



**ASOR Executive Committee Meeting
Residence Inn Alexandria Old Town/Duke Street
Alexandria, VA**

**February 2, 2019
9:00am-5:00pm**

In attendance: Richard Coffman (Chair); Susan Ackerman (President); Sharon Herbert (Vice President); Tim Harrison (Past President); Heather McKee (Treasurer); Ann-Marie Knoblauch (Secretary); Andrew Vaughn (Executive Director), Jane Evans, Eric Meyers, Joe Seger, Ed Wright, Gary Arbino (guest).

Business Items (9:00-9:45am)

1. Call to Order: 9:04 AM
 - Welcome to Jane DeRose Evans, new member of the Executive Committee
 - Welcome to Gary Arbino, guest
2. Approval of Agenda

BE IT RESOLVED: the Agenda is approved by unanimous consent
3. Approval of the Minutes from the July EC Conference Call (July 3, 2018)

BE IT RESOLVED: the Minutes from the July EC Conference Call (July 3, 2018) are approved by unanimous consent
4. Approval of the Minutes from the November EC Meeting (November 17, 2018)

BE IT RESOLVED: the Minutes from the November EC Conference Call (November 17, 2018) are approved by unanimous consent, correction page 2 McGee to McKee

5. Approval of the Minutes from the January EC Conference Call (January 4, 2019)
BE IT RESOLVED: the Minutes from the January EC Conference Call (January 4, 2019) are approved by unanimous consent
 - Ann-Marie Knoblauch: as new secretary, requested committee members let her know if anything needs to be adjusted in minutes (content, format, style, etc.)

6. Editor Appointments:
 - Stephanie Lynn Budin for a three-year term as editor of *NEA* (January 1, 2019-December 31, 2021)
 - Susan explained the circumstances of Stephanie's appointment. Thomas Schneider announced his resignation in August 2018 due to a new job in China. He was in year 7 as editor of *NEA* (year one of third term).
 - In late November, the Publications Committee voted unanimously to accept that recommendation of the Search Committee (Chuck Jones, Kevin McGeough, and Eric Cline) to offer the position to Stephanie Budin, to start on January 1, 2019.
 - A contract was issued to Stephanie to start on January 1 for three months, with continuation contingent on approval by the EC.

Joe Seger moved, multiple seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED: Stephanie Lynn Budin is appointed to a three year term as editor of NEA (January 1, 2019-December 31, 2021) (approved unanimously)

Discussion:

- Andy talked about the need to improve subscriptions, which have been falling at *NEA* more dramatically than other journals. *NEA* dropped about 15% last year, faster than market trends.
 - Conversations have been happening about making it more visually appealing and popularly attractive. Also, special issues are good but are usually only of interest to the people working on that topic
 - As of January 1, all subscribers to *NEA* will also be associate members of *ASOR*.
 - Stephanie can work with University of Chicago to address these issues.
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- Alex Joffe for a three-year term as editor of *ANEToday* (January 1, 2019-December 31, 2021)

- ANE began in 2013 as an initiative of the Friends of ASOR, Alex has been the editor since the beginning. ANEToday comes out once a week and currently has 15,500 subscribers
- Appointment is an attempt to regularize the schedule and put him on the same three-year term as other editors, retroactive, so effective Jan 1 2019.
- It is important that the editor of ANEToday is an ex officio member of the Membership and Outreach committee and the Publications committee.

Jane Evans moved, multiple seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED: Alex Joffe is appointed to a three year term as editor of ANEToday (January 1, 2019-December 31, 2021) (approved unanimously)

7. Other Business

Building Fund Update (Susan and Andy)

- Susan gave an update on the new building and issues on funding
 - As of Wednesday Jan 30, 2019, approx. \$930,000 gifts and pledges had been made.
 - On Thurs Jan 31, anonymous donor who had already pledged \$300,000, had offered to pledge another \$450,000 (for a total of \$750,000) contingent on the building being named for James Francis Strange.
 - This additional pledge would bring the total pledges to \$1,380,000
 - Andy noted he expected the donation would be realized from the donor within a two-year time frame.
 - As to the exact name of the building, Susan noted she has no hesitation about accepting this gift, and has not talked specifically with the donor, but “James F. Strange Center for Archaeology: ASOR” or something similar.
 - Andy: Jim Strange spoke passionately in Boston about a building for ASOR that will be around after we are gone. He encouraged us to take this bold move. Personally Andy thinks it’s appropriate.

Joe Seger moved, Eric Meyers seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED: The EC accepts the pledge of \$450,000 with the understanding that it be part of a total pledge of \$750,000 to name the building in honor of James Francis Strange. Further, the

Executive Committee empowers the President, Executive Director and Board Chair to negotiate the specific details of the naming of the new building after James Francis Strange pursuant to conversations with the donor and pursuant to the anticipated gift. (unanimously approved)

AGADE

- Eric: Jack Sasson, publisher of AGADE (a daily/every other day email blast of news pertinent to the study of the Ancient Near East) is looking for someone to take over, and has asked Eric to help him find someone. Do we know of any organizations that would be interested in doing it?
- Andy noted it would be fabulous for ASOR to take this over, it might be appropriate for the Friends of ASOR steering group to consider.
- Discussion followed about the ways that ASOR might integrate the AGADE content and audience with the content ASOR already provides (Friends of ASOR, ANEToday, etc.) as well as being attentive to the volume of online content that can be overwhelming.
- Susan and Andy will determine which committee is best suited to discuss this topic, Eric noted it is not urgent.

(Tim Harrison arrives 10:00 am)

Discussion Items (9:45am-12:00pm)

1. The Future of the Annual Meeting: Time and Place (with Gary Arbino, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of the Annual Meeting)
 - (10:17 conversation begins)
 - Susan provides some background: The Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 indicated we need an ad hoc committee to plan the future of the meeting due to the growth of combined SBL and AAR. The cities where these organizations meet provide only limited options for ASOR to meet in the same city. 2019 (San Diego) and 2020 (Boston) have reasonable options for ASOR, but 2021 (San Antonio) is more urgent because ASOR would have to be held at a Marriott resort outside of town. This is not a good option.
 - A committee was formed in 2016, Gary was asked to chair.
 - Gary explains his submitted report: The committee is grateful to the office staff especially Cynthia for all of their help—timely and well done.
 - Most information in the report is anecdotal. There is no set of available “slam dunk” data that makes a decision obvious. Furthermore, and the committee has not yet deliberated on the data. Gary’s task is to take input from EC and return to the committee for discussion.

- Susan notes that in terms of timeline, we need to have a report ready for the April Board meeting because at that time we will need to make decision about San Antonio in 2021. The committee should present a report that outlines various ranked options—not an up or down decision.
- There was lengthy discussion about the process. Gary noted that since the Board has to make some decision, the committee’s job is to provide the information to help the Board make that decision. There are not that many main options. Do we break with SBL or do we not?
- Sharon and Tim both noted that the EC needs to express our concerns to the committee.
- Eric spoke to the importance of maintaining a connection with SBL. He argued that ASOR began as an organization rooted in the Levant. If we break from SBL, the break from the original story of ASOR would be an affront to many people including Eric. Eric reminded us that Jim Strange embraced the term Biblical Archaeology. Furthermore, the Albright has given us a serious ultimatum: if we don’t meet with SBL, they will leave ASOR and go to SBL. Finally, we have 50-60 top notch Israeli scholars coming to ASOR every year covering all topics from prehistory to museology. Eric worries this group, were we to split, would go to SBL.
- Tim noted that ASOR “split” with SBL long ago, that SBL is not willing to negotiate with ASOR about improving venues in certain cities.
- Gary interject some data: the report has the actual numbers. In 2017, 15-20% attendees were also members of SBL.
- Susan added one piece of datum, that our attendance in Denver was depressed. This means also depressed revenue.
- Andy noted that data reveal locations matter—less popular cities mean people don’t attend. Furthermore, our current arrangement has a cost. For example in Boston, ASOR attendees pay \$10 more per night because we are meeting Wednesday-Saturday (prime business travel days), instead of Thursday-Sunday. So, the result is that 85% of our attendees are paying a premium for the minority group who are members of SBL.
- Much discussion followed about the history of ASOR attempting to work with the leadership of SBL, without results that benefited ASOR. The last time serious conversations took place on this topic, ASOR was smaller and less fiscally sound.
- Susan one suggested solution that SBL has asked us to experiment with is to push our meetings back a day (meet Tuesday-Friday), and to vacate the hotels by Friday.
- Jane noted this is difficult for academics with teaching positions who would likely have to cancel additional days of classes.

- Susan another suggested solution is to meet in a large adjacent city (for example, when SBL meets in San Antonio, ASOR might meet in Houston).
- Ann-Marie suggested the most reasonable answer is to consider the same city when possible, adjacent/easily accessible when the same city is not possible (Denver, San Antonio)
- It was noted that hearing from as many different people as possible, as early as possible, is important (including all school directors)
- Gary noted an online poll will be coming in the next week or so, asking carefully crafted questions of ASOR members about this matter.
- Discussion followed about different options for San Antonio in 2021, since that is the immediate problem. Solutions include a resort out of town, or another city that is easily accessible (such as Houston, 4 hours one way, ASOR could provide a bus; or Austin).
- Susan reminded Gary that the committee's real task is to recommend options for a long term solution as well as options for a short term solution for San Antonio in 2021.

Lunch (12:00pm-1:00pm)

"Field Trip" (1:15pm-2:15pm)

- EC committee members visited 209 Commerce Street

Discussion Items (2:30pm-5:00pm)

1. New Office Financing (with guest Carolyn Strange as a representative of the Building Campaign Cabinet)

1a. Financing plan

- Susan reminded the committee of a discussion at the January 3, 2019, EC meeting about a financial model for the purchase of 209 Commerce Street
- Andy had prepared a spreadsheet and a memo with 4 options
 - 1. Take out conventional mortgage
 - 2. Finance building exclusively with assets through ASOR (endowment and rainy day)
 - 3. Pursue an equity line of credit with endowment serving as collateral—somewhere between 30-50%
- We decided to go with option 3
- Finance Committee convened by conference call on Tuesday, Jan 29, 2019—
 - Reviewed conflict of interest forms
 - Approved forms—no material conflicts of interests
 - ASOR has received a line of credit offer from BB&T, with a non-binding term sheet. (A line of credit, unlike a mortgage,

doesn't require that we use the building for collateral, also less expensive.) This is just one offer, Andy has also talked to Sun Trust, no written proposal from them yet, anticipate something similar.

- Most line of credit offers come with an expectation that ASOR will transfer funds from endowment to that institution, discussion followed about how that might work for ASOR, including the potential for transferring accounts from ASOR to a managed account at the financing institution.
 - A disadvantage of this type of line of credit is that the interest rate is variable.
 - An advantage of this type of line of credit that there are no penalties for early payoff, we only pay the interest on what we have borrowed. Our donors are sensitive to trying to save us money, some may accelerate their gifts to prevent us paying the added interest.
- Eric moved, several seconded

BE IT RESOLVED: the EC accepts the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

- Susan brought up the issue of ASOR's managed accounts. If BB&T is the bank ASOR works with, there is a plan to transfer our endowment for operations to BB&T, but not the many separate endowments we have with Schwab for fellowships, etc.
- Then question becomes how would that account be administered if we transferred to BB&T?
- Two options:
 - Continue to administer account the same way we do our Schwab accounts—ASOR investment policy, Andy goes through twice a year in consultation with Heather, and rebalance to bring us in line with goals (that's where we pay our fees) We could continue to administer it that way.
 - What BB&T would prefer is that we move into a managed brokerage—they monitor it on a much more regular basis (more than two times a year). They are moving money much more frequently and you pay a management fee for this to be done. (fee: .75 of the balance per year.)
- ASOR has talked about making this transition for a while, our assets are at 1.9 million
- Susan noted one of the things we should think about: going forward, what is our most effective use of Andy's time?
- Taking on ownership of the building will expand the duties Andy will deal with on a daily basis.

- Andy also takes primary responsibility for our cultural heritage work, including working to bring in grant funding and writing grant proposals beyond the State Department.
- The amount of money we can bring in with Andy getting grants/overhead fees—much more money.
- Joe, and Tim both noted that a managed arrangement would be good for ASOR, particularly one that specializes in academic/non-profits. Ed noted with oversight could be guided by ASOR's investment policy and a spending policy.
- Eric reminded the committee that Sheldon Fox has a small management company and would likely have some good recommendations and advice.
- Susan reminded the committee that for now we need to put assets with whoever is going to give us this line of credit and so we might not have options until the building purchase is concluded.
- Andy notes he spoke with Sheldon on Tuesday and Wednesday and so he is already involved. Morgan Price (from BB&T) has offered to meet with the EC to explain a fiduciary model might look like—we could start slowly, and take a year or two decide whether we want to move to a fiduciary model.
- Susan: the closing on 409 commerce is scheduled for April 24, but ASOR will take occupancy on March 15 and pay rent until the closing. ASOR will vacate Virginia Theological Seminary by March 31.
- At the April 4-5 board meeting—we'll have a reception in the new space.
- Details of the purchase and transition of building ownership were discussed.

2. Other New Office Logistics

2a. Apportioning space in the new office

- Susan begins: We are moving into second floor on March 15. It will be a good opportunity to get a sense of the space while working in the building.
- The committee discussed the most logical way of dividing up the space, and current and future staffing needs. Currently there are four staff, but in the next few years that might grow to as many as 12.
- The committee ultimately decided those who would be working in the building were best suited to determine how to organize the space.

2b. Potential tenants in the new office

- Susan begins: The space is configured as floors being able to operate independently, own HVAC and own electric

meters. This was done deliberately to facilitate renting out office space.

- We might want to think about renting out, especially initially before we have expanded. What kind of tenant would we like? Another non-profit, or anyone?
- Andy noted that our pro bono lawyer is determining whether ASOR can get tax breaks as an educational institution. If so, there may be restrictions on renting space.
- Tim encouraged the idea of CAARI and ACOR being those tenants, and not charging them rent, or charging them a below market rate.
- Andy: China researched rent in King Street area for Class C building (our building is class C.) Rents range from \$25 SF to 40 SF. China felt our space was 30-40 SF. Realtors have told us at 40 SF, occupancy rate is 60-75%; but at 28 SF, there is a lot of demand—so realtor recommended 30.
- Discussion followed about how to apportion space between CAARI and ACOR, and what to charge for rent. No firm arrangement was decided. The Albright is not interested in renting space in the building, though Eric noted it would be nice to see all three institutes listed somewhere in the building.
- Tim mentioned this is an opportunity for ASOR to have a physical “hub” and we should think seriously about ways of promoting the building as a gathering space.

2c. NEH Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant application

- Discussion shifted to the NEH challenge grant (due May 15), and how ASOR would use potential grant money to repurpose the building to create the kind of hub we want the building to be.
- Andy urged the committee not to lose the momentum to bring this home. For example, the windows are all single paned and should be replaced with more energy efficient windows. Also, this building is very close to being LEED certified. Susan noted that the justification in last year’s NEH proposal won’t work, we need ideas to make it better.
- Sharon asked: what changes to the infrastructure would help turn it into the kind of hub we envision? Possibly a reception area, a resource for archaeological research what it will cover.
- Richard suggested we budget a consultation with the architects currently in the building to see what they can offer to help us achieve the space we want?

- Tim noted we must stress our vision as a digital and physical hub. The group brainstormed for a few minutes on what that might look like: archives, geo-spatial research; monitor, reporting, fact finding of archaeological sites; possibly a GIS lab on the third floor, a studio for doing press, provide resources for faculty that they don't have access to in their own institutions; ASOR's old digs; large, open access server available for ASOR affiliated digs
- Susan reminded the group of our priorities 1. Buy the building; 2. Endow the building; 3. Create an infrastructure. We need help with 3.

2d. Rent for ACOR/CAARI

- Note: this was discussed under 2b above.

Building Campaign Cabinet Business Meeting and Working Dinner: Sharon, Susan, Carolyn, Ed, Andy (5:00pm >)

Meeting adjourned 4:46 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ann-Marie Knoblauch