

AFICS/NY GB 470

ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS (New York)

Minutes from the 470th meeting of the Governing Board on Tuesday 17th February 2026, at 11:00 am.

Present: Nicholas Alipui, Steve Avedon, Gail Bindley-Taylor, Suzanne Bishopric, Marianne Brzak-Metzler, Alejandro Caruso, Andrés Castellanos del Corral, Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli, Robin DellaRocca, John Dietz, Pilar Fuentes Conte, Nancy Hurtz-Soyka, Jayant Karia, Deborah Landey, Dr. Sudershan Narula, Andrew Nye, Edward Omotoso, Jay Pozenel, Michelle Rockcliffe, Linda Saputelli, Gulden Turkoz-Cosslett, Darshak Shah and Michael Zilberg.

Absent with Notice:

Furio DeTomassi and Judith Karl

Actions taken at this meeting:

- 1. The FAFICS Council Working Group on Succession Planning's Interim Report was endorsed by the Governing Board with broad support for the establishment of a Standing Committee on Succession Planning and the need to follow the Rules of Procedure in the elections of officers of FAFICS.**
- 2. The Communications Committee's 2026 workplan was endorsed.**
- 3. The Board approved the two-page pro forma financial report, to be submitted quarterly.**
- 4. A Standing Fundraising Committee was established.**
- 5. The 2026 elections to be conducted exclusively by electronic voting, with affected members notified by letter containing clear voting instructions.**

Agenda

1. The President declared the meeting open at 11:00 am. The Agenda was presented as follows:
 1. Adoption of the Agenda
 2. Approval of the Minutes of the Governing Board meeting held on 20th January
 3. President's Report
 4. FAFICS update: interim report of the FAFICS Council Working Group on Succession Planning
 5. AFICS/NY Work Plan for 2026: Committee on Communications
 6. Financial report
 7. Committee Chair's reports
 8. Temporary move
 9. AOB

Adoption of the Agenda [1]

2. The agenda was unanimously approved.

Approval of the Minutes of the Governing Board meeting held on 20th January 2026 [2]

3. The draft Minutes were adopted as amended to reflect that Mr. Caruso was filling the vacancy left by the late Sandra Haji-Ahmed for the remainder of her unexpired term.

President's Report [3]

4. The President Darshak Shah delivered his report addressing the following:
 - The leadership team continued to meet weekly and the Bureau had met last week.
 - Officially welcomed Alejandro Caruso to the Board and expressed enthusiasm about his contribution.
 - Noted that Mr. Robert Van Der Zee had been appointed as the new RSG for UNSJPF; the Pension Committee had conducted well-attended consultations with him and CEPA, including participation from FAFICS members including members of the FAFICS delegation to the Pension Board.
 - Highlighted that ASHIL launched a survey on third-party administrators to gather member feedback from all Associations of FAFICS
 - Proposed Nancy Hurtz-Soyka as Co-chair of the Events Committee, informing them that the Committee had organized its first event on February 26th.
 - Stated that Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli would provide finance updates in a new, concise format emphasizing key items.
 - Reported that FAFICS Succession Planning documents had been circulated for comments; praised the quality of the documents and recognized Nancy Hurtz-Soyka and Deborah Landey for their leadership in producing them, noting their contribution to fostering transparency, accountability, and professionalism.
 - Shared that Claudio Santangelo had informed AFICS/NY of the need to temporarily vacate the UNITAR building due to UN leadership transitions (PGA and SG).
 - Announced that OICT had offered 100 old computers for AFICS/NY members; five had been accepted initially, and a survey issued to assess further demand. Clarified that the computers were primarily for members, with a few available for training purposes.
 - Noted that Veronique Whalen's last day was February 18th, with Velimir Kovacevic temporarily assuming her duties and expressed gratitude for her contributions.

- Shared that UNITAR had invited AFICS to a retiree briefing for the first time, which he, Jay Pozenel, and Doctor Narula would attend.
 - Highlighted that the latest Bulletin issue had omitted the mission statement at the front and emphasized the importance of including it in future issues.
 - Informed that a productive meeting was held with the Communications Committee regarding the proposal for the new website. He noted that the proposal was sensible, progress was being made, and it would be discussed further in the Committee chair's report. He also highlighted that the website initiative was incorporated into the latest budget.
 - Announced upcoming Governing Board meetings on Friday March 20th and Friday April 24th, and the AFICS/NY Assembly on Friday May 29th.
5. Jay Pozenel confirmed that the donated computers included an MS operating system, and that current and former UN employees could obtain additional software (e.g., MS Office suite with Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, etc.) under a discounted Microsoft family program, noting annual renewal costs.

FAFICS update [4]

6. Nancy Hurtz-Soyka briefed on the interim report of the FAFICS Council Working Group on Succession Planning. She provided the background on the establishment of the Working Group as well as activities undertaken and possible next steps. In his cover letter to the report, President Barton asked for comments/feedback on the recommendations in the Report as well as suggestions for the next steps of work by 7 March:
- Establishment of the Working Group:
 - i. The FAFICS Council established the Working Group in July following President Barton's report on succession planning.
 - ii. Seven associations joined the Group, chaired by FAFICS Vice President Nancy Hurtz-Soyka.
 - iii. The FAFICS Bureau endorsed the interim report in January, and it was circulated to all 65 associations for comments by 7 March and a final report will be presented at the July 2026 Council session.
 - Development of Job Description:
 - i. Job descriptions were prepared for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and FAFICS Representative to the Pension Board
 - ii. This marked the first time in FAFICS history that formal job descriptions were developed for these roles and work began on preparing job descriptions for Chairs and Co-Chairs of the four Standing Committees.
 - iii. Job descriptions for the officer positions that will become vacant in 2026 were included in the Interim Report. These included the job descriptions for President, Vice-President (3) and Treasurer.
 - Revision of the Expertise Pool:

- i. The structure and submission form of the expertise pool were revised to collect more detailed and relevant information to make the pool more user-friendly and searchable by expertise.
 - ii. Efforts were initiated to automate the form to ease data entry and management.
- Candidate Review Process and evaluation template were introduced for technical positions to ensure structured assessment of candidates, while the President retained final decision-making authority:
- Greater emphasis was placed on strengthening learning and knowledge sharing across the Federation and its four Standing Committees, with a recommendation for 8–10 members per committee and the establishment of effective focal point systems.
- A functioning focal point system for each committee was encouraged, similar to the existing system in the ASHIL Standing Committee.
- The importance of establishing a structured handover process to ensure continuity and transfer of institutional knowledge was emphasized, with further work planned over the next six months.
- Effective Date of Office: Under Rule 6.5, officers normally take office immediately after the Council session, but concerns were raised because the Pension Board meets the following week, making an immediate transition challenging for newly elected officers. Instead, 1st September was proposed as a possible effective date to:
 - i. Allow the outgoing President to attend the Pension Board session
 - ii. Finalize and sign off on the Council report
 - iii. Conduct comprehensive handover briefings
- 7. The discussion reflected strong overall support for the Working Group's Report, with members commending its professionalism, transparency, and alignment with the Rules of Procedure.
- 8. A number of members emphasized the importance of clear job descriptions to enhance transparency, legitimacy, and structured recruitment and noted that by including the job descriptions for positions becoming vacant in 2026 would provide essential clarity of roles and responsibilities and would allow Associations to begin to identify qualified candidates and the importance of following the established terms of office under the FAFICS Rules of Procedure.
- 9. Also highlighted was the value of adopting a competency-based, professional selection process.
- 10. It was suggested that language competency definitions be refined using standard UN terminology and that Vice-President competencies be aligned more closely with those of the President.
- 11. A key theme was the structured handover process. Many participants strongly supported the proposed overlap between outgoing and incoming officers, particularly the option proposed to have 1 September as an effective date to ensure continuity, especially in relation to the Pension Board. The importance of practical language considerations was also noted, with English reaffirmed as the working language.

12. Standing Committees were another focus, with the view expressed that achieving 8–10 members per Committee would be a feasible target based on prior experiences, while stressing the importance of broad participation from Associations.
13. The President of AFICS/NY characterized the initiative as driving culture change and emphasized the importance of establishing a permanent Standing Committee on Succession Planning to ensure sustained implementation and representation at the highest level where decisions are made.
14. The discussion concluded with Jay Pozenel suggesting that comments be submitted in writing, while the President responded that this was unnecessary since a transcript existed and the meeting had been recorded.
15. Nancy Hurtz-Soyka provided clarification on the following:
 - The Secretary's job description was prepared but not circulated, as the current Secretary was not leaving office and that only the job descriptions for President, Vice President(s), and Treasurer (vacancies in 2026) were shared to help Associations begin considering potential candidates.
 - Explained that the job descriptions provided advance information on responsibilities, time commitments, and expectations ahead of the formal nomination process in May.
 - Emphasized the importance of handovers for all functions and announced plans to develop a standardized handover template outlining required documents, contacts, and other essential information.
 - Highlighted the cultural shift towards succession planning and talent acquisition recognizing the importance of following the revised Rules of Procedure while providing Associations with advance information.
 - Affirmed that filling Standing Committees with 8–10 members was feasible using the expertise pool
16. Deborah Landey provided additional updates on the following:
 - Praised the Working Group's global participation.
 - Highlighted the significance of the first-ever formal job descriptions for key FAFICS posts, especially for the 2026 vacancies.
 - Supported fully staffed Standing Committees and endorsed creating a new Standing Committee on Succession Planning.
 - Commended the candidate review process as professional and valuable for decision-making Emphasizing that attracting and placing the right talent was critical for FAFICS' future and good governance.

Decision: The proposed actions in the Interim Report were endorsed, there was broad support for the establishment of a FAFICS Standing Committee on Succession Planning and the need to follow the Rules of Procedure in the elections of officers of FAFICS.

AFICS/NY Work Plan for 2026: Committee on Communications [5]

17. Co-Chair Gail Bindley-Taylor provided an update on the following:

- Reported that the spring-summer bulletin was successfully completed in mid-July after six months of intensive work with a small group.
- Noted that the website redesign had made significant progress despite challenges with the hosting platform in 2025, explaining plans for 2026 to continue working on it, selected WIX as the new platform, and will involve co-chairs, interns, and team members to maintain content, thanking Andy for his hard work.
- Stated that the social media group had limited progress, with nine members but low participation, and explained that the three-month pilot would determine future interest. Reported that a decision would be made at the end of March.
- Highlighted that the content management system (CMS) had not received much attention in 2025 due to time spent on the bulletin and website and emphasized the need to prioritize it in 2026. Stated that the CMS work was expected to be completed between March and April 2026.
- Indicated that dividing the group into smaller teams for editorial, website, and CMS work had been successful.
- Mentioned plans to organize two major events in 2026 jointly with the Events Committee, and to explore outreach through iSeek.

18. Co-Chair Andy Nye gave an overview of the following matters:

- Presented a summary of website platform options and concluded that WIX was the best solution due to affordability, user-friendliness, and positive feedback from similar organizations.
- Described WIX features, including event scheduling and drag-and-drop interface with no technical coding required.
- Explained the costs: approximately \$550 per year for the business platform and \$600 per year for the member login, noting first-year discounts.
- Outlined the website transfer process, including using a redirect from the existing OICT site to the new domain.

19. The Communications Committee was commended for their work in keeping members informed about Association activities, retiree updates, pension matters, and health issues. Emphasis was placed on the importance of developing a strong communications strategy while maintaining consistent and ongoing communication with members.

20. The team was also praised for identifying an affordable and effective website solution, and the Committee's efforts and transparency in sharing information were highlighted.

21. Gail Bindley-Taylor reminded all Committee Chairs to review their website pages and update content as needed in preparation for upcoming website changes.

Decision: The Communications Workplan for 2026 was approved by the Governing Board.

Financial report [6]

22. Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli outlined updates in the following areas:

- Presented a proposed two-page pro forma financial report to be submitted quarterly in April, July, October, and January–February, allowing time for year-end adjustments. The report incorporated key statistics and financial elements previously discussed and invited feedback from the Board.
- Key performance indicators considered most critical to the organization: number of annual members, life members, deceased members (reported quarterly by the Pension Fund), total active members to monitor trends, administrative hours worked as the largest office expense, and the cash balance.
- The report included a revenue and expense overview on a simple chart, followed by a more detailed comparison of 2025 full-year actuals, the revised 2026 budget, and quarterly figures, as well as a percentage-of-budget to track progress throughout the year. The first quarter figures shown were illustrative. Quarterly highlights to be noted at the bottom of the page.
- The format covered all annual financial activities but could be further consolidated if desired.
- Revenue generation was considered critical. Giving Tuesday raised \$1,000 to date. Additional potential revenue sources included requested donations linked to laptop distributions, sales of the 80th anniversary bulletin, donations from upcoming lectures, and 2026 membership invoices.
- Revenues and expenditures were noted to be seasonal, with major income and expense items occurring in specific quarters. These variations would be explained in the quarterly highlights.

23. The report was considered as strong and useful in guiding decision-making, particularly in identifying overspending, with a question raised about whether seasonality in expenditures would be considered. Concerns were expressed about the income side of the budget in light of the delicate financial situation, highlighting the need to strengthen revenue generation and encouraging support for the Events Committee in organizing activities to meet projections.

24. Advertising in the bulletin was suggested as a potential revenue source, and Jay Pozenel offered to work with the Communications Committee to discuss this possibility. At the same time, both Jay and John Dietz advised caution regarding the Association's engaging in public fundraising because of restrictions in the by-laws and NY State laws that would subject the Association to stricter oversight and reporting requirements in connection with such public fundraising activities and resulting use of funds and subject the Association to possible tax liabilities. Additional revenue-generating ideas included advertising directed to members, modest surcharges on luncheons and boat rides, promoting lifetime donations, and organizing raffles at events.

25. The importance of financial oversight was emphasized, and the establishment of a permanent standing Fundraising Committee was proposed. for continuing and

- possibly expanding Giving Tuesday initiatives, encouraging voluntary contributions from Board members, and exploring advertising and other revenue-generating ideas.
26. It was further proposed that the newly formed Fundraising Committee, comprising Jayant Karia, Deborah Landey, John Dietz, Gail Bindley-Taylor, and Judith Karl, with Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli serving as Chair, review these revenue-generating options and present detailed proposals at the next meeting. A recommendation was also made to develop practical guidelines for those soliciting advertisements to ensure legal compliance.

Decisions: a) The Governing Board approved the format of the Financial Report and its reporting timeframe. b) The Governing Board approved the establishment of a permanent Fundraising Committee chaired by the Treasurer, Mac Chiulli.

Committee Chair's reports [7]

Nominating Committee

27. Co-Chair Dr. Narula reported the following:

- Requested Board approval to conduct the 2026 elections exclusively by electronic voting, citing the current financial situation and high cost of printing and mailing paper ballots as the reason for electronic-only voting, since in the 2024 election, 560 paper ballots were sent, but only 20 members (5%) voted by mail, with a cost of \$2,771.
- Noted that the vendor reduced the electronic voting cost from \$3,290 to \$2,500 and the total savings of \$3,561 by eliminating paper ballots.
- Explained that members without email addresses could still vote using a PIN provided by the vendor and access the voting site from any computer
- Stated that the committee would contact the 20 members who previously voted by mail to assist them
- Reported that the number of members without email addresses had decreased to 314 after data cleaning efforts.

28. Questions were raised about how many members lacked email addresses and whether extra efforts could be made to reach those who had previously voted by mail. Concerns were also expressed about the legal implications of excluding these members, emphasizing that the Board needed to protect voting rights and consider legal guidance before making a final decision.

29. It was suggested that members without email addresses be notified in writing that future elections would be electronic and encouraged to provide an email address or acknowledge the change. Clarification was provided that an email address was not required to vote electronically, and it was recommended that the letters include clear instructions for accessing the voting platform, such as a PIN, URL, or QR code.

30. Jay Pozenel cited the Association's by-laws (Article 5, Section 1(c)), which authorized the Governing Board to conduct elections exclusively by electronic voting. He confirmed that electronic-only voting was legally permissible and supported the proposal to notify affected members by letter with clear voting instructions,

31. The President, Darshak Shah proposed consolidating the suggestions into a formal communication to members without email addresses, referencing the relevant by-law provision and ensuring legal review.

Decision: The 2026 elections to be conducted exclusively by electronic voting, with affected members notified by letter containing clear voting instructions.

Health Insurance Committee

32. Co-Chair Jayant Karia reported that the Committee had prepared two communications:
- The first communication addressed long-term care planning and guidelines, adapted from FAFICS for US members, and was scheduled for imminent distribution.
 - The second communication requested member participation in a health insurance survey, modeled on FAFICS' TPAS initiative, with a deadline of 16 March.
 - Noted that HLIC would begin its renewals review and discussions starting on 4 March.

Aging Smart Committee

33. Co-Chair Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli reported that the Committee identified a tool useful for members dealing with dementia and end-of-life choices and suggested presenting it to the Board at the next meeting to decide whether to distribute it to members or post it on the website.

Temporary move [8]

34. The President addressed the following situation:
- UN requested temporary use of the 4th floor of the UNITAR building for the incoming PGA from June to September and incoming SG team from October to December.
 - AFICS offices were to move to the Albano building, which has limited offices, dark interiors, and poorly designed workstations.
 - Emphasized the importance of returning to the 4th floor after the temporary relocation.
 - Confirmed he would write to USG Atul Khare to reiterate concerns and the need to return to the 4th floor.
 - Outlined plans to appoint a task force to manage the move.
 - Requested input for additional ideas regarding the move.
35. The relocation was explained as being largely due to renovations in DC-2 and that the 4th floor of UNITAR was enclosed and secure, suitable for the incoming SG and GA President.

AOB [9]

36. Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli publicly acknowledged Veronique Whalen's contributions over the past year, highlighting her instrumental role in cleaning up accounts receivable and creating a foundational framework for the new database migration. She noted that her skills had left a lasting legacy for the organization and expressed that she would be greatly missed.
37. Deborah Landey and Ed Omotoso, who had previously worked with her, echoed appreciation, emphasizing Veronique's dedication, long-standing involvement, and her valued presence as part of the AFICS 'family'.
38. The Board collectively wished Veronique success and expressed their gratitude.
39. Veronique Whalen thanked everyone, expressed that working with the team had been a highlight of her time in New York, and extended her best wishes before departing.
40. **The Board agreed to hold its next meeting on Tuesday, March 24th at 11 a.m.**
41. The President closed the meeting at 1:22 pm