

2019 Executive Committee Meeting

April 13, 2019

Columbus, Ohio

Hyatt Regency Columbus

Fayette

12:00-4:30pm

Officers Present:

Graeme Wynn, President

Edmund Russell, Vice President/President Elect

Mark Madison, Treasurer

Sarah Elkind, Secretary

Executive Committee Members Present:

Kathryn Morse

Cindy Ott

Lynn Heasley

Conevery Valencius

Kieko Matteson

Camden Burd, Graduate Student Caucus President

Kathleen Brosnan, Past President

David Spatz, Ex Officio, Executive Director

Lisa Brady, Ex Officio, Outgoing Editor of *Environmental History*

Mark Hersey, Ex Officio, Co-Editor of *Environmental History*

Stephen Brain, Ex Officio, Co-Editor of *Environmental History*

Guests:

Steven Anderson, Forest History Society President

Sam White, Chair 2019 Local Arrangements Committee

Melissa Wiedenfeld, Chair 2019 Program Committee

Trish Thomas, Oxford University Press

Sherri Sheu, incoming Graduate Student Caucus President

Marsha Wiesiger, Executive Committee Elect

Ellen Arnold, Executive Committee Elect

Regrets:

Emily Greenwald, Executive Committee member

Mike Dockry, Executive Committee Elect

Catherine McNeur, Executive Committee Elect

Pete Alagona, Secretary-Elect

Lunch at 12:00pm

12:30pm, Graeme Wynn called the meeting to order. Brief introductions.

1) Approval of 2018 minutes.

The minutes for the 2018 Executive Committee Meeting moved, seconded, and approved.

2) **Business arising:**

WEHN Status clarification:

WEHN proposes to remain an **interest group** within ASEH and other environmental history organizations with the explicit mission of advancing diversity within ASEH initially by supporting and promoting on scholarship by women. WEHN will organize a special reception at the conference, open to all, with costs split between attendees, fundraising, and ASEH. The reception merits support from ASEH as a whole because it is directed specifically at meeting ASEH's own organizational goals of increasing diversity, creating an inclusive, scholarly community, and mentoring new environmental historians. This networking reception, and ASEH's ongoing support of it, distinguish WEHN from other interest groups (Envirotech, War and Environment, Energy History) that hold meetings at the ASEH conference, and are listed in the conference program.

Accepted by acclamation.

Discussion: It was suggested WEHN investigate holding receptions off-site to lower reception costs.

3) President's Remarks – Wynn thanked Sam White for heading the conference local arrangements committee, and Melissa Wiedenfeld for heading the conference program committee. The past year has seen the transition to a new Executive Director – greatly facilitated by the efforts of David Spatz and Lisa Mighetto – and the creation and initial implementation of a strategic plan. On behalf of ASEH, Wynn signed a letter in opposition to a NARA plan to cull records, and decided not to sign an amicus brief for Juuliani v. U.S.

4) 2019 Conference Report by Sam White and Melissa Wiedenfeld)

Wynn thanked Sam White for an excellent, well-organized conference; and thanked Melissa Wiedenfeld for producing a lively & coherent program. Presidential sessions seemed to have worked as intended, to create a space in the program for sessions in response to emerging issues.

Sam White thanked David Spatz for his assistance. The site selection committee reported no serious difficulties with conference arrangements. **Attendance:** 540 registered; 590 attendees, including exhibitors.

Melissa Wiedenfeld reported the program committee accepted 81 individual papers, and 101 complete sessions. As usual, acceptance rates for complete sessions was higher than for individual papers. The Program Committee piloted a “virtual” session, with paper presentations and discussion via video-conference. This went very smoothly, and is worth doing again. A special session on activism was scheduled in the same room as the members meeting in hope of increasing participation in the members' meeting. This did not significantly increase members' meeting attendance. There was more “double-dipping” (individuals appearing on multiple panels) on the program this year than in some previous years. Some of this was a product of extended deadlines for special sessions and graduate student sessions. Stricter deadlines might help prevent multiple appearances on the program.

Discussion: A clearer policy against chairing or commenting on multiple sessions might help invited chairs/commentators decline, and so create more space in the program for other participants. Individuals who “Skype in” should still be required to register for the conference. Can we arrange with conference hotels to reduce waste by avoiding disposable cups and table-ware?

5) Journal Report (Trish Thomas)

Positive report. Journal is a pleasure to work with. Circulation is stable. The journal is reaching new readers internationally through consortia. OUP's new platform and search-engine optimization has increased usage amongst authorized users of full text downloads. There is a good flow of traffic to the OUP site. Production continues to be smooth & timely, because of editorial office's front end work.

Virtual issue on the history of food helps usage statistics this year. Virtual special issues are created to market the journal; they are open-access.

Questions?

- The **ASEH/FHS – OUP Contract** up for renewal end of 2021. So, 2020 is “discussion year” for all parties to decide whether or not to renew.
 - Anderson proposed ASEH and FHS create a committee to discuss the journal and renewal with OUP
- **Open Access:** There is a big movement in EU to increase open access journal publication because of government funding for research there; T. Thomas does not expect this to play a big role in US soon because US has a different funding regime. There is an open access option for articles. OUP provides free online access to poorest countries – significant take-up and readership in these countries as a result.

Wynn thanked T. Thomas for producing an excellent journal and report.

6) Editor's Report (Lisa Brady, Mark Hersey, Stephen Brain)

Brady: Submissions, time to decision, time to publication all remain unchanged since last year. Unfortunately, gender distribution of submitted and published articles is also unchanged; something needs to be done to encourage more female scholars to submit. Brady will continue to research and work on gender inequities in journal, using Scholar One database information, and will report back. Brady thanked the editorial team, and the new editors for a smooth transition.

Wynn extended ASEH's sincere and overwhelming heartfelt thanks gratitude to Brady for excellent journal, and research on gender in *Environmental History*.

Hersey & Brain, new journal editors: Mississippi State has welcomed journal. They plan the following new initiatives: Hire grad students for fact-checking and plagiarism review; direct the new book review editor to continue to send most books to a woman first to increase reviews by women; introduce invited review articles as an addition to the book review offerings; shorten and tighten forum features, and redirect forums to topics with broader appeal; use editorial note to call attention to material available on line; digitize the pre-journal environmental history newsletters. They expect that the editorial response time will be a bit slower next year, until the editors get familiar with the editorial processes. Eventually, Brain and Hersey plan to divide editorial duties by geography; this should speed turnaround and response time.

Wynn thanked Hersey & Brain for their good work and interesting initiatives.

7) 2019 Election Results: Sarah Elkind elected VP/Pres Elect; Pete Alagona elected Secretary; Marsha Weisinger, Ellen Arnold, Catherine McNeur, Mike Dockry elected to the Executive Committee; Ling Zhang and Michael Egan elected to the Nominating Committee. The Amendment to bylaws re Treasurer-elect passed. Lots of votes were cast.

Discussion of Treasurer, Treasurer-elect, and treasurer transition: Madison to step down 2021. Concern was raised that appointing a treasurer is not consistent with practice for other

offices. However, doing anything else would not be consistent with the bylaw amendment to create an elected treasurer-elect office. Madison is willing to delay transition to new treasurer to permit the election of a treasurer-elect during our normal election cycle.

Next steps: Solicit nominations and self-nominations for treasurer-elect; Madison and Treasurer-elect to develop an ASEH treasurer's manual. Make Madison's retirement public, and publicize need for new treasurer. Recommendations: set nomination deadline early, so there is time for the nominating committee to identify good candidates by 2020 conference to stand for election in 2021.

Question: Should Executive Committee investigate benefits ASEH might offer the new treasurer including subsidies for conference attendance. Qualifications: interest in financial affairs, knowledge of investment markets, risk-averse investment philosophy.

8) Treasurer's Report and 2019 budget (Mark Madison).

The 2018 budget and summary were circulated before the meeting. ASEH has been in the red for the last 2 years, in spite of lower expenses in many categories. Deficit is mostly the result of stock market performance, but deficits may be a trend. Income streams are stable, but stock dividends slightly negative. The 2018 conference generated modest revenue. Looking forward: there is no good reason to expect membership, or conference or OUP revenues to increase. Fixed expenses continue to go up, including executive director pay, and unfunded obligations for grants and prizes. 2019 proposed budget is also in the red; expenses in 2019 budget are actual, not estimated expenses.

Annual SWOT analysis: Strengths: David Spatz brings energy and new skills to Executive Director position; environmental history is a growing field; conferences draw well.

Weaknesses: ASEH membership does not donate -- our rates of giving are unusually low for organizations like this; ASEH has increased expenses for grants, prizes and other activities without thinking about funding. Opportunities: Spatz has found some new advertising income streams; our best opportunities maybe to increase gifts and bequests. Threats: Journal profits are flat or declining; consortia increase circulation, but generate less revenue than subscriptions. A movement to expand open access will reduce revenue further. If journal profits decline, OUP may reduce the current revenue floor. In contract negotiations, ASEH/FHS should request an increased revenue floor. Madison also observed that we are unlikely to get a better deal from another press

Recommendations: invest in increasing membership and donations from members.

Discussion:

Conference registration fees and membership dues are both relatively low. Donations are also very low. We have been trying to change the culture to increase giving without much success. An increase in conference registration of \$43 would cover this year's deficit.

Suggestions:

Introduce automatic membership renewal and automatic, recurrent donations on web page. Include donation envelopes in conference program. Change the difference in conference registration fee so that non-member registration equals member registration plus one year of membership (register and get the membership for free).

To ease conference organizing, on-site conference registration fees should be increased to be more-or-less prohibitive.

Budget and Treasurer's Report moved. Seconded. Passed.

9) **Website** overhaul, and IT arrangements (D. Spatz)

Current web site and IT arrangements are inefficient. ASEH uses 5 core functions (conference paper submission & review – expensive but pretty good; conference registration system – expensive, but includes lots of good data; membership system – separate, but has about 80% overlap and redundant; communications for all email – separate from conference and membership; website – completely disconnected from all). These are currently 5 separate systems. Spatz recommends replacing these with one system for membership communication, events, and website, and one for conference paper submission. Replacing these systems will increase costs in the short-run, but should save money or be revenue-neutral going forward.

- 10) Travel grant for Grad Caucus president-elect. Motion to formalize designating an existing travel grant for the Grad Caucus president-elect to attend the annual meeting. Moved. Seconded. Passed.

14: 45 – 15:00 BREAK

- 11) Fundraising Statement and Endowment Strategy (Ed Russell); Hughes gift (D. Spatz)

Russell: Proposed that ASEH start a new fundraising campaign by raising earmarked funds to endow awards – starting w Rachel Carson. After raising enough funds for Carson Prize, ASEH will start a new campaign to fund the next prize. The goal here is to raise money to cover our fixed, routine expenses separately from membership and journal revenues. If the earmarked fund takes the form of a contractual endowment, we need to consult an attorney to make sure that the endowment and fundraising plan is appropriate.

Discussion: It is possible to earmark and track specific funds without a legal, contractual endowment. ASEH Executive Committee rejected creating a formal endowment in the past, because it is unnecessarily complex.

Motion to approve in concept. Seconded. Passed.

Don Hughes's daughter Melissa has committed \$5000/year for 10 years for grad student research travel funds, and the J. Donald Hughes Travel Grant. This donation will cover the cost of (at least some) existing ASEH travel grants., which will be renamed JDH TGs for the duration of the funding commitment. Recipients should be encouraged to write letters of thanks. Russell and Spatz to write thank you to Hughes family.

Motion to create J. Donald Hughes Fellowships for the duration of the funding. Seconded. Passed.

- 12) Respectful Behavior Policy (Conevery Valencius/Ed Russell);

Purpose: To develop a clearly articulated policy to respond to sexual harassment; to clearly signal opposition to other forms of harassment; and to use discussions of these problems to articulate positive norms and behaviors. In other words, this policy is a way to articulate the kind of society we want to be.

Proposed document is a policy on discriminatory harassment, that articulates what discriminatory harassment is and how ASEH will respond. Of note: This proposal has no appeal process; it focuses only on things that happen in the course of ASEH business, and so severely constrains what ASEH is responsible for. The committee did not discuss what happens if we give an award, and allegations of misbehavior emerge afterwards. Online harassment is covered only in the course of ASEH business (online meetings, online mentorship, live tweeting conference). Other, general online interaction are not covered by this policy. In other words, this policy does not apply to

interactions amongst ASEH members away from meeting. The policy was written mostly with annual meeting in mind. The policy does not promise any particular action, so ASEH can respond appropriately to unanticipated situations. We can also make our efforts in this direction more evident and promote the kinds of norms we want by making plagiarism and harassment searchable on our web site.

Motion to adopt policy. Seconded. Passed.

13) **Procedures for rapid-response to advocacy requests.** (G Wynn)

ASEH's policy regarding advocacy questions is not well-suited to questions that require a rapid response. Wynn convened an ad hoc committee of the executive committee to generate recommendations (not a specific policy) for how to "rapid response" situations. Committee: K. Matteson, chair; E. Arnold, C. Valencius, M. Hersey, with Keith Woodhouse as ex officio.

14) Awards Committee (C. Ott, K. Matteson, C. Mauch): Lisa Mighetto Award for Distinguished Service 2020 and Distinguished Scholar Award 2020

2019: Mighetto award to Stephen Pyne; Distinguished Scholar Award to John McNeill; Public history award to Libby Robin and Tom Griffiths.

2020 awards: Mighetto service award to Lisa Brady; Distinguished Scholar to Harriet Ritvo. The committee reports they are not receiving many nominations. The Awards committee can also nominate, and will pass their list of potential nominations on to next year's committee.

Motion to accept nominations: Moved. seconded. Passed.

15) Discussion of new prize nomination and decision timeline (G. Wynn, E. Russell, D. Spatz); discussion of virtual 6-month EC meeting: Announcement: E. Russell will convene a mid-year (October) electronic meeting – mid-day Saturday. Technology to be determined. Date to be determined. Move the prize decisions to the mid-year meeting.

16) Fellowships and Prizes (D. Spatz): ASEH offers two grad fellowships (Rothman and Equity Graduate Student fellowships), selected by separate committees. This year, both committees selected the same person. Proposal: to change policy so that one student cannot receive both awards. Discussion: This must be resolved in a way that does not force a fellowship winner to select identity. When possible, give winner Rothman? With an equity award, and an excellence award – we don't want to push "equity" candidate out of excellence recognition. Perhaps ask CODIE to provide second nominee so if one person wins both, CODIE's could quietly award Equity Award to the second ranked.

Tabled until October meeting.

17) Graduate Student Caucus Report (C. Burd and S. Sheu)

The meeting on Wednesday night went well. ASEH's financial support for food and beverages helped enormously. C. Burd thanked to Sheu for engaging right away to organize panels and create an online dissertation writing group; and thanked Charlotte Leib for organizing the Twitter conference. Grad students appreciate support for child care services, but wonder if there is a way to support day care services if children stay home. Other activities this year: roommate matching service; panel-finder – happened late in process but could help more ASEH members to set up panels.

The Executive Committee recognizes and thanks Burd & Sheu for their contributions

18) Review of Executive Director's Performance (Graeme Wynn): David Spatz has brought new energy and initiatives. Very positive.

19) AHA use of ASEH membership list

Because we are an AHA affiliate organization, AHA can ask to contact our membership. We can refuse this request, but it's clear that they would really like them to say yes. They are undertaking a capital campaign for building renovations. We can edit their language, and put it out through our normal channels of communication.

Motion: to approve allowing AHA to contact membership for the purposes indicated.

Second. Passed.

20) **Advertising:** UNC Press has purchased an ad on ASEH home page and newsletter. David would like to pursue similar opportunities in future. Many societies sell space in society communications like this. To do so, ASEH needs need a policy about what type of advertisements/organizations we will accept.

Motion: President and Exec Director develop policy/system for advertising and conference sponsorship, including rates and what types of advertisers we'll accept. Seconded. Passed.

21) **We need a site selection committee activated, and a site for 2022 meeting**

22) **16:45** – Meeting adjourned.