

Ponoka Ag Society moves forward into 2021 with new vision [EMILY JAYCOX](#) Dec. 16, 2020 2:20 p.m. [NEWS](#)

The Ponoka Ag Society (PAS) had some significant achievements in 2020 and is welcoming 2021 with a fresh outlook, cemented by a new vision and revised bylaws.

PAS held their annual general meeting (AGM) and board elections on Dec. 7, 2020 at the Calnash Ag Event Centre.

One of the main accomplishments of PAS in 2020 was moving forward with using funds received from the Alberta Agricultural Societies Energy Efficiency grant for three green projects for the ag event centre.

The total amount received was \$279, 117.

The grant was to be used for qualifying energy efficient equipment or upgrades and had a deadline of Dec. 1, 2020, or the funds would have to be returned.

“We worked diligently with PAEC, the ag centre management and government offices to effectively use all the grant money that we received in the spring of 2019,” said PAS president Tammy Henkelman.

Member Terry Jones brought forward the need to use the funds before the deadline at the 2019 AGM.

He requested that PAS seek a meeting with MLA Ron Orr to discuss the possible uses for the funds.

Members were in agreement that based on the amount of grant money available as well as the potential energy cost savings, that a diligent effort was warranted.

The three projects, which were approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry as eligible expenditures under the grant, were completed by Dec. 1, 2020.

They were a water management system that collects rain water for a cost of \$84,626, changing the facility over to energy efficient lighting for \$78, 563 and concession coolers for \$38, 738.

The draining project re-routed the water on the north side of the building into a 5,000 gallon holding tank in the arena. Previously, the water was washing out the road on that side of the building.

That water will now be used to water down the arena during events, which will save money on their town water bill. The water may also be piped into the cattle pavilion.

“Nine or 10 months ago it looked like there was not going to be a dollar being spent in our community,” said Margo Hatala, accountant for Rowland Parker and Associates during her presentation of the society’s financials.

“So good on everybody that wasn’t going to take no for an answer and was able to get that money into this building.”

PAS’s garden project was also well-received, with the produce donated to the Ponoka Food Bank.

Although many events were cancelled, PAS was able to hold a Black Elk cutting event in September and an equine clinic in November, as well as supporting the winter barrels series.

They also awarded three scholarships. As there were some extra funds due to lack of events, PAS decided to award \$500 scholarships to all three applicants, instead of the usual two.

“Even given the fact that COVID hit and the world was not how we expected it, the ag society was able to maintain a good cash position and set itself up to consider events to bring back, or new events to host in the upcoming year,” said Hatala.

As required by the new Alberta Agricultural Societies Act, PAS revised their bylaws over the past year, using the opportunity to clarify the responsibilities and benefits to members.

The act requires all ag societies to write new, more comprehensive bylaws to guide how they operate.

PAS’s strategic plan aims for “better communication to engage the community, and a strong diverse board guided by good governance to ensure direction and financial stability and programs and activities that are seen by the community as relevant and valuable.”

The society’s vision statement is: “Doing great deeds to inspire, support and create vitality in our urban and rural community” and its mission is to, “Use our resources and collaborate with like-minded groups to gather in meaningful ways.”

“There was concern about a policy that had been made restricting whom could let their name stand for directorship and it was put into policy, which, unfortunately, was allowed to supersede the bylaws, which shouldn’t have happened,” said Lauraine Weir, secretary.

The policy had stated that PAS members could not be on the Stampede board, and Stampede, or town or county officials could not be a director of PAS.

Weir says to avoid any confusion going ahead, the policy was removed from the books eight months ago.

“It was one of the first things that the board did,” she said.

“We want to have the best people that we can put on a board and we will deal with the conflict of interests as they come up.”

The new board of directors were elected as follows: Tammy Henkelman, president; Dale Olsen, vice president; Joanne Volk, treasurer; Lauraine Weir, secretary and directors Miles Crandall, Willie Klimec, Jolynn Pugh, Daren Schwieger, Tina Stewart, Carissa Raugust and Lyle Reid.

Outgoing directors are Shanon Archibald, Doug Hosler and Joyce Winter.

