



Summary of the Minutes of the 451st meeting of the Governing Board (hybrid) Tuesday, 16 April 2024, at 11:00

Agenda

1. The President declared the meeting open at 11:07 AM. The Agenda was presented as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Governing Board of 19 March 2024
3. President's Report
4. Committee and Working Group reports
5. Financial Statements
6. FAFICS matters
7. AOB

Adoption of the Agenda [1]

2. The Agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of the Minutes of the Governing Board Meeting held 19 March 2024 [2]

3. The draft Minutes of the 19 March 2024 meeting were adopted as presented.

President's Report [3]

4. The President made the following points in her report:

- AFICS/NY had a successful spring luncheon last week which happened to fall on the 92nd birthday of Richard Nottidge. Some eighty plus colleagues attended. Barbara Linardo did a wonderful job as always. Supported by Mac Chiulli, Velimir Kovacevic, Veronique Whalen and some great volunteers Franco, Irma and Sissi.
- the Bureau met yesterday 15 April 2024 to track the work and problem solve.
- The Annual Assembly is to be held on 21 May 2024, 3-6 pm, Conference Room 1, everything is on track. One of the Pension Fund ASGs is going to be away and not reachable so we will have a Deputy present. We are still trying to determine if a hookup will be possible or not. The reception afterwards was also being organized.
- the Governing Board elections ballot is out. It was a tremendous effort with photos of those running. Great job by those who put this altogether.



- For the voting on the proposed amendments to the By-Laws and membership rates, she together with Dr. Sudershan Narula, Pilar Fuentes-Conte, Furio DeTomassi, and Michelle Rockcliffe had prepared some four hundred packages containing the draft By-Laws, voting instructions and ballot to be sent to those colleagues not on email.
- The President's Newsletter was distributed on 15 April 2024 and the President thanked all those who provided substantive inputs and to Ed Omotoso and Soknan Jung who helped with editing, formatting and adding pictures and to Velimir Kovacevic and Veronique Whalen for their help on the links to new members and those who have passed away.
- There had been a meeting with Martha Helena Lopez and her team on the issue of visa retrogression and Darshak Shah would brief on the meeting.
- With regard to the UNSPC, Steve Avedon had formally confirmed he would no longer serve on the UNSPC group which reviews disability cases. Anyone interested in serving on this group should submit their interest to the Secretary.
- Finally, for the next meeting of the Governing Board, it was questioned whether or not there should be on in May as the Annual Assembly meeting would be held on 21 May 2024. Normally, the June meeting would be devoted to the election results as well as agreeing on what the AFICS/NY delegation would take forward to the FAFICS Council on pension and health insurance issues. A decision needed to be taken whether or not to hold a Governing Board meeting in May.

Decision

5. It was decided that additional efforts would be made to better ensure the participation of the Pension Fund ASG's as well as the President of the General Assembly at the AFICS/NY Annual Assembly.

Committee and Working Group reports [4]

Nominating Committee

6.. Dr. Sudershan Narula, Co-Chair of the Committee, reported that with respect to the AFICS/NY 2024 Governing Board Elections, voting went live on Friday, 12 April and that the online voting would remain open until 15 May 2024. She further specified that during this period, the vendor would be sending out three reminders to vote to those who had not yet voted. She stated that the Nominating Committee would also be sending out one or two reminders. In this regard she stated that when they send out reminders, they usually hear from people who never received the ballot to begin with; either the message went to their spam or they forgot or they cannot find it and then they write to the Nominating Committee who then writes to the vendor who, within 24 hours, sends out a new ballot to those affected. The vendor



is able to know who has voted and on what day. On 12 April 2024, the vendor also mailed out ballots to 456 members for whom we do not have email addresses. She also stated that the vendor would inform the Nominating Committee if it receives any envelopes that were not able to be delivered so that AFICS/NY could update its database.

7.. With respect to the other voting matter which is to have the approval of the members on the proposed changes to the By-Laws and the proposed increase in the membership dues, she informed that colleagues came to help her to prepare the mailing of the materials. As the President had already said, she along with Pilar Fuentes Conte, Furio DeTomassi and Michelle Rockcliffe came to help and Andres Castellanos, Fernando Astete and Dawn Gautier were ready to come the next day to continue to help out but since they had already finished the stuffing of 450 envelopes, etc., their assistance was no longer needed. The envelopes were ready to be mailed and they would be picked up by the messenger service for mailing so the members would get the material more than 30 days before the Annual Assembly which is what is required by the By-Laws. The ballot which comes back is very simple: Yes or No. The deadline to receive the paper ballots is 14 May 2024 giving the office one week to go through them. The electronic ballot version would be going out today or tomorrow. They were going to count the number of people who have voted on two separate issues with the intention of announcing the results at the Annual Assembly.

8. Jay Karia, Co-Chair of the Nominating Committee, thanked Dr. Sudershan Narula and the rest of the Nominating Committee for doing all the work that was completed for the upcoming Governing Board election. He added that the amount of work involved was tremendous. .

Membership Committee

9. Dr. Sudershan Narula, Co-Chair of the Committee, reported that thus far this year 32 new members had joined AFICS/NY. Starting January 2023, she reported that the names of the new members had been published on the membership page on the AFICS/NY website, as well as having the link included in the newly published Newsletter.

Health Insurance Committee

10. Jay Karia, Co-Chair of the Committee, reported that the AFICS/NY Health Insurance Committee (HIC) had met to review some of the proposals that were being discussed in the Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC), especially on the Empire Anthem Plan. He stated that discussions took place in HIC to have a position as increases were going to be hefty in terms of the premiums. Experience indicated that medical expenses and usage were going up. There were a number of issues as well as proposals on adjusting some of the benefits. The HLIC Meeting would be taking place tomorrow (17 April 2024) when proposals from all sides would be reviewed to produce a consensus in terms of what the HLIC would recommend to the Controller. He also reported that a meeting had taken place with the HLIS, (Officer-in-



Charge Vera Rajic and her senior staff), and a number of issues including client service issues were reviewed and they would be taking them on board. He reported that they were assured that they were working extremely hard to address those issues. He further informed that there had been an unprecedented exodus of staff from HLIS. A number of General Service staff had found other positions in the Secretariat. He also thought that the recruitment freeze might have impacted on this, but he had been assured that things had improved, and they have recruited most of the people who had left but now they were dealing with various other issues and training. He stated that the HIC was monitoring this very carefully and if any issues arose then they would be discussed with the Officer-in-Charge.

. Pension Committee

11. Jay Pozenel, Co-Chair of the Pension Committee, stated he would be calling for a meeting next week to begin to develop an agenda for the issues to be before the Pension Board and the FAFICS Council. He stated that many of these issues would be the same as those that were raised last year but they would try to parry the list down and try to produce the top five issues.

Review of changes to AFICS/NY By-Laws

12. Jay Pozenel, Co-Chair of the Working Group on the AFICS/NY By-Laws, stated that at the last Governing Board, the Working Group that developed the proposed amendments to the By-Laws was asked to go back and start working on the Code of Conflict-of-Interest policy and the Code of Conduct for the Governing Board. He stated that he and John Dietz had received inputs from other members on the Governing Board of examples that might be used and that they would start to pull all of that together. He stated that the work involved would go into the summer allowing the Board to be in a position to adopt it when the new members join the Board after the elections.

13. Jay Karia responded with the following:

- As we are self-insured all the costs that go up for medical expenses have to be shared within the plan.
- It was important to be mindful of the reserves. Unfortunately, under Empire, reserves are at four months and should normally be between ten and twelve months if not more.
- Cost increases are not only because of the increase in the insurance premium, it is because of the move from one bracket to the next. In 2015, this issue emerged as management wanted to change to a percentage system and AFICS/NY objected because it would have meant that some of the premiums, especially for those who were at the higher level in terms of a P-5, D-1 or D-2, where the premium level would have



doubled. This has come up recently and the issue needs to be fought again as it will impact retirees tremendously. That being said, the bracket system has not been reviewed for the last 10 years. and people do not completely understand how such a change would affect them.

- Referring to comments on what members say when there is a COLA increase, Jay Karia pointed out that information was shared with retirees and important points impacting the insurance plans were always part of various presentations. For example, the use of the emergency rooms in hospitals instead of urgent care is constantly referred to and how that adds to the plan costs. Reference is made on how members' uses of the plan impacts costs. As a result, behaviors have changed and some of the statistics that recently were released showed that the number of visits to emergency rooms were declining. So, it is important to continue to present the message carefully, deliver it at the Assembly but also constantly remind participants and also the HLIS when they do their briefing sessions to members.
- As far as In network and Out of Network costs, , Empire and Aetna both reported that as a group the UN participants were doing much better utilizing the In Network facilities compared to Out of Network facilities compared to their book of business. So, our messages are working. The only area where it does not work as well is for those participants who use Out of Network for physical therapy. So that is something that needs to be worked and reported on as the cost is less than half.
- Sandra Hadji- Ahmed wondered if it would be helpful to organize this year some kind of a briefing or discussion for colleagues just on the points that had been mentioned. When people do things, they may not do things consciously, so more education or outreach from AFICS/NY might be an appropriate way to do this. Jay Karia said that this was a good idea but normally when the HLIS holds their briefing session for the annual renewals, they pass on these messages, but it certainly would not hurt to hold a webinar for all AFICS/NY members.

Aging Smart Committee and IT Committee

14. Mac Chiulli, Chair of the Aging Smart Committee reported that there had been an online webinar last week given by the Committee on Older Persons and she and Nick Alipui had attended. She stated that notices of these presentations arrive late making it difficult to announce them to the AFICS/NY membership. Her Committee is thinking of trying to arrange an online session for the summer months. As regards the IT Committee, there was nothing new to report.



Visa retrogression update

15.. Darshak Shah provided an update on the current status of the Working Group on Visa Retrogression. He reported the following:

- The leadership had a very informative meeting with ASG Martha Helena Lopez and colleagues from DMSPC.
- There had been a great deal of activity on this subject which has a staff welfare component to it, but also a political one, as US elections are taking place this year. In addition, there is also the issue of the large influx of migrants into the US.
- DMSPC colleagues stated that a meeting with the State Department had taken place. USG Catherine Pollard had met with a particular State Department senior official, and they were all told that this was a matter for USCIS (United States Customs and Immigration Service) in terms of what to do. However, the USCIS told them that it was for the State Department.
- So, there had been many meetings with a lot of back and forth. The bottom line was that nothing could be done directly by either the State Department or the USCIS because they could not propose a change in the practice, or the legislation. It had to be Congress that requested them to do something. So basically, it meant that one had to find a way of triggering Congress to say that this particular issue should be addressed and then obviously the State Department and the USCIS would take it forward and produce a solution. This would mean in one way or another to lobby the US Congress to address this particularly in the tri-state area, and also in California and Florida where many UN retirees live. It was a matter of convincing them not only of the difficulties this new situation presented to new retirees, but also the contributions that the UN community makes to the areas in which they live, both financially and in terms of volunteer work and being part of the community.
- AFICS/NY told the UN staff that it was not just a retiree issue, but also something that active staff had to work on as well. However, the DMSPS staff felt that for them to lobby or to try to influence Congress would be a conflict of interest from the point of view of the Secretariat but there was a sense that AFICS/NY would not be bound by the same rules because AFICS/NY was actually a US based NGO.
- In the meantime, a meeting of the AFICS/NY Working Group was scheduled to discuss this and to see how this matter could be moved forward. In the meantime, the Secretariat was going to issue a circular on the matter to staff, which would say what



the earlier circular had reported but adding that they had consulted but until a solution was found, staff would have to return to their home countries unless they had a family member based in the States.

- This issue remains quite a difficult and sobering one and the Working Group would come together to decide how best to support the matter and of course report back to the next Governing Board meeting.

Decision

16. **Deborah Landey summarized the discussion and stated that the Working Group on Visa Retrogression would meet next week and come up with a set of next steps.**

Communications Committee

17. Chair Gail Bindley-Taylor reported that the Committee has begun drafting a Communications Strategy which she hoped would be finalized by the end of the month so it would be available to be discussed at the Governing Board's May meeting. Her Committee was also waiting to see if there were any more applications for the Editor position. Only one application had so far been received so they may need to look elsewhere. As for the website, both the IT people and the other members of the Committee were to prepare a paper by the end of the month so the Committee could meet with the OICT with a proposal which would lead to having a dedicated OICT person to assist with the revamping of the website. So, it was her hope that these two activities could happen at the same time. As regards the Bulletin, that could only be done with an Editor. What was done with the recently issued Newsletter was great and if such a Newsletter was to be done in that length and size then there was still a need to have someone pull it all together.

18. Deborah Landey commented that she was sure that Edward Omotoso, Soknan Jung and herself would volunteer to help put it together. Gail Bindley-Taylor indicated that it was more a question of where you wanted to get the news as it should not just be from the Governing Board but what was needed was also input from participants sending in information to share. Deborah Landey agreed that this was a good idea and requested that a message be sent out requesting contributions. She thought the Committee could do just that and contributions could be received so it was not just the Board talking about the Board.

Financial Statements [5]

19. Mac Chiulli, AFICS/NY Treasurer presented the financial documents noting that the reports would be presented to the Annual Assembly in May.



- The account statement for the Charities group was done and ready for review and for audit.
- For AFICS/NY, the account statement was about done. One of the things that needed to be completed as a result of the analysis and getting the databases and the accounts in order was the catch up from the pandemic when many actions over the last four years were not completed. One remaining issue was the provision for bad debts which would be the last step in the closing of the books. ,
- Over the past ten years under normal circumstances AFICS/NY was taking a provision for potential bad debts between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year. But for the six years from 2016 through 2021, no such provision was taken. So, this led to a large provision taken in 2021. No provision was taken in 2022 and so now AFICS/NY was again faced with catching up . However, despite these issues it did seem that there would be a profit at the end of the day.
- The accounts receivable collection programme would start on 1 May 2024, and she thought that with the catch-up AFICS/NY would be in good shape with a small surplus for 2023.

FAFICS matters [6]

20. Deborah Landey reported that the FAFICS Bureau would be meeting this week and would be devoted to the preparations for the FAFICS Council in July. There was a great deal of work to be done including the preparation of reports. On the logistical side, everything was lined up to have the meeting at ESCAP and would be a hybrid meeting. As far as attendance was concerned, it was thought that those Associations who were closer to Bangkok would attend the meeting in person.

AOB [7]

21. The Governing Board decided to hold a meeting on Thursday 16 May 2024 in the afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

22. Andres Castellanos informed of the passing of Ashen Chowdry and Roger Eggleston. A minute of silence was observed.

23. The President closed the meeting at 1:03 pm.
