



April 26, 2022

AAG Council Meeting

Minutes

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Opening

Present

Emily Yeh, President; Marilyn Raphael, Vice President; Amy Lobben, Past President; LaToya Eaves, Treasurer; Joseph Oppong, Secretary; Gary Langham, Executive Director.

National Councilors: Pablo Bose, University of Vermont; Meghan Cope, University of Vermont; Wei Li, Arizona State University; Elizabeth Edna Wangui, Ohio University.

Student Councilor: John (Jack) Swab, University of Kentucky

Regional Councilors: East Lakes, Marcia England, Miami University (Ohio); Great Plains/Rocky Mountains, Shannon O’Lear, University of Kansas; Middle Atlantic, Tracy Edwards, Frostburg University; Middle States, Steven M. Schnell, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania; New England St. Lawrence Valley, Richard Kujawa, St. Michael’s College; Pacific Coast, Yolonda Youngs, California State University San Bernardino; Southeastern, Selima Sultana, University of North Carolina Greensboro; Southwestern, Colleen Myles, Texas State University; West Lakes, Heike Alberts, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Absent during the first half of the meeting: International Councilor (Observer): Diana Ojeda, Universidad de los Andes.

Staff: Jill Treby, Chief of Staff; Amanda McKnight, Chief of Programs; Candida Mannozi, Chief Operations Officer.

Langham welcomed everyone and thanked them for their ongoing service on the AAG Council and their time during the Strategic Planning session.

Adopt the Agenda

Yeh welcomed everyone and said she was glad to see a majority of the Councilors assembled in person, after two years of virtual meetings.

Myles moved to Adopt the Council Meeting Agenda. Li seconded the motion, which was unanimously adopted.

Adopt the Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda

- Suggestions from HDC members for Standing Committees and Nominating Committee recruitment – Langham
- Policy Manual preview – McKnight, Langham
- Draft Councilor Handbook preview – McKnight, Langham
- Membership Development and Growth – Langham, Treby
- 2022 Annual Meeting statistics – Langham, McKnight
- Resolutions for Outgoing Councilors – Yeh, Langham

Eaves moved to adopt the Consent Agenda and Myles seconded the motion. The Consent

Agenda was adopted unanimously.

Wangui moved to adopt the Minutes of the February 2022 Council Meeting and Youngs seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

President's Comments

Yeh mentioned looking forward to discussing the many topics before the Council at this meeting.

Vice President's Comments

Raphael greeted everyone from her remote location. She thanked Lobben and Yeh for their counsel and leadership as she became familiar with her role on Council. She indicated being pleased that the Council wants to make Geography Departments an area of focus in the next Three-Year AAG Strategic Plan. She also reiterated her desire to focus on JEDI and continue to work on increasing inclusivity in the discipline.

Langham indicated that Raphael and he had agreed the next Council meeting on Sept. 15 - 16 will be located in Los Angeles, possibly hosted at UCLA.

State of the AAG

Langham indicated he would elaborate on the State of the AAG later in the meeting.

Publications

Jennifer Cassidento, AAG Director of Publications, joined the meeting.

GeoHumanities Editorial Interviews

After interviewing three candidates for the GeoHumanities Editor opening, discussion revealed the Council's preference to appoint one of the candidates to begin in 2023, and another in 2024.

Eaves moved to consider all three candidates as acceptable for the GeoHumanities Co-Editor position. Li seconded the motion. The motion passed with 17 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

Joshua Inwood and Anastasia Christou resulted top-ranked.

Myles moved to appoint Joshua Inwood as GeoHumanities Co-Editor beginning in 2023 and to appoint the next-ranked candidate should he decline the offer. Eaves seconded the motion. The motion passed with 13 votes in favor and 5 abstentions.

Myles moved to appoint Anastasia Christou as GeoHumanities Co-Editor beginning in 2024, and to appoint the next-ranked candidate should she decline the offer. Eaves seconded the motion, which passed with 13 votes in favor and 5 abstentions.

Annals – permanent fifth Editor

Council discussion of this topic resulted in a suggestion to discuss possible revisions to the Annals sections at a future Council meeting and to discuss a permanent fifth editorship for the Annals at that

time as well. The Council generally felt the proposal for a fifth Editor was agreeable. However, the Council acknowledged the need to discuss in more depth a possible restructuring of the journal, specifically the idea of possibly splitting the Human Geography section, and how to equitably address the representation of qualitative Methods in the journal. Langham stated that staff would work with the Publications Committee on a revised approach.

Committees, Specialty & Affinity Groups

Committee on Committees – Ratify 2022-2023 rosters

Cope moved to approve the roster of 2022-2023 AAG Committees. Swab seconded the motion which passed with 18 votes in favor.

Committees' Annual Reports

The Council reviewed the JEDI Committee's suggestion for a revised charge. Kujawa confirmed that the revised charge mirrors the goals of the Council-approved JEDI strategic framework. There was general consensus to therefore accept the revised charge for the JEDI Committee.

Suggestions from Healthy Depts Committee for Committee recruitment

Langham indicated that he and staff are more than happy to follow the Healthy Department Committee's recommendation for more inclusion of volunteers from two-year and minority-serving institutions on AAG Committees and the Nominating Committee. The improved AAG database will assist in these efforts. There was discussion and general consensus in favor of the suggestion.

Governance Audit

Revised Bylaws and AAG Councilor / Officer Roles

Langham introduced the revised Bylaws to Council. He indicated that following a Council vote the revised Bylaws will be submitted to the membership for review and approval as the next steps in the process.

Eaves moved to approve the revised Bylaws, Oppong seconded the motion, which passed with a unanimous vote in favor.

Li moved to approve the Officer and Councilor roles. Eaves seconded the motion. The motion received a unanimous vote in favor.

Policy Manual – preview

Langham and McKnight indicated that the policies currently before Council are in a very draft format that will be revised and updated to the just-approved Bylaws. That refreshed version of policies will be brought before Council for review later this year after thorough review.

Councilor Handbook - preview

This item was not discussed.

JEDI Framework

Staffing and timeline for JEDI Framework implementation

Langham updated the Council on progress on the 32-point JEDI Framework Plan, such as assigning AAG staff to each goal in the plan and beginning the task of recruiting for the JEDI Director position. He indicated that around 60 applicants have responded to the call so far. He asked the Council to encourage deserving candidates to apply.

CRT Memo

Langham explained that he wanted the Council's opinion on whether the AAG should take an official stance on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Langham brought this question to Council, as an official position by the AAG cannot be decided by an AAG Committee (JEDI in this case) but needs to be decided by the AAG Council.

Eaves offered some background on what activities the Black Geographies Specialty Group had originally launched around this topic, wanting to coordinate AAG efforts in parallel with other US and international efforts on CRT.

Council generally agreed to support the requests of the CRT Working Group. Swab suggested the Council agree to issue a statement of support and post it on the AAG website, and to ask the Working Group to provide more detail on the suggestion to establish and implement a "fund for scholars under fire." This suggestion met with general agreement.

There was also a consensus for Langham to reach out to the CRT Working Group and the JEDI Committee for next steps.

JEDI Committee proposal for AAG Hardwick Excellence in Mentoring Award

Li summarized the process that led to the suggestions before the Council.

Langham proposed to the Council a course of action that he had vetted with the AAG's legal counsel that would apply to all proposed awardees.

Discussion resulted in a consensus for Langham to pursue this solution. Langham indicated he will present the detailed procedure to the Council at a future date.

The Council also agreed to the JEDI Committee's proposal that the ad-hoc committee deciding the AAG Hardwick Excellence in Mentoring Award may ask for a letter of support from the nominee's unit head prior to the award decision.

Membership Development and Growth

Treby directed the Council's attention to the report from Green Jay Strategies and provided an update on recent focus groups held with Community College, physical geography, and non-academic AAG members. She outlined a few key strategies the AAG will pursue to solidify its member base, improve member retention, and pursue member growth with new programs and offerings.

Climate Change and AAG

Future AAG meeting options and associated costs-benefits

McKnight summarized plans for the hybrid 2023 Annual Meeting including preparations that have evolved since the direction received at the February Council meeting. She stated that the AAG is planning for 5 - 10% of the sessions in Denver to be fully hybrid, with priority given to externally sponsored sessions, Council-involved sessions (i.e., keynotes, addresses and the like), and special sessions of AAG Specialty/Affinity Groups. 50% of all sessions in Denver will be one-way hybrid (with in-person and virtual attendees) and 1-2 rooms will be reserved for streaming virtual content. She also walked the Council through proposed Watch Party options to be piloted in Denver.

Yeh reminded Langham and staff that the Climate Action Task Force had requested guidelines for best practices on nodes by also surveying other hybrid meeting organizers.

Youngs requested that virtual session recordings be made available online for 180 days as was the case previously. She also stated that APCG held a hybrid meeting last fall and is planning to do so again in 2022 and that her Region would be happy to be a “test-case” for the remote nodes.

2024 AAG Meeting: McKnight reported on the feasibility studies that AAG staff carried out for the Honolulu meeting, including hosting a secondary meeting Hub location in Washington, DC. One of the key requirements is for the secondary Hub to be staffed in the same way as the Honolulu event, to be equally attractive to participants. However, this results in a significant expense in terms of staffing and other costs required for an in-person meeting venue. Langham stated that the AAG is committed to hybrid meetings into the future and to perfecting them every year. He stated that the idea of hosting a second in-person Annual Meeting Hub location is impractical at this time, but that AAG would continue to explore future solutions.

Other climate updates

Yeh mentioned that she doesn't think the AAG will meet its 2030 carbon footprint goals as recommended by the Climate Action Task Force. Langham stated that, per the recent carbon study by AAG, holding a hybrid meeting could allow the AAG to hit those very goals. He reminded the Council that AAG has committed to calculating and reporting on the carbon footprint results after the Denver meeting and future meetings. This transparency will allow Council to consider progress towards 2030 goals.

Langham also stated that he's exploring carbon offsets for the Honolulu meeting in 2024, by talking to the Honolulu hotels as well as other organizations about offset options on the island. He has also been in discussion with Tracey Osborne about offsets in Ecuador. He plans to bring these proposals to the Council at a forthcoming meeting for further discussion.

Meridian Place

Divestments

Langham introduced this topic by stating that since the AAG bank's merger from SunTrust to Truist, the AAG now has access to more and different divestment options at low cost. These options come with the ability to validate that the new allocations truly are Environmental Social Governance (ESG) holdings and to adjust as desired. The Council encouraged Langham to begin divesting and to bring recommendations from the Truist investors to the Finance Committee for review and approval.

Options for the Future of Meridian Place

Langham thanked Treby for hiring a real estate company to help delineate possible future plans for Meridian Place. He outlined that maintaining 1710 16th Street, NW and leasing a LEED-certified space in already excellent condition amounts to practically the same in total annual outlays. By contrast, to renovate Meridian Place, the \$3M Council had previously approved for this process would not suffice under current circumstances and would require allocating additional funds. Divesting from current AAG holdings to afford a renovation would also mean selling AAG holdings in an unfavorable market, resulting in additional losses. He also mentioned that the developer remodeling the building adjacent to 1710 16th Street, NW indicated his interest in purchasing the building from the AAG.

Langham therefore suggested pursuing the sale of 1710 16th Street, NW and to add the proceeds from the sale to the existing Council-approved \$3M fund originally intended for the building renovation. This would create an approx. \$5M AAG Building Fund to be invested and reserved for future AAG leadership. Youngs and Eaves applauded the idea of divesting from 1710 16th Street, NW.

There was general consensus to sell the AAG's current building and add the sale proceeds to the AAG Building Fund, while Langham and staff continue exploring lease options and cost-benefit analyses of different lease properties.

Cope moved to authorize Langham to sell the AAG property located at 1710 16th Street, NW in Washington DC and to add the proceeds from the sale to the existing AAG Building Fund. Swab and O'Lear seconded the motion which passed with 17 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

Cope and others commended Treby for obtaining the comparative analysis from the realtors, which facilitated this discussion and decision.

Council & Resolutions

Vote on permanent International Councilor position

Ojeda shared that because her Observer term is approaching its end in a year's time, she recommends turning the International Councilor into a permanent, 3-year voting position on the Council. She indicated that her time on the Council has been very rewarding and informative and expressed her hope that the Council would approve this new position.

Li moved to establish the International Councilor as a voting, 3-year position on the AAG Council. Sultana seconded the motion, which passed with a unanimous vote in favor.

Conclude any pending items

Myles asked some guidance for Regional Division Councilors for their reports, as they could prove useful for their columns in regional division news. Youngs suggested Regional Councilors be allowed to add news from their Regions to the departmental survey results as part of the annual Regional Divisions report to the Council.

Kujawa suggested the Council keep an AAG Regions item on the agenda for all its meetings to address any imminent developments, rather than addressing this topic only with the annual reports.

Resolutions

Whereas, Amy Lobben, as Vice President, President, and Past President of the American Association of Geographers has ably guided and served the Association to address the challenges facing the AAG and the discipline of geography, particularly supporting AAG efforts to continue addressing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its finances, events and its most vulnerable members, and by championing universal access for AAG meetings and website; and whereas she has thus contributed considerable efforts to advance the AAG's mission, goals, and activities;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the American Association of Geographers, assembled after the canceled 118th in-person Annual Meeting, heartily thanks Amy for her leadership of the Association during the past three years, especially for her efforts to address the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its finances, events and its most vulnerable members, and by championing universal access for AAG meetings and website.

Whereas, Councilors of The American Association of Geographers expend substantial time and effort advancing the causes of the Association and the discipline; and

Whereas, the Council of The American Association of Geographers has confronted numerous challenges and responded to many opportunities during the last three years;

Therefore Be It Resolved that The American Association of Geographers, assembled after the canceled 118th in-person Annual Meeting, extends warm appreciation to Past President Amy Lobben, National Councilor and Treasurer LaToya Eaves, National Councilor Wei Li, Student Councilor John (Jack) Swab, New England St. Lawrence Valley Division Councilor Richard Kujawa, Pacific Coast Division Councilor Yolonda Youngs, for the energy, time, and talent they have contributed to the Association during their terms on the AAG Council.

Whereas, Members of The American Association of Geographers offer their talents, time, and ideas to support the activities of the Association as Chairs and Members of various association committees appointed by the AAG Council;

Therefore Be It Resolved that The American Association of Geographers, assembled in an online meeting after the canceled 118th in-person Annual Meeting, thanks the outgoing Chairs and Members of the AAG Committees for their service to the Association, the discipline and the profession during their committee terms.

Langham heartily thanked all outgoing Councilors for their dedication and service. He also thanked Emily Yeh for her time and dedication as AAG President, including her additional service on several task forces and committees and looks forward to her next year on the Council as Past President.

New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Adjourn

There being no further items to discuss, Langham and Yeh adjourned the Council meeting at 4:12 PM.