

North American Feis Commission
Meeting Minutes of the Annual Convention
Portland, Oregon
October 16-18, 2015

In addition to the attached attendance list, the following Board of Directors and Executive Board were in attendance:

Members Present

Jeri Hagan, NAFC Chairman of the Board of Directors, Past NAFC President
John Glynn, Past Chairperson of the Board, Past NAFC President, Member of the Board
Patricia Dwyer, Past NAFC President, Member of the Board, Hall of Fame Chairperson
Tom Blake, Past NAFC President, Member of the Board
Anne Gervin, Past NAFC President, Member of the Board, Chairperson Music Scholarship
Pat Short, Past Chairman of the Board of Directors, Member of the Board
Patricia Watkins, Past NAFC President, Member of the Board
Lori Seeman, NAFC President
Jim Mueller – NAFC Vice President
Carl Petri, NAFC 2nd Vice President
Cindy Kinney, NAFC Treasurer
Edward Hansberry, Past NAFC President, NAFC Vice Chairman
Teresa Buck – NAFC Secretary
Shannon Dayringer – NAFC Registrar
Hellen Gannon, Member of the Board, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann
Tom Gervin, Seargent at Arms
Gráinne Ní Chonchubha, CLRG Chairperson, An Coimisiún, Member of the Board
Tim O’Hare – IDTANA President, An Coimisiún Vice President, Member of the Board

Lori Seeman opened the meeting.

Agenda Items

See attached

Opening prayer by Patrick Short in memory of James Brennen who recently passed away.

Introduction of Host

James Mueller was the host of the 2015 Convention in Portland, Oregon.

Rules of the Convention:

Tom Gervin is the Sergeant at Arms

- Indicated ‘Roberts Rules’ would be followed
- Attendees were reminded of the following specific points:
- Raise your hand with your number right side up
- Discussions on any one subject are limited to 10 minutes
- Each person can only speak once on an issue until everyone that wants to speak has done so.

Approval of Agenda

Lori Seeman presented the convention agenda.

Tim O’Hare moved for acceptance, Teresa Buck seconded. Motion passed to accept agenda.

Approval of Minutes

Edward Hansberry moved to accept the 2014 Convention Minutes, seconded by John Glynn.
Motion passed to accept the 2014 minutes.

Correspondence:

Presented by Lori Seeman, President

- Letter from parent regarding declining numbers of dancers at competitions, specifically groups with less than 5 dancers. Request for commission to consider revised approach, otherwise why would dancers continue to dance. Board discussed issue; any change would have to go before teachers for decision.
- A request to ban wigs as they are a health concern, damaging to the scalp, physically burdening and relics of the 1980's. Encouraging a beauty type competition is not positive. We should strive for a modern, healthy environment.
- Several correspondences, as we have received every convention for the last several years, regarding self-tanning not being healthy and should not be part of the Irish Dance identity.
- Combining of boys in Open Champs; Per Ann Lavin-Cassidy, there is no specific ruling at this time with regards to OC boys combining with girls, that feis chose to combine where there were less than five boys. Per Ann this topic will be further discussed at the IDTANA meeting in January as to come up with a definite rule rather than a gray area that it is right now.

Trisha White with the Peach State Feis commented she is creating a contact list for feis musician. She will maintain for at least the next 4 years. The list will only be provided to feis coordinators. More information in open forum.

2015 NAFC Championship Report – Pat Watkins

February 7, 2015, Phoenix, Arizona at the Arizona Grand Resort

A feis was held in conjunction with the NAFC Championships.

Every competitor was recognized by name, received a group patch and adjudicator comments. Entrance special, step down line, was much bigger than last year, many 'day of' entries. Most participants received a commemorative item.

There were 17 competitors in the Gerry Campbell Senior Belt; this is the first time, in my memory, it has been won by a Western Region dancer.

The Robert Gabor Jr. Trophy had 36 competitors (last year we only had 22); Melanie Valdez is a multiple time winner of this competition.

There were 20 competitors in the George Sweetnam Minor Trophy. It was unbelievable how these little tiny dancers were so good, it was amazing to watch them.

NAFC Championships winners:

Gerry Campbell Senior Belt:

- **Libby Decker** Michael Patrick Gallagher Irish Dance, Arizona

Robert Gabor Junior Trophy:

- **Melanie Valdez** Doherty Petri School of Irish Dance

George Sweetnam Minor Trophy:

- **Simon Loysen** Broesler School, Maryland

Adjudicators:

James Early
 Iris Gray Sharnick
 Ann Lavin Cassidy
 Margaret Cleary
 Bill Maple
 Ryan Carroll
 Mary Kay Heneghan
 Russell Beaton

Musicians

Michael Fitzpatrick
 Niall O'Leary

We had the great pleasure and honor of inducting Maureen Hall into the Irish Cultural Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony was very well attended including previous students of Maureen who are now teachers and adjudicators. There were actually quite a few tears shed at this induction. In addition to the plaque she took home, an identical plaque has been placed in the hall of fame.

The 2016 NAFC Championship

Will be held at the Arizona Grand Resort, Phoenix, AZ, January 16, 2016

We are continuing with what we did in Florida, that is holding it two years in one place. Florida was obviously on the East coast, now we're doing two years in a row on the West coast. Because we know the venue we will be going back to the Arizona Grand Resort. The Bracken School of Irish Dance will be hosting its 'Feis in the Desert' in conjunction with the NAFC Championships.

NAFC Program Update – presented by Teresa Buck:

The job of getting the NAFC program together has grown over these past couple of years. I really appreciate everyone's support over the last two years. It's a big job, but last year it helped the Championships not lose as much money. Everyone will get information today, please return to me today or mail back.

Music Scholarship Report – Anne Gervin

Scholarship Committee:

Helen Gannon
 Michael Fitzpatrick
 Mary Bryan
 Geraldine Murray

15 and Over Scholarship Competition – Helen Gannon

Held in St. Louis by St. Louis Irish Arts on February 14, 2015

Zohra Coday from the St.Louis area was the winner

- A huge thank you to the St. Louis Irish Arts for hosting this event. There were 9 competitors; violin, piano accordion and concertina. Congratulations to the winner Zohra Coday, she played the concertina.
- It was brought up that we need to think about where our feis musicians are going to come from. Should that musician be allowed to play with another musician, perhaps for a feis, maybe for a lesser fee? We have to nurture that, to even produce one a year – that's excellent.

Plans for 2016

We are planning to run a 1-day feis musicians workshop in St. Lewis in combination with the Coltus North American Convention. If you know a musician, a young person who would love to play for a feis – please send them.

Under 15 Scholarship Competition – Pat Guire, Mary Woods & Bernadette Broderick
Held at the Rockland County Feis, Tappan, NY – July 19, 2015

Kian McGeever from Pearl River, NY was the winner, he played the accordion.

There were 14 competitors, one did not show up.

Mary Woods:

Adjudicators:

Kathleen Collins

Guest Adjudicator Debbie Lynch

- There was an issue during the competition that was brought up but it was stated that the child that won the competition deserved to win it, he was excellent.
- A letter of complaint was received, and the committee is working on defining the roles of the AD and TCRG. It was stated that the adjudicator should be a qualified Feis Musician per the rules. There will be new rules that will be sent to the feis that wins the drawing for the 2016 competitions.

It was brought up that finding Irish musicians to sit down to play feis is very difficult. A suggestion was made that it would be beneficial to have a structure for feis musicians, like a degree or something, as we do for teachers and adjudicators. Ultimately going forward the music scholarship will provide some encouragement.

2016 Music Scholarship Site drawing

- One entry per Feis.
- If you've hosted a prior music scholarship you cannot bid again for the same one, but you can bid to host a different age group.
- We encourage feisanna that have hosted music competitions in the past with reasonable attendance to participate.

U15 Music Scholarship Site Drawing Winner:

Catskill Mt. Feis 8/16/16, alternate Pittsburg Winter Feis 12/30-31/16

15& Over Music Scholarship Site Drawing Winner:

Montreal – May 21, 2016, alternate Pittsburg Winter Feis 12/30-31/16

The board has agreed to send an NAFC representative to assist the committee in running the music scholarship. It is a good idea to have someone who knows the music scholarship thoroughly in attendance.

Treasurers Report – Cindy Kinney: See attached report

- Edward Hansberry moved to accept the Treasurers Report, seconded by Anne Gervin. Motion passed.

- Cindy came back later with report for 2015 to date and advised we are in the black thru October this year - see attached report.

Audit Report – Sheila Keady and Bernadette Broderick

- Cindy keeps a fine record, receipts and all the expenses. She is thorough and complete. We took a random sampling of several months of income and disbursements. We found no discrepancies and feel the financial statements accurately represent the current financial position of the NAFC.

Registrars Report – Shannon Watkins Dayringer – see attached report.

- This is the first time the regional reps have advised me on all the feisanna whether they are running or not– thank you!
- If you reserve and make contracts before getting your feis date officially approved you do so at your own risk.

Regional Reports:

Bernadette Broderick – Mid Atlantic: See attached report.

Michael Fitzpatrick – New England: See attached report.

Mary Bryan – Eastern Canada: See attached report.

Nancy Logue – Southern Region: See attached report.

Sandi Asazawa – Mid America Region: See attached report.

Deidre Penk-O'Donnell – Western Canada: Not in attendance.

Geraldine Murray – Western US Region: See attached report.

NAFC Hall of Fame – Patricia Dwyer

There are three new inductees to the hall of fame this year.

- Bernadette Broderick on July 19th at the Rockland Feis
- Sheila Murphy Crawford on May 24th
- Maureen McTaggart Hall on February 7th
- To date there are 39 inductees into the Hall of Fame.
- We should consider moving the hall of fame so more members can see it on display. The Hall of Fame is currently located in Philadelphia, King of Prussia, in the AOH building, upstairs in a hallway.
- Expenses were shown on Cindy's report for the Hall of Fame this year.
- When submitting applications for possible inductees please include name, address, email, phone number and date the letters. This will simplify management and reduce delays. We currently have one pending application.

Organizational Reports

Jeri Hagan –Chairperson of the Board

- It is nice to see so many new people attending today. Yesterday’s meeting was interesting and productive. A motion concerning the second chance events was brought by Carl Petri. There was a great deal of discussion, the question the board still has is which competition counts; the first one, or the second chance?
- The motion put forth by Carl Petri was:
 - **Any feis wanting to run a second chance competition must hold it on the same day as the first competition. In the case of a multi-day feis the second chance competition cannot be held on a separate day. Violation of this rule may lead to suspension of the feis.**
- This motion was approved and passed by the board.

Clarification by Jeri Hagen:

- **If you are running a feis and choose to run a 2nd chance event, it must be held on the same day as the full syllabus. If you hold it by itself on a second day with only that 2nd chance competition that is considered another event and it’s in violation of the rules.**
- **Motion read again by Jeri Hagen:**
 - **Any feis wanting to run a second chance competition must hold it on the same day as the first competition. In the case of a multi-day feis the second chance competition cannot be held on a separate day. Violation of this rule may lead to suspension of the feis.**
- Vote was called for by Jeri Hagen
- Vote 32 yes, 5 abstain, 18 no’s, motion passed.

Clarification from Jeri Hagen:

- One of the NAFC roles is to deal with the logistics of holding an event. It has nothing to do with the what steps you do, what sets you do, what timing you have, how you lift, that is not part of our purview. How the event is run is what we do. We’re not preventing anyone from having this 2nd chance event, however, you must run it through the syllabus or you’re running a separate event - you’re actually skirting running two events.

Comments from Tim O’Hare –

- Does this have to be approved by the teachers before it becomes final, and it can’t become effective until 2017?

Response by Jeri Hagen–

- It will be brought to the teachers and you are correct it cannot become effective prior to 2017. For those of you that are new, and those of you that are old. The NAFC, IDTANA and An Coimisiún are all legal corporations. The three of us are in a contract, so we have to abide by contractual agreements. Motions are brought to the different bodies and we agree on them.

Tim O’Hare – President of IDTANA

Contrary to the recent discussion, or my part of the discussion I should say, it’s an honor to be part of this organization, it’s such an integral part in providing dancing teachers with a platform for our students. You’ve dedicated so much time and energy on our behalf, for the most part, for a thankless job. I really appreciate that on behalf of the teachers.

Feisanna need to continue working in conjunction with the NAFC. Though most of our feisanna are now run by dancing teachers, we need to facilitate to the benefit of all of our dancers and in the future any personal interests on behalf of our membership will not be inflicted on specific feisanna. I think some of you know exactly what I mean.

I'd like to congratulate the New England region for hosting the North American Championships in Providence. Regional director Iris Gray Sharnick, the co-chairs Thomas Bracken, Sheila Dupuis Green, Nora Gorman McHugh and Helen O'Dwyer Lisacki did a fantastic job. Next year we look forward to another fantastic event in Orlando, Florida.

The IDTANA continues to maintain a strong presence within CLRG. It has been my honor to work with Gráinne Ní Chochubha, she's done a fantastic job on behalf of Irish Dancing around the world.

Within the organization there continues to be the expected personality conflicts as well as unfortunate and unforeseen issues that any competitive sport seems to foster. As we've heard, feisanna are not always making money, but we continue to add more feiseanna. Dancing school's enrollment continues to drop, yet we continue to register more dancing teachers. We, as an organization, are really kind of putting ourselves out of business. The IDTANA, we're fostering our own replacements by teaching our students to become dancing teachers we're cutting ourselves off, we're cutting our own income off.

At a time when our families are experiencing a lot of difficulty just paying the bills, we say you need to have a wig, tanner, rhinestones, a \$3,000 dress. It seems to be unstoppable. I'm one of the teachers, and proud of the Mid-West teachers that have said under 8, under 9, no rhinestones, no bling. You have to start somewhere training our dancers that being an Irish dancer does not mean you have to wear a crown.

It seems to be a societal issue; that every kid needs to be a winner and come home with a trophy. The fact that vendors sell trophies for kids to hang their medals on is a big pet peeve of mine. Kids need to learn that they have to be good at something to win. Not every kid can win all the time and I think sometimes we're training our children the wrong mind set. Every kid is not the best at every single thing they try.

What we see in Irish dancing is kids who come in as beginners, they're learning what they do and they think they need to win right away. If they don't win by the time they're 7 or 8 they're on to something else where they can win. Are we promoting the idea of being a winner at all costs or are we promoting the tradition and culture of Irish dancing.

We need to teach our children Irish dancing and get them to love that they are doing Irish dancing and feel it's different from anything else. It's different from every kid that plays soccer, different from every kid that picks up an instrument. Irish Dancing is unique, you get something from it, I don't know how it gets in you, but you get this belief and love and obsession with Irish Dancing that needs to be for the culture of Irish dancing and not just the winning.

I have this mindset that most of you started Irish dancing competitions as organizations rather than dancing schools and that you're here are representing the same. I don't run a feis. I think dance teachers need to appreciate that there were organizations that did this job before we were dancing teachers and that needs to be part of our understanding and appreciation of the NAFC.

In summary, I hope that in the future we can all continue to work together. Thank you again for all the work you do on behalf of the Irish dancing teachers association.

Grainne Ni Chonchubhair - An Coimisiún Chairperson

Firstly I have to, on behalf of An Coimisiún, express the sympathies of my organization to the NAFC on the loss of our friend, Jim Brennan. He was an absolute gentleman steeped in the Irish culture as most of you here today are.

An Coimisiún is not an Irish Dance Teaching organization. It's an organization for the promotion of Irish Dance. When it was originally founded in 1930 there were many people involved who were not teachers. They were there for the language, dancing, and promotion of culture generally. Over time we have become top heavy with active teachers and adjudicators representing the areas. In time there won't be any what I call 'lay people'. I'm a teacher, adjudicator, musician but I actually came on as a lay person even though I was a TCRG at the time and from my heart I look at everything from the promotion of dancing view rather than from the business view.

Dancing in North America is very much a business view. It's how people earn their crust whereas on my side of the water there are a few business people, dancing is a secondary income, it's the egg money as they. When it comes to Coimisiún decisions there are two view points; some thinking about dancing worldwide and some thinking about how to protect their business. But that's the way we are today and I can't see it changing in the future.

We've updated our website. It's still a work in progress, we're trying to change the image of Irish Dancing; get away from wigs and tiaras. Most of the photographs on the old website were of the Oireachtas and the World Championships, kids with bloody big cups, curls, tiaras, you know, just overgrown footballs on their heads in some cases. That perception is very much a game set and there are quite a few people not touching Irish Dancing now days because of that. They don't realize its back to the Parish Hall or little school hall, the 4 year old coming in and the teacher helping her stand properly. She doesn't go straight into pumps or hard shoes.

River Dance was the phenomenon that brought the explosion of Irish Dance to a much bigger stage, but people don't think about the 1-2-3's and 7's. On the new web site most photographs are of the dancers in little black outfits, of feet, of legs. We want to send out the message that's it's not all glitz. Unfortunately documentary companies approach An Coimisiún looking for sensationalism because that's what sells. They don't want to see the hard graft of the teacher with a little four year old breaking her back, the teacher breaking her back, trying to walk this kid through her threes and eventually get her to jump her threes.

Our child protection policy is up and running. As a child-centered organization it's a huge issue in Ireland, its mega because we have historical abuse things. It's starting to appear in North America, it's become quite a problem in Australia. An Coimisiún is very much ahead of the posse as regards Irish law. We are based in Ireland so anything to do with An Coimisiún is based on Irish Law. The go-to people in our organization, if a complaint comes in, had liaison training. These people do not deal with the complaint, but they pass it to the social services organization, police or whoever deals with this type of thing. We have to have all these structures in place. This only concerns England and Ireland as that's where An Coimisiún has people on the ground in the region councils.

IDTANA is an affiliate of An Coimisiún so that's something they will have to look after in this country for themselves.

We have new child protection procedure that became effective at our meeting in May. Unfortunately with an organization of over 2000 members it's a bit of an issue. The rules are there; some people don't like the rules and seem to think they are above them which you don't want in any organization. 24 people have been trained; most are dancing teachers who haven't really had to deal with these issues so they were taught in procedures crossing every "t", dotting every "i". Having these procedures in place and following them to the letter of the law assures us that no Supreme Court judge is going to overturn.

The 2015 World Championships were in Montreal, first time ever in Canada in our 45 year history. Great thanks to one of our unsung heroes; Mr. Fix It, Pat Short, and all the people that got dragged in, and not just the husbands

but the daddy's. Pat was an absolute gem for An Coimisiún, nothing was too much problem for him and lead to a very successful first World Championships in Canada that was in no small part also due to the region director Ryan who is here today, Yvonne Kelly and Bernadette Broderick who were our very good people on the ground. Thank you to all of them.

We also had the opportunity to honor the legends of Irish Dancing in Canada. We had people from the East Coast and West Coast Canada, you have to be 105 I think to qualify for this and Mary Bryan was one of the qualifiers (Mary interjected she's 104). They were pioneers of dancing and fostered it throughout their region. I'd like to single out one lady, Vi Moore, she went to Canada in the 1950's. She's had a difficult life, she's a quite character. She absolutely enjoyed herself; she hadn't seen some of the Irish Dancing people for over 20 years.

The Oireachtas Rince na hÉireann, All-Ireland Dance Championships, is being held in Killarney and I'm on my way there. There are quite a few overseas attendees, the American's love to come to Killarney. Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne 2016 is being held in held in Glasgow next year. Glasgow is also a very popular venue, I think it's because it's a very small city, people can really get around and get the flavor of Scottish hospitality.

I wanted to address the concern regarding when there are less than 5 dancers in a competition. There is no actual rule from An Coimisiún that states they can't move up. The rule was introduced that if there were 5 or less in a competition was more to protect the younger dancers who were not of a standard to move on. But it's up to the teacher to determine if the dancer is ready to move up. I think the rule may have been misinterpreted.

On behalf of An Coimisiún, to the NAFC; every one of you here are volunteers who do it for your love Irish culture, not just Irish Dance. All you people in this room, all you feis organizers, in this day and age life is so hectic, people rushing all the time, instant communication and people demanding instant answers. I just have to take my hat off to all of you, not just for the dance competitions, but the music, brown bread making, painting etc. competitions. Unfortunately in Ireland most feisanna have been taken over by dance. We have a few left that have been run since 1901 that run other competitions but sometimes the dancing takes over because they're so exhausted they just can't keep the rest going. The work you're doing here in North America is absolutely tremendous. So to everyone who is here today and all your committees who are not, carry that back to them please. An Coimisiún is absolutely in your debt for the work you do on behalf of Irish Culture here in North America.

Helen Gannon – Comhaltas Ceoltori Eireann

As Gráinne said, the work you do and the effort along with everything else in your lives is just amazing.

On behalf of Comhaltas I'm here, for those of you don't know what Comhaltas was founded in 1951 at a time in Ireland when everything was starting to happen. In my own house in Ireland there was no playing of tapes or CD's. One of us got the dancing and the other one got music, my brother I think got guitar. Then this tape came out 'My First Feis' and it was magic because we could get a gadget and put that into it and play it. However the powers that be in Comhaltas realized where we were headed and by 1951 music was already being played in the house, so nobody was learning to play. Our perspective is that we have to promote the music. As part of the feis, and from the commission of Irish Dance, it was in the little pink book that you have to have live music for a feis. Maureen Hall made sure, but then she'd come back to me and say without live music you'll have no good dancers. And she was right there too.

My effort is huge by comparison with what you're doing with the feis. My job is to convince you that it's not just about the dance; it's about everything that's Irish. Do the kids know how to sing the national anthem of Ireland? My kids were delighted this year when they went to a feis in St. Louis and we were called off to sing the anthem because they knew that the kids from Irish Arts knew it. It was a huge treat for them. You guys have forced us to reach a potential, every child can reach a potential, whatever that is, by going to a feis. I'm always amazed at how

wonderful it is to see families at a weekend feis and it's wonderful that we're providing that kind of aura for our families.

Distributed current issue of Treoir magazine, published 4 times a year, I apologize for not getting more information in there about the championships and other news. If you have big news, you can send it to me and I can get it in.

Comhaltas was held in Slaigo, will be held in Ennis next year. One of my own students won the younger event concertina; we also had a first and a third in Slow Air's. So America is well on its way to pulling off some of the big championships all over Ireland.

We have initiated a new syllabus for the SCT, see brochure. Grade exams are the same as dancing grade exams, only in music. Anyone who reaches the highest level which is Senior Level 4, will be accepted into the TTCT course which is qualification for becoming a music teacher. We have 7 examiners that travel to do the SCT exams.

Kathy wants me to remind you that there are a couple of minor adjustments for the convention next year. We printed these off quickly, they will go out in Treoir magazine when it's finished. We are offering a feis music workshop, on the 2nd by Michael Fitzpatrick, Kelly Wintern and Kevin Buckley who are well known as feis musicians. In our new music book we haven't added all the sets, but a musician would have to know all of those. For a simple competition that you add, you can play any one of the 40 sets.

We are commemorating 100 years of our history and what happened in Ireland in 1916. It will be a huge event in the US next year. Comhaltas has commissioned a piece of music by Michael Rooney. The concert will come to America in the fall of 2016. It will go to London, Carnegie Hall, and the United States. Please mention at your feisanna our 100 year celebration.

Thank you very much for everything you do, I love being part of this organization and we're making great headway.

We ran the convention last year in St. Louis, and on behalf of the three of us we'd like to congratulate Jim Mueller for putting his shine on this. Just seeing the little touches he's put on. Work and effort along with everything else is just amazing.

Motions

- Each feis pay a convention participation fee annually (\$60). This fee will cover one voting representative in attendance at the convention.

Submitted by the Pittsburgh Feis – Mid-American Region

Teresa Buck made the motion, Helen Gannon seconded

There was significant discussion regarding this motion. The key issues and comments are as follows:

- Representatives from only about 20% of the 252 feisanna typically participate in the convention. Often the core group is the same.
- The NAFC needs involvement from more feisanna to continue to be successful.
- This \$60 fee per feis would replace the current \$130 fee per attendee that is now in place.
- This fee would be part of the membership fee paid to the NAFC.

- Collecting the fee earlier would simplify the planning and implementation of the convention by providing a fixed budget.
- The fee for additional attendees and whether there will be a maximum number of attendees per feis has yet to be determined.
- A question was brought forth as to the purpose of the fee; is it to increase attendance at the conference, or to consistently fund the convention. The general consensus was both.

Vote on the motion:

- All in favor of accepting the motion; 2 opposed, 2 abstentions, remainder Yes
- Motion was carried and will take effect in 2017

The next 2 motions were approved by the board yesterday, but they will be read and voted upon:

- That the under 15 Music Scholarship be named: **The Edward Callaghan Music Championship.**

Submitted by Edward D. Hansberry – Irish American Association, Northwest Jersey – Mid-Atlantic Region.

Edward Hansberry made the motion, Michael Farrell seconded.

Comments from Ed Hansberry:

Ed Callaghan was one of the founding members of the NAFC. He, along with others fought very hard to get this organization off the ground. Ed was a past Chairman of the Board of Directors; he chaired the feis in Nassau County, he was fundamental in getting us incorporated. Ed is a good friend and is a member of the Hall of Fame.

Vote on the motion:

- All in favor of accepting the motion; All Yes
- Motion was passed

Motion:

- That the 15 and Over Music Scholarship be named: **The James Brennan Music Championship.**

Submitted by Edward D. Hansberry – Irish American Association, Northwest Jersey – Mid-Atlantic Region.

Edward Hansberry made the motion, Kathleen Yatel seconded.

Comments from Ed Hansberry:

Jim Brennan was involved in and chaired many years at the Buffalo feis. He was a trooper and a past President of the NAFC. He always had something to say at this convention. He had a voice, let me tell you, because he let you know.

Comments from Pat Dwyer:

I'd just like to respectfully say, Jim was character, a great guy, he had the knack of saying things at meetings, whether it be a board or a convention meeting, you may not agree with him, but you would sit there and think; he said what I'm thinking and he's right. He was like Donald Trump he had the guts to say what he thought. He had a Broadway voice and he was a lot of fun and is going to be missed. God bless him.

Comments from Randall McPhee:

On behalf of the people of Buffalo, I want to thank you for recognizing Jim. He was a good friend and I really do miss him. I wanted him to see his 50th feis. You may not know this, there is a little city north of Buffalo, Rockport, he started a feis there. He was instrumental in helping; if Jim were to tell it, he was the sole. He was a good man.

Vote on the motion:

- All in favor of accepting the motion; All Yes
- Motion was passed

Old Business

Lori Seeman reported there was no old business.

New Business

- Following many complaints from Feisanna in our regions regarding unreasonable delays in having their Syllabus approved by the various Regional Syllabus monitors; **the board has appointed Patrick Short as the NAFC Syllabus Coordinator. His contact information will be added to the NAFC website.**

This is in regards to issues with the syllabus only. If you are not receiving approval in a timely manner contact Pat and he will take care of it.

- We have had someone request a Special Needs Competition be added to the syllabus. The board has recommended that any feisanna can add this to their syllabus if they so choose. We've had reports in past conventions that some feisanna have already added this competition so the board is not going to formally add it to the syllabus.
- Alternate Champs Only Feis Format

There was significant discussion regarding this motion. The key issues and comments are as follows:

- The Eastern Canada is struggling with low numbers at feisanna; 30-40 prelim & champs combined in all age groups, 250-300 in grades. Feisanna are considering canceling within three weeks of event.
- Looking for alternate ways to offer feisanna especially between January and March to help prelim and champ dancers prepare for the World Championships.
- Teachers in region have expressed positive interest.
- Work group has developed a proposal that was brought to the North American Convention in the summer; Ryan Carroll to provide Lori Seeman with a copy.
- Concerns include teachers may ignore grades kids and just focus on the prelims and champs.
- Since grades kids usually have summers off, this could be the time to focus on their opportunities.
- Only 17 feisanna in Eastern Canada region vs 50+ in other regions. It takes 8-10 hours to get to main U.S. competitions in New York City or Chicago.
- Between January and the end of March there appears to be 2 that are within two hours and 1 that is within four hours of Toronto. There are 5 additional feisanna within 8 hours, depending of course on where you live in the region.
- Many feisanna are struggling, will adding additional increase attendance, or take away from established feisanna.
- Why not have dancers compete all year long and support existing feisanna?

- Why would a champ's only feis succeed? Could have a smaller venue, less adjudicators and musicians thus bringing overhead down.
- By lowering expectations or placing a cap smaller venues could be used to save costs on current feisanna.
- Other regions have found the champ part of the feis to be the least lucrative and by running two full feisanna back to back have managed to retain profitability despite a reduction in the number of dancers.
- Running grades 3 at a time with one adjudicator is a time and cost effective strategy.
- Would this change put even more emphasis on dancers to win at all costs instead of promoting Irish culture and the joy of dancing?
- The Western Region was granted permission, on a case by case basis, to run Grades only feisanna in isolated areas where there was a disbursed population.
- Isn't the real issue here is getting more kids into Irish Dance, not having more feisanna?
- Those organizations that have a 5013C status are allowed to market to our target audience – kids, and should.
- Children have too many activity choices, if they don't win quickly in Irish Dance, they move on to something else. We need to promote the spirit of Irish Dance and Irish culture to differentiate it from other sports.
- Should a change be approved it would not take place until January 2017 due to the tri-partite agreement. The NAFC board has agreed to discuss with the other organizations.
- It would not be allowed now, but the discussions need to take place now so all parties are prepared to make a decision when the agreement is up for renewal.

- Who do new feisanna send their syllabus to? The NAFC website has that information based on region.

2016 Convention Site Selection –Albany NY (NY Capital) – Desmond Hotel, October 14, 15, 16
Michael & Jeanne Farrell hosting

- Venue is 5 min from the airport, \$122 room rate, no fee for parking, free shuttle, free wi-fi
- Upstate New York in October is beautiful, easy drive or train transportation.
- Teacher response has been positive – hopefully will encourage more people to attend.
- Irish Heritage museum 10 min from the venue
- Dutch apple boat and coach tours available
- 6 hr, 13 min from Toronto
- Meeting room is theater style with podium and big screen up front
- Everyone has their own microphone. Just like the UN!
- It has been 13 years since the convention was last held in Albany

- The suggestion was made to have a rotation of locations for this convention. If people will be expected or required to attend it would make their planning easier. Maybe it could be based on the number of feisanna per region.

No other site selections submitted

- Albany selected.

2017 Convention dates are October 20-21-22

Lori Seeman: Voting for officers

An individual nominated for an office must be a member in good standing and have attended two of the last three AGM's.

At Large Vice President (2nd Vice President)

A three year non-renewable term which is up this year. Carl Petri was elected in 2012. This nomination must be done from the floor.

Jeanne Farrell nominated Michael Farrell
Seconded by Tim O'Hare

Vote on the position:

- All in favor; All Yes
- Accepted by Michael Farrell
- Michael Farrell elected as next At Large Vice President (2nd Vice President)

Thanks were given to Carl Petrie for serving three years as the At Large Vice President.

Motion to adjourn?

A request to amend the agenda and continue with Open Forum now instead of Sunday.

Response by Lori Seeman: Show of hands - approved

Pat Watkins stated that if business is not complete by end of day Saturday we have to continue on Sunday and everyone should be here for the Open Forum if at all possible. We don't want to set a precedent for early completion. Attendees should not book early flights because we were 'done early last year'.

Open Forum

- List of current feis musicians and their stated capabilities
 - Patricia White has started a list, including in her spread sheet whether the musicians say they can play sets and if a feis has confirmed it. If there is anything else you think I should include please let me know. Please send any names or contact information you could provide to me would be extremely helpful. Email peachstatefeis@comcast.net
 - It was suggested that musicians identify at least 2 feisanna they have played for.
- Ongoing problem with adjudicators contacting feisanna and soliciting jobs.
 - Some feisanna have never been contacted and some receive frequent email. The general consensus is that solicitations come from new adjudicators, many from overseas attempting to work their way across the U.S. or combine a job with a vacation.
 - Word of mouth is the preferred method of contact, but we also need to give new adjudicators a chance to gain experience. The CLRG book includes a list of all adjudicators. Regional directors have the list of Adjudicators that have most recently passed.
 - Please let the commission know if you experience this so there can be a discussion regarding this. You don't have to make a big deal of it, but if things aren't reported, they cannot be investigated.
- How do Adjudicators feel about running three dancers at a time on the stage?

- It can definitely be a challenge especially grades because they dance only two steps and then the next group of children start straight away, the reel and treble jig especially; some feisanna have opted to do two at a time for these dances. Hard to write comments during grades, not so hard with prelim & champs.
 - A 32'W by 24'D stage is required for prelims and champs when running 3 at a time. A 24'W x 20'D stage is required for grades when running 3 at a time and they must be under 14 years old.
 - The 24'W x 20'D for 2 at a time championships is a very small stage for today's modern steps, there's a lot of movement. The actual square footage may be more important than the, something to consider. Although even with a 30' x 40' stage some dancers fight for the last six inches.
 - I've had Adjudicators push back when the stage does not meet the standards saying if they can run 3 at a time for Oireachtas, Nationals and Worlds they can do it here.
 - Oireachtas, Nationals and Worlds are teacher run events not governed by NAFC rules. This issue comes up frequently.
 - The Chairperson is in charge. If they won't follow the rules, don't have them back.
- Are large Grade competitions still split and what are the rules?
 - There is no NAFC rule; typically a group is split when it reaches 25-30. It's up to the regional syllabus.
 - I find it very irritating and unfair to the dancer's when adjudicators are texting while adjudicating.
 - Don't hire them again. Have someone from the feis chair group or the feis committee point out to them that it's not appropriate, although it should be obvious.
 - How far in advance do adjudicators want to schedule for a feis and what things do you consider?
 - Response was anywhere from a couple months, longer if flights are involved to 6-12 months ahead. Some feis schedule adjudicators and musicians as soon as they have feis date approval.
 - Pennsylvania feisanna, September 10th and 11th
 - In response to my colleagues from Pennsylvania who are running their first feis the day before mine. I do hope to work with them regarding the Adjudicators and Musicians that work with me. Edward Hansberry
 - When does the calendar year for dancers start? January 1st
 - Is it allowed to pay adjudicator and musician fees in Canadian currency?
 - You can pay in Canadian currency as long as it's equivalent to the US negotiated price.
 - Is there a list of feis support services like people who put down floors, tabulation services, etc.? It would be especially helpful for people starting a new feis.
 - Word of mouth, Google, Angies List, Craigs List.
 - There is a man in western Canada who does stages for all 11 of us. He has a booklet and is making a video presentation. They are color coded and any feisanna can put them together the same way.
 - In Rockland we had our own stages for many years, but rent now; stages, poles for electrical, fans, generators, 9 or 10 large tents that cover stages – runs about \$13,000.
 - Registration and Tabulation software options. If a company offers free registration but then charges registrants a 16% fee is this typical or reasonable? It seems high.
 - Typically a company will charge you for the tabulating and charge your registerants a fee of 2 – 5% for processing their payment.
 - We use QuickFeis (www.quickfeis.com) it's a nice company. They have a flat fee of \$750, minimum. Then they have what they call 'Feis in a box' for \$450; they do all of you printing, report, dancer cards all of it. When my parents register if their registration fee was \$40 there was an extra \$5 transaction fee for processing the payment via credit card, PayPal or however they ran it.

- I can't get my parents, or enough of them, to volunteer.
 - In many other sports parents are given a choice; volunteer or pay a fee. If your parents are not able, for whatever reason, to spend 10 hours a year helping your dance school put on this one time (or however many) a year event charge them a \$150 buy-out fee. Take that money and go pay somebody or go to the local High School or College and ask if they have students who need service hours. They do a great job and people love them.
- You have to wait 3 months between taking grade exams. Is that calculated by month or by actual number of days? How is this being enforced? What is the process to make sure this is enforced?
 - It is a strict An Commission policy that there is to be 3 months between; i.e. June 15th to September 15th for example.
 - This is typically caught when registering.
 - If you see this happen, please report. The grade(s) will be and have to be re-taken. There have been cases where somebody did it a couple days short, they were American and did it in England where their workshop teacher was. It's like anything else, if you deviate one day, then its two days and on and on. It has to be a strict policy to protect the integrity of all the exams they oversee.
- Grades are very important. For 2018 any prospective TCRG candidate will have to have all 12 grades completed. A teacher can run grades in their own class if they have the numbers, or a couple of teachers in an area could get together. In some cases the feisanna are running them. If you have enough students so it will be self-funding, all you need to do is apply to An Commission. 60% of the profit goes to the teacher or representative body, 40% to An Commission so it can actually be used as a fund raiser for a feis that is struggling.

Information and application can be found here:

www.clrg.ie/images/downloads/exams/Grade%20Syllabus%202015.pdf

Adjourned 3:45P

List of Attendees (in addition to board members)

James	Early	N. Jersey Champs
Michael	Fitzpatrick	New England Region
Mairead	O'Brien	
Pat	Hall	Arizona State Championships & Feis
Kami	Amann	Badger State Feis
Randall	McPhee	Buffalo Feis
Sharon	Murphy	Celtic Spirit Feis
Nancy	Logue Woods	Feis ATL
Lauren	Crowe-Mueller	Feis na Mara
Rebekka	Zander	Feis na Mara
Mary	Kemock	Greater Cleveland Feis Society
Susannah	Ruehlen	Heart of the Rockies Feis
Crystal	Carper	Hooley Red Rose Feis
Patricia	Lane	Hooley Red Rose Feis
Dale	Woods	Hotlanta Feis
Nora	Smith	Irish Culture Club of Delaware
Sue	Cannon	Lewis & Clark Feis
John	McGough	McGough Feis
Bernadette	Broderick	Mid-Atlantic Regional Rep
Sandi	Asazawa	North Coast Feis
Beth	Motta	North Coast Feis

Becky	Fisk	Northwest Winterfeis
Sinead	Yeates	Oregon State Championships
Patricia	White	Peach State Feis
James	Graven	Pittsburgh Feis
Isabella	Graven	Pittsburgh Winter Feis
Amanda	Mathisen	Portland New Year's Feis
Mary	Woods	Rockland Feis
Ryan	Carroll	Rose City Feis
Sarah	Deighan	
Kylie	Witbeck	Sliver State Feis
Cathy	Thompson	SLIA Feis
Pam	Zykan	SLIA Feis
Mary	Bryan	St. Catherine's Feis
Mike	Schuler	St. Louis Fall Feis
David	Yatel	Tessie Burke Feis
Ann	Cosart	The Portland Feis
Clark	Cosart	The Portland Feis
John	Zagorski	The Portland Feis
Geraldine	Murray	The Portland Feis Saturday
Alex	Hailey	The Portland Feis Sunday
Sheila	Keady	United Irish Counties Feis
Alison	Paladini	Victoria Highland Games and Celtic Festival
Kathleen	Yatel	West Virginia Feis @ Pittsburgh
Jeanne	Farrell	Catskill Mountain Feis
Michael	Farrell	Catskill Mountain Feis

Expected, but not in attendance

Joan	Preece	NAFC Board Member
Eileen	Petri	Doherty Petri Feis
Patricia	Campbell	Greater Cleveland Feis Society