



ASOR Fall Executive Committee Meeting
March 6, 2021, 12:00-4:00 PM ET

Via Zoom

Present: Richard Coffman (Chair of the Board); Andy Vaughn (Executive Director); Sharon Herbert (President); Chuck Jones (Vice President); Emily Miller Bonney (Treasurer); Ann-Marie Knoblauch (Secretary); Susan Ackerman (Past President); Jane DeRose Evans.

Absent: Eric Meyers; Lynn Swartz Dodd

Guest: Marta Ostovich

Business Items (12:00-12:30)

1. Call to Order (Richard Coffman)

- The meeting was called to order at 12:03 PM

2. Approval of Agenda (Richard Coffman)

- **BE IT RESOLVED:** The agenda is approved by unanimous consent.

3. Approval of Minutes from the Dec. 10, 2020 EC Meeting (Richard Coffman)

- The approval of the December 10, 2020 meeting minutes is postponed until April.

4. Welcome Emily Miller Bonney as Treasurer

- Richard welcomed Emily Miller Bonney as the new treasurer of ASOR.

5. Open Board Appointments

a. EMB's appointment as Treasurer leaves her remaining term as membership elected trustee (ends Dec. 31, 2021). Appoint Margaret Cohen (runner up in 2020)

- Sharon noted Margaret Cohen was nominated in November 2020, and she was the runner up in the election, receiving a very high number of votes.
- Jane De Rose Evans, chair of the Board Nominations Committee, supports the appointment.

Jane moved, Joe seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED The Executive Committee elects Margaret Cohen as a Member-Elected Trustee to complete the term of Emily Miller Bonney (ending December 31, 2021)

Discussion

- Jane will reach out to Margaret with this information

Unanimously approved.

b. One Board-elected slot (of 12) is open. Preliminary thoughts on options for action in April.

- Sharon discussed potential candidates for one Board-elected slot. There is support for engaging with the BIPOC community as well as representation from the regions where ASOR members typically work was part of the conversation. Sharon was encouraged to approach a BIPOC to serve as a Board-elected trustee, and there was a general consensus that it would be appropriate to provide travel support for the Spring Board Meeting if that were needed.

6. Other Business

- None

Discussion Current Business Items and reports as related to Strategic plan (12:30-2:00m)

1. Brief Financial report; 990 (Andy Vaughn, Emily Miller Bonney)

- Andy prepared the report presented by Emily. It covers 2019-2020, but we have made improvements since then, and ASOR is financially healthy.
- Investment spreadsheet shows that fellowship and grant accounts over \$500,000 are showing a 25% increase, and the Endowment for Operations is up 25%.
- Susan noted that Scott and Stringfellow is underperforming on ASOR's Schwab accounts that they manage.
- Andy responded that Clearview has been hired to review ASOR's investments. Andy proposes to wait until April to get a report from Clearview to get a more accurate review of the past twelve months. In December Scott and Stringfellow were doing better than ASOR. All accounts are doing very well. (The Mason Account and Building Fund are lower because we are only slowly moving money into these funds.)
- Emily noted that at the end of the day we are doing extremely well, the PPP money has been very helpful. We have \$5,700,000 in the asset column, which is outstanding.
- Susan also noted that Andy's Executive Director memo prepared for this EC meeting focuses on the Annual Meeting, and the fact that it operates at a loss because it can't support staff salaries. However, no other operation within ASOR is broken down as to whether it makes money.
- Andy noted that during an audit, other programs are indicated with a positive or negative number (journals are the only thing that are positive). We had originally budgeted for a 2020 meeting in Boston would be historically successful because of the popularity of the city, but it was not because of the pandemic. The Virtual Annual Meeting had very real costs associated with it, without the draw of meeting in a popular city. To make up the foregone revenue, we are allocating more undesignated dollars to the 2020 Annual Meeting than budgeted.

- Susan expressed that the meta question still stands: the Annual Meeting is one of our greatest priorities, and so if it loses money, it loses money. Why are we always presented with the Annual Meeting as a money-losing program, when there is always an expectation that it will cost money?
- Andy noted that he anticipates we will be in an unfavorable position for the Annual Meeting compared to the FY21 budget by about \$29,000; and unfavorable with membership revenues compared to the budget by about \$25,000. He estimated Institutional Memberships would be unfavorable to the budget by around \$20,000. So, rhetoric aside, we may be down a lot this year unless the situation changes.
- This was followed by more conversation about how the Annual Meeting is presented.
- Andy indicated that his memo was intended to do two things:
 - i. Give a quick update on the budget (including some unfavorable items)
 - ii. Explain the justification for applying for a second PPP Loan, in spite of an overall strong financial balance sheet of endowment accounts.

2. Current Virtual Office Staffing and Activities (AV)

- Andy provided some updates on the office staff and the James Strange Center.
- The ASOR staff continues to work mostly remotely, with one person permitted in the building at a time. The staff is able to continue to carry out needed functions.
- The last twelve months has been challenging for the staff with the lack of face-to-face interaction.
- Sharon noted that there are a couple of planned new hires to correspond with DEI ASOR's DEI initiatives. (The PPP loan and designated giving have enabled that.)
- Richard asked if there are any issues that a second PPP loan might not be forgiven?
- Andy explained that we are prequalified for forgiveness as long as the money is paid on staff. He anticipates that it will be forgiven based on guidance from BB&T (now Truist).

3. CH Committee activities (JDE)

- Jane updated that the Cultural Heritage committee had gotten together and discussed the Strategic Plan and had come up with some concrete suggestions to be discussed below.

4. CCC (CJ)

- Chuck updated the EC that CCC discussed the 2021 plenary speaker and Morag Kersal was the enthusiastic first choice.
- CCC had met all through the summer, not the usual habit, but was possible because no one had gone into the field.
- The focus of many meetings was the Strategic Plan, and each committee came up with ideas about the Strategic Plan and their committee work. It is helpful that the current committee chairs are all excellent and thoroughly committed to DEI goals and other important initiatives
- Committees have also thought about the makeup of their own committees. For example, the Early Career scholars have submitted a slate of members—important and clear and articulate voices, also have been serving on the DEI task force. They are doing impressive work.

- Chuck noted that the DEI Task Force has acknowledged the limited number of people of color in our fields, and the added amount of hard work they have to do for representation, especially in the area of DEI, which can be difficult and personal.
- Andy added comments about online resources at this point, indicating that the time working distantly has given the staff the opportunity to think in a visionary way about what ASOR can be doing. One area is online resources, which have expanded dramatically and it's an area we can continue to invest in
- Susan asked if we were tracking uses of the online resources. Andy replied that we have the resources to do so using Google Analytics, and we need to look into advertising what ASOR does and increasing the content.

Break 2:00-2:10

Strategic Plan (SCH 2:10-4:00)

- Sharon reminded the committee of the purpose of a Strategic Plan. It is not a business plan or a road map; and not a place to set metrics. It's a wellness check on our values, and also an important fund-raising tool. Almost a wish list.
- Richard asked Sharon our goals for the remainder of the meeting. Sharon noted she is looking for input for things that need to change (added, subtracted, expanded on) for the next draft.

1. The Process

2. The Organization/structure. Is this an Interim Plan? A Revised Plan? A New Plan?

3. The Substance: add, subtract areas?

4. The Infrastructure

The minutes that follow are some preliminary remarks and items of discussion. See Attachment 1 (2021-03-strategic-plan-ec-discussion) for references to particular points in that document

- Sharon reminded the EC that last spring it was agreed that our new Strategic Plan would benefit from buy-in from members. Plans for a face-to-face session at the 2020 Annual Meeting to engage with ASOR members was cancelled, but the structure of the CCC broadens the reach of who has input in this document.
- Sharon is working on a plan to present at the May meeting of the full ASOR Board, and asked if it's possible to reach out to even more people between now and then (perhaps our public members).
- Susan recommended reaching out to the Executive Directors of our ORCs. For example, the suggestion that each ORC have a table in the exhibit room of the Annual Meeting is a great idea, but it also commits them to something
- Andy made a general comment that the plan as written has some points that are very detailed with specific activities listed to accomplish a goal, and others are more general. Andy expressed preference for a more general and aspirational approach to goals. Susan disagreed with this point, indicating that the specifics are in fact very helpful. It gives a direction for implementation, and also gives the staff a sense of their priorities.
- Chuck agreed with Susan that the ORCs (and perhaps the boards of the ORCs) should be more involved.
- Susan also noted the current draft is somewhat uneven, for example with a lot on the Annual Meeting, but not much on Cultural Heritage.
- Sharon noted that there is a lot of overlap with last plan; Susan noted that the last plan (2015-2020) was a good plan, but needed better communication so people would know

about what was in it. Here, the much greater involvement of the CCC is a real strength. They have ownership and be better at doing what they didn't do in the old plan.

Part I. Strengthening ASOR's Key Program Areas

- **Area 1: The Annual Meeting**

- Under the Annual Meeting, discussion centered around the expectation for both a face-to-face and a virtual component going forward. Sharon pointed out that this will always be an added expense.
- Other topics included the expense of the conference for attendees. Andy noted a commitment to offer scholarships to cover 25, 50 or 100% of Annual Meeting conference registration to anyone who asks.
- Sharon brought up a concern of the early Career Scholars who liked the accessibility of the virtual Annual Meeting, but want to make sure the virtual component is not seen as "second class."
- Richard suggested adding language to include improving the marketing of the conference, since the online option offers room for growth.
- Sharon noted that making the Annual Meeting more affordable should be an aspiration.

- **Area 2: Cultural Heritage**

- During the discussion of this section, Jane proposed that the organization of the Strategic Plan should be rethought, separating statements about who we are from what we do. Jane pointed out that Cultural Heritage is who we are and so belongs higher up in the document, as opposed to the Annual Meeting, which is what we do.
- Jane also proposed giving more thought to the role of Cultural Heritage within ASOR. When the last Strategic Plan was written, ASOR was just beginning to get involved with Cultural Heritage projects. Now is an appropriate time to reflect on the shift that has happened within the past five years in ASOR and also think about what direction the organization wants to take moving forward.
- Susan noted this would be an appropriate place to add some retrospective comments.

- **Area 3: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

- Susan proposed checking with the Executive Directors of the ORCs before establishing ASOR programming at the centers.
- Emily proposed moving language about the ORCs out of this section because it dilutes the DEI initiatives in the same section.
- Andy noted that this section of the Strategic Plan lays the groundwork for expanding our presence in parts of the world where we'd like to work.
- Susan noted that much has been done to secure the success of the next generation (Section 3D). Careers outside the academy is now a standing session at the Annual Meeting chaired by Emily She suggested an overall rewriting of this section as there is a lot of obsolete information.
- Andy suggested removing language about increasing the amount of excavation scholarships because that has already been accomplished.

- **Area 4: Publications**

- Sharon raised a question posed by Eric about additional detail with regards to digital publishing. Chuck said he is not sure what the future holds for digital

publishing.

- **Area 5: Public Outreach**

- Ann-Marie suggested perhaps a sponsored lecture series like the AIA. This year the lectures have been virtual, making them less expensive and more accessible.
- Further discussion focused on a public-facing event (or day of events) in tandem with the Annual Meeting.

- **Area 6 Supporting the Work of our Members**

- Susan noted this section could use some updating, and was a place for a retrospective review of things that have been done, for example, the newly endowed fellowships and scholarships since 2015. Susan also noted that this is where ASOR can talk about initiatives that support members (for example, creating professional grants).
- Emily proposed moving section 6F (Champion the Study of the Near East and Wider Mediterranean) to another section that more specifically covers the ORCs.

Part II Infrastructure to Support Programs

- **Develop James Strange Center to best serve our various programs**

- Sharon noted this section will benefit from input from the Facilities Committee, the staff and the Executive Committee, including reorganizing the space, discussion of usages for the third floor, and creating a public space.
- Susan suggested the idea of a public space be mentioned in the section on Public Outreach.
- Susan also noted that our archives have ended up at Harvard, and we need to recover them and move them to the James Strange Center. About 150 square feet will be needed.
- Discussion also included the feasibility of using the basement as a storage space. Andy noted the degree of dampness makes it an issue for document storage, even if there is already a digital copy. Andy explained the basement is more of a cellar.

Meeting adjourned at 4:01.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann-Marie Knoblauch