

AAG Council Meeting
November 3, 2022
(Zoom)

Minutes

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Present: Marilyn Raphael, President; Rebecca Lave, Vice President; Emily Yeh, Past President; Marcia England, Treasurer; Joseph Oppong, Secretary; Gary Langham, Executive Director; Meghan Cope, National Councilor Chair; Debarchana Ghosh, National Councilor; Patricia Solis, National Councilor; Edna Wangui, National Councilor; Amariah Fischer, Student Councilor; Shannon O’Lear, Great Plains Rocky Mountains Regional Councilor; Tracy Edwards, Middle Atlantic and Regional Councilor Chair; Steven Schnell, Middle States Regional Councilor; Steven Silvern, New England St. Lawrence Valley Regional Councilor; Dydia DeLyser, Pacific Coast Regional Councilor; Selima Sultana, Southeastern Regional Councilor; Colleen Myles, Southwestern Regional Councilor; Heike Alberts, West Lakes Regional Councilor; Diana Ojeda, International Councilor.

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

November 3, 2022

10:30 AM Eastern

1.0 Opening

President Raphael welcomed everyone and expressed her pleasure at seeing the Council again, especially after the time together at the September meeting in Los Angeles.

1.2 Adopt Agenda

Raphael asked if anyone had any questions about the Council Meeting Agenda.

Cope reminded the group that the Agenda was missing a placeholder for a JEDI topic, as recommended in the JEDI Strategic Plan. Langham stated this was an inadvertent omission and that all future Council agendas would include a slot for JEDI items. Yeh hoped there would be enough time to discuss the three items under New Business at the end of the meeting.

Solis moved to approve the Council Meeting Agenda. Ojeda seconded the motion which passed with a unanimous vote in favor.

1.3 Adopt Consent Agenda

Raphael asked the Council if there were any questions about the Consent Agenda. There being none, **Oppong moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. Solis seconded the motion. The motion passed with all votes in favor.**

1.4 Ratify Sept. 2022 Council Meeting Minutes

Oppong recommended that the Council ratify the votes they had recently cast via email approving the Minutes from the September 2022 Council Meeting. **Lave moved to ratify the approval of the September 2022 Council Meeting Minutes. Yeh seconded the motion. The approval of the September 2022 Council Meeting Minutes was unanimously ratified.**

1.5 President’s Comments

Raphael welcomed everyone again and reiterated her pleasure at having been able to meet with the Council in person in September, near the UCLA campus. She indicated that this meeting’s Agenda

continues many of the discussions that were held then. She indicated the documents and topics before the Council will demonstrate progress made since the September meeting. She also mentioned looking forward to the 2023 Annual Meeting and to hearing more registration statistics and other details on it later in the day.

1.6 Vice President's Comments

Raphael invited Lave to share her comments with the Council. Lave shared that she is getting a lot of useful feedback from members, some of which will be covered in the annual meeting section and in new business.

1.7 State of the AAG

Langham echoed Raphael's appreciation of the September Council meeting, mentioning how important it is to have in-person meetings. He briefly described the in-person AAG staff retreat in October, which gave staff the opportunity to visit the new office space and to (re)visit the current office for a final goodbye. He mentioned his recent participation in the West Lakes meeting and how much he enjoyed meeting more AAG and regional members. He indicated he was headed to Salem, MA to attend the NESTVAL meeting later this week. He also expressed his hope for the Council's adoption of the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan to be discussed later in the day.

Regarding the AAG's finances, Langham indicated having recently converted AAG investment holdings to 100% socially/environmentally responsible, fossil fuel-free investments. Given the current markets and recent large expenditures, he indicated the need for AAG to curtail spending from reserves. He stated feeling encouraged by the current uptick in registration numbers for the 2023 Annual Meeting.

2.0 Finance

Raphael invited Langham and AAG Treasurer Marcia England to provide an update on the AAG's finances. England mentioned that she had met with Langham recently to review the FYE results. She repeated Langham's statement that the AAG has undergone once-in-a-lifetime changes to its systems and platforms. She pointed out that the AAG's finances will depend heavily on the outcome of the 2023 hybrid meeting and on being able to rein in expenses.

2.1 Update on AAG Cash & Investments, Endowment, P&L, Balance Sheet

Langham reminded the Council that the decision to switch the 2022 Annual Meeting to virtual affected the AAG's income, incurring a heavy loss in its main revenue generator. He also indicated that while the markets are currently down significantly, those losses are unrealized unless the AAG converts its holdings. By reining in discretionary expenditures over the next few years, we can wait for the markets to recover. He indicated that the current FYE results before the Council will be audited and confirmed by the time of the early 2023 Finance Committee meeting. He anticipated that the audit process might result in some adjustments to the figures currently before the Council.

Cope asked whether expenditures on the new website and database would continue at currently posted levels. Cope commented on the credit card fees. She also wondered about the Capital Gains costs and how the sale of 1710 16th Street, once it occurs, might affect AAG's bottom line compared to the rental costs for the new office. Langham confirmed that the main expenditure for these major upgrades will not have to be incurred again for many years to come. He also explained that AAG is expecting to save money in the new headquarters and to move the sale revenue into reserves.

Lave asked about the royalties from the AAG's journals contract with Taylor & Francis (T&F), and when that contract is due to expire. Langham replied the annual royalties are inflation adjusted and are issued to AAG the beginning of each year. He added that the contract with T&F is not up for renewal until 2028.

England added that the AAG obtained a \$1M line of credit from Truist, which facilitates a healthy cash flow during the slower months before the expected surge in income from the Annual Meeting registrations.

3.0 Meridian Place

Raphael invited Langham and Treby to speak to this section of the Agenda.

3.1 Update on new office lease and move-in process

Treby was pleased to report that the AAG's new office lease began on Nov. 1. She stated that furniture is on order and IT and cabling installations are pending. She mentioned that some of the staff retreat was spent talking about the new space, how the staff will work there, and envisaging how the space will serve the AAG's work culture.

She thanked the AAG Operations Team for all the hard work getting the AAG ready for this move.

3.2 Update on 1710 16th Street sale

Treby shared good news that the AAG's prospective buyer has provided a purchase contract, which is being reviewed by the AAG's lawyers. She indicated feeling very hopeful about a successful outcome to this negotiation.

4.0 Strategic Plan

Raphael invited Langham to present this topic to the Council.

4.1 Ratify 2023 – 2025 AAG Strategic Plan

Langham stated that, following the September Council meeting, he and the AAG senior staff worked the Council and staff suggestions into the Strategic Plan version that is now before the Council. He underscored that this is a living document that may undergo some tweaking or adjustments as time and circumstances evolve, reminding everyone that the main aim is to make the best use of all the once-in-a-generation investments the AAG has made under the current 2020-2022 plan.

He then walked the Council through the adjustments and additions made to the 2023-2025 plan, to show how Council and staff feedback were incorporated.

Cope indicated wishing to see more of the JEDI Strategic Plan goals and activities reflected in this Strategic Plan. Langham thanked her for these suggestions and indicated that the JEDI Strategic Plan was approved previously, that it is already being implemented and therefore not up for a vote at this meeting. He also indicated moving the start date of that plan to 1/1/2023 in order to align the timing of the two plans. Lave suggested referencing the JEDI Plan in the Strategic Plan to address this question. Langham appreciated these suggestions and recommended that once the plan was approved, we move to a new phase of integrating the plans together prior to public launch.

Yeh recalled the Climate Action Task Force goals of achieving a 45% reduction in carbon footprint by 2030, wondering how the AAG plans to deliver on these goals. Langham replied that achieving this goal

will require a balancing act between the Climate Action goals and the equally important responsibility to ensure the AAG's financial viability. Langham added that the AAG has yet to host its first ever hybrid meeting and until then it is impossible to predict financial outcomes with any certainty. Once the meeting's figures are in, he and the staff will be in a position to adjust the meeting format for future years. He reminded everyone that the Annual Meeting makes up almost half of the AAG's revenue (FYE23: registration 45% + sponsorship 3%), making it a significant source of the Association's financial wellbeing. Oppong and England expressed their desire for caution as to how much more to experiment with the AAG's first-ever hybrid meeting, when costs and outcomes are not yet known. Solis asked whether others are encountering barriers to in-person participation in sessions or panels, due to universities being unable or unwilling to fund travel and meeting costs. Others confirmed encountering these issues too. Myles pointed out that this hybrid meeting is a first step along a journey that pits mindset and cultural shifts against environmental and fiscal/financial considerations.

Cope and Raphael wondered about finding other, external sources of funding to support hybrid and virtual components of AAG programs, to alleviate some of the financial difficulties.

Lave pointed to the need to resolve the communication logjam that seems to exist between the Climate Action Task Force and the AAG on this issue. Langham committed to more closely leading the collaboration between the Climate Action Task Force and AAG staff and asked the Council to assist him in communicating the results and impacts from the 2023 Annual Meeting back to AAG members.

Langham asked whether there were any other questions about the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. **Langham offered to work on integrating the Strategic Plan and JEDI Strategic Plan before making them publicly available.** Raphael asked that this commitment to incorporating the two plans into one be captured in the Minutes, which received general consensus.

Schnell moved to approve the 2023-2025 AAG Strategic Plan. DeLyser seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Raphael adjourned the Council for a 30-minute break at 11:54 AM.

Raphael reconvened the Council at 12:30 PM. Ghosh joined the meeting.

5.0 AAG Honors & Awards

5.1 Ratify 2023 AAG Honors Committee selection

Raphael invited Langham and Mannozi to lead this section. Mannozi briefly summarized the materials before the Councilors: the proposed slate of 2023 AAG Honorees, citations, and the Honors Committee report with recommendations for tweaks and improvements to the review and selection process.

There being no questions about any of the materials, Raphael asked for a motion to approve the 2023 AAG Honorees as proposed by the AAG Honors Committee. **O'Lear moved to approve the 2023 AAG Honorees as proposed by the AAG Honors Committee. Alberts seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote in favor.**

5.2 Ratify 2023 AAG Fellows Committee selection

Mannozi briefly summarized the materials before the Councilors: the proposed slate of 2023 AAG Fellows and their citations.

There being no questions about any of the materials, Raphael asked for a motion to approve the 2023 AAG Fellows as proposed by the AAG Fellows Selection Committee. **O’Lear moved to approve the 2023 AAG Fellows as proposed by the AAG Fellows Selection Committee. Solis seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote in favor.**

5.3 Other Awards updates

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Langham announced that Susanna Hecht, Political Ecologist at UCLA, was selected for the 2023 Brunn Award for Creativity in Geography and Rebecca Solnit, renowned author, was selected for the 2023 Honorary Geographer award.

Raphael added that she and Hecht have been in communication about Hecht’s event at the Denver meeting, including names of potential interviewers. Langham added that he has been in communication with Solnit regarding her event.

5.4 Student Travel Grant updates

Treby summarized the outcome of the new Student Travel Grants program. A total of 243 students applied and AAG will award 31 grants. She mentioned that an appeal for support for these grants after the application period closed generated an additional \$3,000 in donations. She indicated that students will receive the funds onsite in Denver and will be asked to share their experience with AAG.

Cope asked whether the awardees might not receive the funds ahead of the meeting, in order to offset costs for participation as they incur them. Treby agreed to take this suggestion under advisement for the next cycle, not wanting to change the publicized process midway. Fischer underscored that it would be preferable if students received the funds up front in order to apply them to registration and travel costs as they incur them. There was consensus to make the grants available ahead of time in the future, rather than onsite.

Discussion ensued about the timing of the grant deadline vs. the abstract or early-bird registration deadline.

5.5 Ratify new certification process for AAG awards

Langham briefly re-introduced this topic to the Council, as it had been discussed in previous meetings. He indicated that the proposed process was reviewed and approved by the AAG’s legal counsel, stating that it would give the AAG recourse in the event an AAG award finalist or awardee is found not to be in compliance with AAG conduct policies.

Ghosh moved to approve the new certification process for AAG award recipients. Edwards seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous votes in favor.

6.0 Committees & Specialty Groups

6.1 Ratify Nominating Committee slate for 2023 AAG election

Raphael asked Langham and Mannozi to lead the discussion of this section. Langham summarized the Executive Committee’s review of Nominating Committee’s report.

Council discussion of the Committee’s report and the suggestions it contained led to a suggestion from Langham to evaluate the difficulties encountered in the current cycle and resolve these procedurally. The Council discussed the possibility of lengthening and rotating terms on the Nominating Committee,

as currently done on the Honors Committee. Langham did not rule out possible future changes to AAG Constitution/Bylaws on the make-up and terms of the Nominating Committee but cautioned that such structural governance changes should be undertaken with time and care. Solis echoed that sentiment.

Solis moved to approve the slate for the 2023 election as proposed by the Nominating Committee, which Lave seconded. The votes in favor were unanimous, the proposed slate for the 2023 election was approved.

6.2 Modify election method – update

Langham reported that in January 2021 an AAG member had reached out asking for an update to the AAG elections process from the current one-person-one-vote system to a ranked voting method, which would allow better representation of diverse or underrepresented candidates. He indicated that the AAG’s election software allows for such changes but that more time is needed to ensure the implemented change will have the intended result. He indicated that he and staff would explore this question further and report back to the Council.

6.3 Specialty/Affinity Group annual reports: update from Membership Committee review

Treby reported that having implemented a new reporting mechanism for Specialty and Affinity Groups, the number of annual reports submitted was vastly higher than in previous years. She indicated the AAG Membership Committee is now reviewing the reports and identifying any groups that may benefit from additional AAG support or help. She indicated that the Membership Committee’s report and recommendations will come before the Council at its March 2023 meeting.

Raphael asked that AAG emphasize to the Specialty and Affinity Groups that this annual report is not a proforma exercise, but that it is an important tool for Council to understand more clearly how groups are doing and how the AAG can continue to serve them better.

7.0 Annual Meeting

7.1 Update on 2023 meeting preparation

Raphael invited Langham and McKnight to share updates on the preparations for the 2023 Denver Annual Meeting. McKnight shared that as of November 3 there were a total of 1,205 registrants, 85% for in-person, 15% for virtual. After November 10, the registration fees will increase except for students, retirees and underemployed. She also reported on the October AAG staff site visit at the two meeting venues in Denver, which she indicated will serve the AAG and its attendees very well.

Ghosh asked about the meeting Nodes and how they are being advertised. McKnight explained that Nodes are not open to everyone, as this meeting format is being rolled out experimentally for Denver. The outcomes from participation in the Nodes will then be used as a model for 2024 and beyond.

Yeh invited creative suggestions for virtual networking opportunities for AAG members to use both in Denver and at other times (e.g., Wonder, Gather, other). Treby stated that she and Emily Fekete of the AAG staff are working to develop an entire virtual networking plan for Denver and would welcome Yeh’s and any other interested Specialty or Affinity Group leaders’ participation. England mentioned Fekete’s recent suggestion of organizing 1-2 virtual days at the outset of the Annual Meeting, to allow anyone who connected virtually to follow-up in person later during the meeting week. This idea was well received.

7.2 Preliminary Denver VIP schedule

Langham explained that the Preliminary VIP schedule shared in the packet was provided to familiarize Councilors with the structure and some of the high-level events planned for Denver that may require their participation or involvement.

7.3 Discuss support for Students, Nodes & hubs, Curated Tracks

Lave introduced a suggestion she received that AAG consider organizing a one-day pre-conference event for students (similar to the American Meteorological Society model) to better curate their experience at the meeting and ensure they get the most out of participating.

Cope wondered how to assist undergrads once they are at the meeting to connect with other students. Raphael wondered if we could offer an hour or so for all students in attendance at the outset of the Meeting, to connect and potentially continue their communication throughout the rest of the meeting week.

Fischer advocated involving the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Affinity Groups in this exploration and process. She cautioned not to ask them to pull off the planning for any events themselves, but to bring them in as contributors to any such efforts.

Lave shared feedback from a Dept. Chair who was interested in seeing other options besides viewing nodes as a virtual means of participation.

Lave also shared a suggestion from a graduate student on how to better integrate physical geographers into the meeting, by prioritizing the allocation of any unassigned Group-sponsored hybrid meeting sessions to physical geography groups.

Yeh asked for more detail on how the 1-2 rooms dedicated to beamed-in sessions will be filled, whose sessions/events will be selected? McKnight indicated that these decisions are important but have not yet been made.

Lave mentioned social media discussions regarding hesitations to go to the AAG meeting in Hawaii in 2024 in response to representatives of native Hawaiian peoples requesting that non-native visitors refrain from traveling there. Langham indicated that he has been communicating with Reece Jones and others at the University of Hawaii on ways to involve local leaders in our meeting. He also pointed out that pulling out of the AAG's contract for 2024 is not possible, as cancellation costs with the Hilton would be prohibitive at this stage. He indicated being fully committed to making 2024 the best possible meeting we can.

Cope suggested involving the JEDI Committee to support these preparations and communications. Raphael also suggested that AAG explore how best to maintain the goodwill and connections developed in the lead-up to the 2024 Hawaii meeting even after our meeting concludes.

8.0 Governance

8.1 DEI Director hiring process update

Raphael invited Langham and McKnight to update the Council on this process. McKnight reported that the second round of recruitment for a new DEI Director has resulted in a final set of candidates, and that soon the AAG anticipates having a new staff member hire to announce. Cope thanked her for all her

hard work in facilitating this process. Langham echoed his thanks and extended it also to the subset of JEDI Committee members who participated in the process.

9.0 Council

9.1 Discuss and decide 2023 AAG Council meeting dates/venues/formats

Discussion of potential Council meeting dates in 2023 resulted in a general agreement to meet virtually in the week of June 5; to hold the new Councilor Orientation in the week of July 10; to hold an in-person Council meeting in Washington, DC in the week of Sept. 18; and another virtual meeting in October/November. This last meeting date remains TBD, pending communication with Regional Divisions in order to avoid travel conflicts for the AAG President, Vice President, and Past President, who will be participating in Regional Division Meetings.

10.0 New Business

10.1 IGU; Regional Accrediting Associations; Community Colleges

Yeh summarized the three topics recently submitted to her, Lave and Raphael by an AAG member and community college leader, and asked Councilors for their thoughts.

Discussion resulted in sharing information on existing linkages and collaborations between AAG and IGU; to continue using existing AAG Groups and AAG structures to further evolve community college participation and involvement in the Association; and to encourage the Healthy Departments Committee to take up the community college and accreditation issues, if relevant.

There being no further discussion, Raphael stated that all the Council Agenda items had been covered. **Oppong moved to adjourn the meeting and Raphael seconded the motion. The November 2022 Council meeting was adjourned at 3:29 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Oppong, Council Secretary
Candida Mannozi, Chief Operating Officer