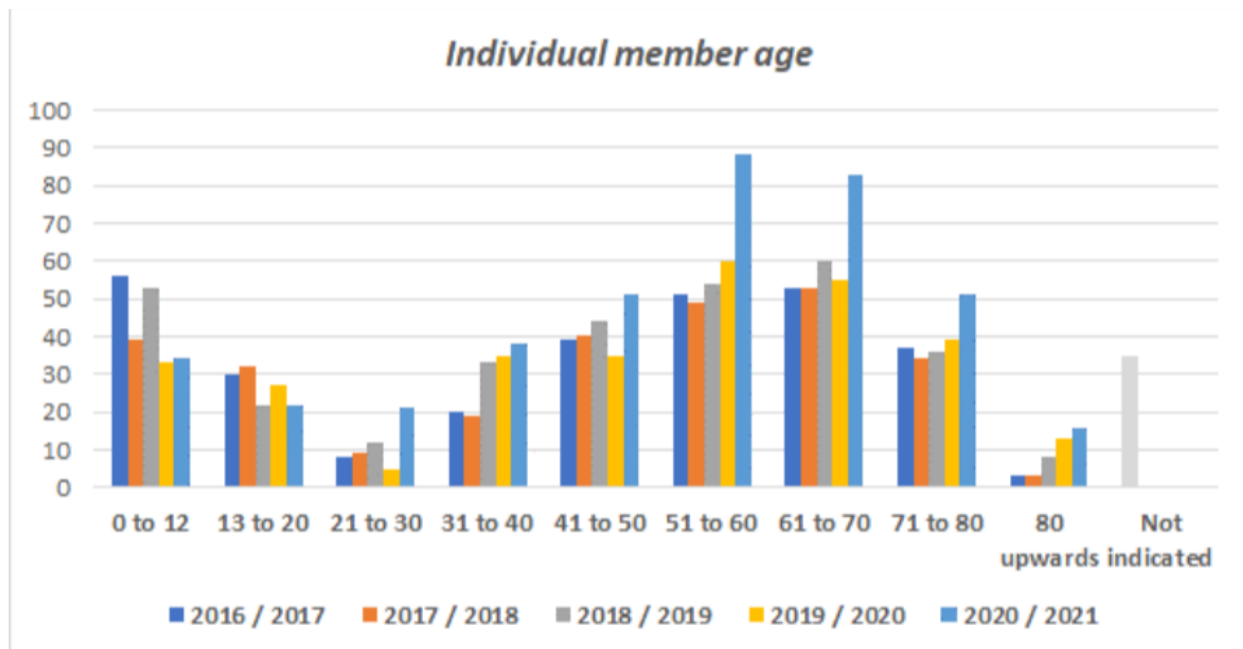
Membership persistence

- 46% of members have 3 or more years of memberships in the previous five years (this is significantly lower than last season because of the high number of new members).
- 26 out of 60 new members 1 (43%) in 2019 / 2020 re-joined for the 2020 / 2021 season (a slight increase from 41% in the previous season).



Age breakdown over time

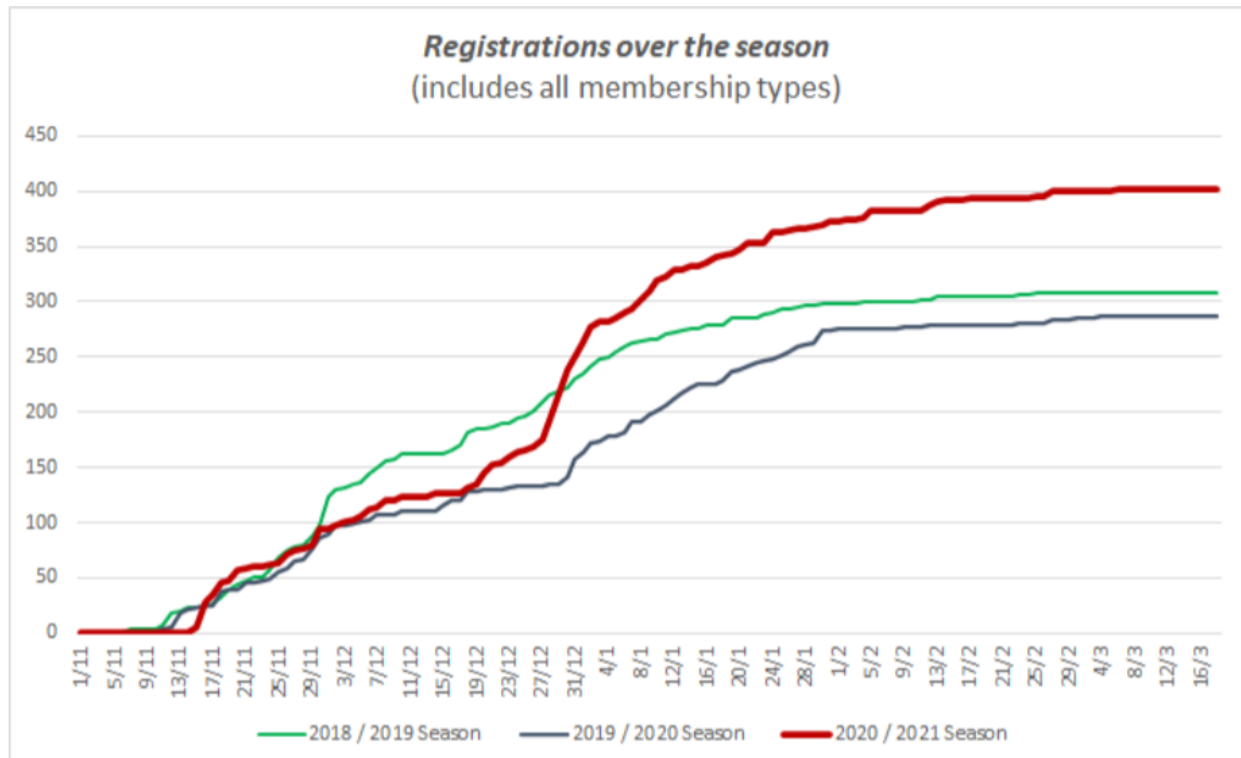
- In this season, all adult membership numbers **increased**, with a very large increase in young adults (21 to 30 years old), and members older than 50.
- Unfortunately, the general **decreasing** trend in the child and youth membership continued this year, likely because the Jackrabbits program was not run due to the pandemic.
- **The median age for adult members has decreased to 58 years old**, down from 59 years old in the 2019 / 2020 season.



Age of adult members	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021
Average	56.7	57.0	56.8	55.8	57.7	56.5
Median	58	58	57	56	59	58

Registration over the season time

- The boost in membership in late December was likely the result of the pandemic lockdown that came into effect on December 24 th .



Notes and Definitions

Notes

- All analysis is based on the membership data as captured in the Zone4 database. This is reliable from the 2015 / 2016 season, but not complete prior to that. For this reason, there may be some discrepancies and small errors.
- There were some limited instances of individuals registering as members more than once in a season. This has been accounted for as far as possible but may result in slight differences in total values.

Definitions

1. **New Member:** An individual who has not been members in the last five years
2. **Lapsed Member:** An individual who was a member in the immediately previous season but did not renew their membership for the current season.
3. **Returning Lapsed Member:** An individual who was not a member in the previous season but had been a member in one of the previous five years; previously.

6. Emergency Plan (Diane Davis)

As Vice President, I do not have specific jobs. Therefore, I took on the task of creating an emergency plan this year. I also sent out the thank you notes to landowners who allow the trails and skiers to be on their land.

The following is my quick report of the emergency plan.

Four barrels were bought and first aid kits put in them. The barrels were put in strategic locations on our trails (One at the chalet, one was at the bottom of M hill, one was at the Bass Lake cabin, one at sidetrack junction as well as smaller donated olive barrels with a few first aid supplies at the forestry and at the top on S). The scouts lent some sleeping bags to put in the barrels and donated the olive barrels. Safety tips were put in the DRXC newsletters.

Greatly improved detailed maps of the DRXC trails were created. The maps were needed to help find the location of one injured person when 911 was called. The maps can be viewed on the DXRC website.

Found volunteers who were willing to help in an emergency and even a couple who could operate a rescue snowmobile.

Unfortunately, the plan had to be used 3 times this year. The injured skiers got out safely with the help of the rescue volunteers and 911.

Subsequent meetings have caused the emergency plan to be improved.

The emergency plan should be revisited at least once a year. I have a very qualified volunteer willing to help me next year.

I would like to give a big thank you to many volunteers of the DRXC who helped during this process.

Next year, I would like to work on getting an updated logo for the DRXC.

7. Trail Maintenance (Stuart Craig)

Silver Spoon trail maintenance went smoothly during the 2020/2021 season. A full complement of trail captains and volunteers had the trails cleared and brushed before the snow fell. We did not experience any major wind-falls during the ski season.

Acquisition of a new brushsaw with "Xtreme"; harness was appreciated and saw considerable use on the Silver Spoon trails and portions of the Petawawa Research Forest trails.

(More from Stuart) Humm, don't know where this fits, but we did have all that fuss over numerous COVID-refugees walking, snowshoeing, cycling on the ski trails. This resulted in a couple of media notices and volunteers posting "ski trail" signs at the PRF and Bass Lakes. And then there was the placement of benches in the PRF -- just 4 so far, with 5 more to go. Perhaps these go in Trail Improvements?

(From Dave Rhodes) Roughly 50 more trail signs were installed last summer. This is an ongoing project.

8. Trail Improvements (Helena Rummens)

The following projects were worked on or completed during 2020:

June

- Left-over piles of wood chips at the chalet were spread on **M loop** to avoid combustion issues during the summer.

September

- Extensive work was done on **C loop** to improve rough trails.
- Sand was brought from last year's stockpile at the hydro line and placed on the first half of C to build up a haul route (Step 1). This was later reinforced with corduroy in soft spots.
- Sand and stone purchased from Tracy Lance were deposited near Wintergreen Lane, transferred by bucket to a
- tractor trailer, and then moved over the haul route to Miami Beach (Step 2).
- That material was then moved by bucket and ATV trailer to rough spots and raked in (Step 3).
- In the meantime, corduroy was cut locally and placed at one swampy area, and the culvert there was replaced. (Note: for corduroy projects, balsam trees were cut almost exclusively because of their overabundance.)
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October

- Piles of slash and deadfalls were cut down at the **C loop** waterfront, for esthetics and to reduce fire hazards (kindling).

October

- Extensive work was done on **B loop** to drain or cover perpetually wet areas.

- At three large swampy areas, corduroy was cut locally and placed, channels were dug to improve drainage, and one culvert was installed.
- The large wet section in the middle of the first downhill was drained as much as possible. This area is relatively flat and remains muddy (may need extensive corduroy in future).

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November

- The tight bends on **B loop and H loop** were widened for easier grooming.

October–November

- Targeted trail clearing was undertaken at the Forestry (3 sessions) and BLISS trail (1 session). This was in part to introduce new volunteers to trail work.

All of these projects involved one or several crews of volunteer labourers who welcomed getting dirty and tired. David Lee, Doug Champ, and Aubrey Fletcher generously provided their time and machines.

Proposed projects for 2021 (so far):

- Reinforcement of trails that lead to the M bridges, for anticipated bridge replacement.
- More corduroy and drainage on R loop, which suffered from flooding in 2020 and hence had ice during the ski season.

June: M loop wood chips



September: C loop reinforcement



September: C loop swampy area (before and after)



October: B loop corduroy cutting



October: B loop corduroy laying



October: B loop drainage



9. Grooming (Marc Audet)

2020/2021 was a decent year for grooming operations. After having a costly repair to one snowmobile (pre-season), we had a trouble-free winter with starting and running the sleds and with operating the grooming implements. With the limited snowfall in January, we made good use of the “snow gatherer” implement, which many of us had not used before. We also implemented a policy of minimizing the width of the grooming swath on loops R, X and C in order to preserve snow on the edge of those trails for later spring use (drawing that undisturbed snow in using the snow gatherer). This was done by avoiding using the small Ginzu of those loops. Unfortunately, the March thaw was too damaging to the snowpack to allow us to utilize that “banked” snow. Still, it is a good strategy to employ in giving us an option for late season reconditioning of those challenging loops (challenging because of heavy forest canopy reducing snow accumulation locally).

We trained one additional groomer who is both a nordic skier and an experienced snowmobiler, bringing our contingent of groomers to 6. This is a good number of groomers to support. Among our contingent, there are several groomers with good grooming knowledge and experience that we consult with in determining when and how to groom after snowfalls.

There were no injuries to groomers and no damage to equipment from grooming activities.

We are presently waiting for the covid lockdown to be lifted before we can have the snowmobiles inspected and winterized.

It should be noted that DRXC should be planning to update/replace one of the two snowmobiles within the next several years. The two sleds are already 11 years old and although they are both working fine, and they continue to be maintained to a high standard, at some point we will start to experience mechanical problems (e.g., one this year with an internal electrical problem). In order to groom all trails, collectively taking about 10 hours machine time, we need 2 reliable, dependable snowmobiles. It would be best to be proactive in retaining reliable snowmobiles, and the 20 year planning assumption for replacement (as I understand is DRXC's position) is very ambitious. From conversations with other nordic clubs at a nordic grooming blog, a specific make/model of snowmobile can be recommended to DRXC.

10. Chalet (Doug Killey)

Chalet operations were substantially affected by pandemic restrictions during the past winter. With helpful input from the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU), a protocol that allowed for limited use of the chalet when our area was classified as "green" under the province's COVID response system was developed and implemented. It wasn't feasible to make the chalet available under more restrictive classifications, though, and as a result we were only able to open it between Feb. 10 and March 7. Bob Donders installed an outside donation box so that generously-inclined trail users could contribute even when the chalet was closed.

A number of the previous volunteers on the chalet roster didn't feel comfortable with opening the chalet at all during the pandemic. For this past season the chalet was managed by 7 volunteers, and I'd like to thank them very much. Hopefully, chalet operations next season can get back to something much closer to normal and we can once again have a 14-person roster. Once again, I'd also like to thank Stuart Craig and Helena Rummens for cutting, splitting, and stacking chalet firewood - it will get burnt!

There were no significant maintenance or structural issues observed or reported during the past year.

11. Bass Lake Cabin (Erik Hagberg)

The cabin usage was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For long periods of time the cabin could not be used as a result of provincial rules. For the times when the cabin use was permitted, the only groups allowed to rent were persons living in the same household. As a result, the cabin was used for 6 nights and a total number of 16 person nights. That is less than a third of normal usage. This year, about 30% of our revenue came from a Bank GIC and the rest from rental fees.

The books are not closed until the season end of June 30. This report is therefore not complete, but includes known future bookings and expenses. The result is that we will have a loss of \$290 for the season. We are still in decent shape as we will have about \$3,145 in liquid assets.

The cabin trail system was maintained last fall. Two trail captains informed us that it would be the last season that they would do their assigned trail. One of them has been replaced and we have a good candidate for the other one.

12. Rental Equipment (Phil Davis)

The DRXC ski rental program did no better than any of our other programs in escaping the ravages of COVID-19. It hit in March 2020, just before we were due to take back the equipment from the renters at the end of the season. Erring on the side of caution, we decided to ask renters to hang on to their equipment over the summer, if they expected to use it again in the fall. Most renters did choose this option, which left about 120 sets of skis out in the community. In the fall, we staged a few rental events, where people who didn't rent last year could pick up equipment by appointment. In this way we were able to outfit another 70 skiers. The program was so successful that we rented out all our adult skis and many of our shoe sizes. We hope to reclaim all the equipment this spring once the stay-at-home order is lifted. This will allow us to do a full inventory of equipment, and determine where more equipment is needed to plug gaps. The recall is tentatively scheduled for late April or early May. An email will come around closer to the time with more details.

13. Jackrabbits (Kevin McDonald)

The Jackrabbits season was greatly affected by COVID-19 lockdowns, but with a small positive as a result. Kevin McDonald stepped into the Head Coaching role on an interim basis for 2021.

While some other instruction was ongoing at DRXC, Cross Country Ski Ontario discouraged any Jackrabbit season while locked down. However, there was a grant offered through XCSO for facilitators to run coaching courses for instructors of the program. A new virtual+on-snow format was created to lessen the number of in-person hours. So, a virtual course was completed by Kevin McDonald who is now fully certified as a facilitator. The on-snow portion had some out of town participants also. The club now has more trained coaches than it has had in many years; hopefully many of them step up when it is time to run a full Jackrabbit program again!

When the January/Feb lockdown was finally lifted, DRXC put on a 3 week Jackrabbit program for interested families at no charge. All coaches were volunteers. Twenty Jackrabbits signed up and the first lesson was so nice to have kids out. Week 2 was cancelled due to the rain followed by wind and a flash freeze. Surprisingly, week 3 could proceed on the powerlines only and was attended by only a small number of Jackrabbits.

Outlook for the future is blurry. Post pandemic, it will be interesting to see how many youngsters can be brought into the program. While we have many trained coaches, many parents are often

reluctant to volunteer as coaches. Key will be to have enough coaches and Jackrabbits. The closest neighbouring program is at PAXC; we have not had any coaches from Pembroke attend our coaching sessions, so it is unclear how their program will fare once it starts up again.

The (hopeful) new development is a core team of older Jackrabbits interested in racing. Raphael Guerout (formerly PAXC racing program and now at Nakkertok ENERGY) volunteered his time to teach this group on some Sunday afternoons informally on skate skiing. The NCD is hiring a regional racing support coordinator (Kevin is on the hiring committee); that person will have a mandate to support programs across the whole NCD. The key to success is to have motivated skiers (check) and a core team of dedicated coaches to keep a program going and participate in some away races.

The final point is that participation in the Silver Spoon by Jackrabbits was low. Finding a means to encourage participation (e.g. awards for younger skiers; group skis) will be important.

14. Adult Lessons (Tom Holden)

There was a strong demand for beginner cross-country ski lessons this year partly because there were many newcomers in town who were looking for outside exercise during our long winters and Covid-19 allowed far fewer snow-birds to leave for warmer climates. Quite a number of older skiers confessed that they had not been out on their skis for 20 years. Altogether 30 skiers signed up; 24 for beginner lessons, which were streamed to some degree, and 6 for intermediate lessons. There was about a 70% turnout rate.

Because of Covid-19 the groups with each instructor were limited to three and the arrival times at the chalet were staggered over an hour so that distancing could be maintained. The usual waxing demonstration in the chalet was cancelled since the chalet could not be used. As an alternative, a series of tips were put on the DRXC website, "Tom's tips", which included waxing basics, clothing and general common-sense and the instructors also answered questions from their own groups. Lesson plans were suggested for the two lessons. The first lesson was held on the 10 th of January but, because of the provincial shut-down, the second lesson was postponed to the 14 th of February. Fortunately the weather was favourable for both lessons and the groomers did a wonderful job in setting tracks on the hydro line. The more advanced students ventured onto the short M loop to get used to hills and corners.

The skiers were polled as to their perceptions of the lessons, the material taught, the instructors, the rate at which the various topics were covered and the sizes of the groups. The replies were very positive particularly the size of the groups since this permitted a fair amount of one-on-one attention. Probably this should be retained although it requires identifying more instructors for the program. Some of the comments were: "I learned more than I expected", "I improved right away", "I learned a ton", "We covered everything I wanted to cover", "I am a more confident skier now", "It was useful to learn the proper technique and mechanics", "I liked the easy trail on the hydro line with some uphill and downhill", "The instructor was knowledgeable and easy to work with", "The lessons built up at a reasonable rate and were not overwhelming". It was

generally felt by the instructors that 1½ hours should be considered as the formal lesson length and people can stay on longer if they wish.

One problem faced by beginners is that the skis they buy locally tend to be “training skis” (which have certainly been selected by the paper test) but which are a bit too stiff for beginners to manage a proper kick and this can lead to frustration with waxing, with the skis and to some degree with cross-country skiing.

Finally I wish to thank the instructors for their time and talent, Ewan Craig, Adrian Cecco, Nick Cox, Phil Davis, Diane Davis, Bob Donders and Ann Murphy.

Adult Skate Lessons (Kevin McDonald)

Kevin ran a Sunday mid-day workshop with waxing and skiing for adult skate skiers, assisted by Jamie Hopkins and Steven Hopkins. It was well attended by 10 participants, some with experience and others first time skate skiers.

15. Junior Racing (Aubrey Fletcher)

No report as the program could not be run because of Covid restrictions.

16. Silver Spoon (Anne Murphy)

When life gives you lemons, you try something else. In the case of Silver Spoon 2021, the long-standing cross-country ski race got a transformation.

Instead of racing on a single day, from February 6 to 14 (nine days), 125 skiers and snowshoers racked up a stupendous number of kilometres, all for the benefit of two local charities.

As one participant put it, “It was the most fun I’d had in months!”

Participants skied and snowshoed a whopping total of 10,045 km, enough to get from Newfoundland to Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories with some side excursions. During the week, they “visited” Pinawa, Manitoba, and Uranium City, Saskatchewan.

With the Silver Spoon Committee pledging \$0.50/km, the amount raised was \$2,511 to the North Renfrew Family Services and \$2,511 to the Deep River and Area Food Bank.

These funds are part of the profits from past events, for which scores of local volunteers had offered their time and abilities. The Committee wanted to funnel those profits back to the community.

Kudos to Martin Smith, who snowshoed the most (81 km), and to Jamie Hopkins, who skied the most (326 km)! More than a third of the participants averaged at least 10 km each day – wow.

The most junior participant was Wesley Wright (age 3, skied 2 km), and the most senior was Ann Serdula (age 82, skied 75 km and snowshoed 17 km). Just goes to show that these activities are truly life-long.

Teams of up to four participants could enter. Of the ten teams, the two most active were the Lightning McSkiin' team (McDonald–Renehan family), who collectively racked up 565 km, and the Team Hopkins family, at 513 km.

Some chose to do the more difficult backcountry trails to achieve certain levels (and bragging rights!). Fourteen skiers completed the highest (Odyssey) level: all Silver Spoon trails (including P Loop), three Forestry trails, the Bass Lake trail to the ski cabin, and one other backcountry trail. One snowshoer completed the Adventure level: all Four Seasons trails, and all Forestry trails.

All results are posted on the Silver Spoon website www.bright-ideas-software.com/silverspoon/

17. Plan to Replace the DRXC Bridges

The club is in the process of planning the replacement of the bridges on X loop and M loop. Aluminum I-beams will be procured this summer for this project.

18. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

19. Election of Executive

All existing members are willing to continue in their roles. No new nominations were received. The Executive Members are:

- President: Robert Donders
- Vice-President: Diane Davis
- Treasurer: David Rhodes
- Membership: Christian Kaiser
- Secretary: Adrian Cecco
- Past President: Phil Davis
- Non-Voting Member at Large: Lindsay Dooh

20. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at ~ 9:30 p.m.