

# ***Applied Geography Conferences***

## ***Fall 2019 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes***

October 25, 2019

### **I. Call to order**

President Tom Dwyer called to order the fall Board of Directors meeting at 1:55 PM in the Quorum Room of the Holiday Inn Center City, Charlotte, NC, the location of the 2019 Applied Geography Conference.

### **II. Attendance**

The following board members were in attendance: President Tom Dwyer, Executive Director Murray Rice, and Board Members Harrison Campbell, Dawna Cerney, Jon Comer, Richard Earl, Tony Hernandez, Jay Lee, Linda Peters, Michael Ratcliffe, Wei Song, Brandon Vogt, and Clayton Whitesides.

### **III. Vision for Future of Conference**

Rice proposed rearranging the posted agenda to address the future of the conference first, in two break-out groups. Three main topics were used to facilitate the discussions: 1) Why do people come (back) to the conference? 2) What positive practices should we pursue to ensure the health of the conference? 3) What barriers exist that prevent attendance? Upon reconvening, many ideas were shared but some common themes emerged.

#### 1) Conference positives:

- Networking (both professional and personal) are a major draw of the conference;
- Student engagement and encouragement have been and will continue to be extremely important as this cultivates the next generation of applied geographers;
- Student paper and poster competitions are a critical factor in attracting students to the conference;
- The conference uniquely connects academics (faculty and students) with practitioners in industry and the government, to the benefit of both;
- The conference's relatively small size means fewer concurrent sessions and therefore an ability to see/hear more presentations without conflicts; and
- The conference's small size contributes heavily to the collegiality, relaxed atmosphere, and connectedness participants experience.

#### 2) Conference barriers:

- Cost and location are the most common, and obvious, barriers.
- No other significant barriers were noted.

3) Positive practices:

- Experimenting with virtual participation was heavily discussed. Technical logistics aside, the cost savings to participants also mean fewer hotel bookings and limits the conference's ability to negotiate room blocks/rates. The Board will continue to explore this issue, however, given the budget constraints most participants face.
- Providing Continuing Education credits for participants in workshops was also a popular topic. Expanding workshops to half- or whole-day experiences (likely the day before the conference officially opens) is seen as a way to provide more in-depth training that would merit certifications of completion of workshops.
- Increasing the cash awards for the Student Paper/Poster competition winners would continue to attract students.
- Devoting a special issue of the *Papers in Applied Geography* to student paper competition winners should be explored.

#### **IV. Report on AGC 2019**

Executive Director Rice provided preliminary data on conference registrations and overall conference finances. A tentative number of 141 registrations was reported, and preliminary estimates of income and conference expenses could result in an approximately \$5,000 net surplus for the conference this year.

#### **V. Report on AGC 2020 and Beyond**

Rice and Ratcliffe discussed plans for the 2020 conference to be held in the Washington, D.C. area. Locations in Arlington and Reston, VA were mentioned, as well as some others. Ratcliffe will continue discussions with hotels in the area to secure a reasonably good location (near the capital or at least a Metro line) at reasonably good rates, and will keep the Board updated on progress. This is expected to be a joint meeting with the Mid-Atlantic States division of the AAG (MADAAG). The target dates are late October or Early November, 2020 and the Board will assess the dates of other conferences (especially because all the regional divisions of AAG meet in the fall) to avoid conflicting with too many other conferences.

The 2021 conference is slated for Toledo, OH in conjunction with both the East and West Lakes Divisions of the AAG (ELDAAG and WLDAAG).

As part of this discussion, the need for continuity and institutional memory was raised in terms of planning the conference. Board members strongly felt that a conference planning committee was needed to prevent all the work falling solely on the conference organizer for upcoming locations. The most logical plan was for the past, current, and future conference organizers to comprise this committee; hence, for AGC 2019 this would have involved Lee (AGC 2018, in Kent, OH), Campbell (AGC 2019, in Charlotte, NC), and Ratcliffe (AGC 2020, in Washington,

D.C.). In this manner a continually rotating set of members involved with planning the conference would pass along tips and procedures to those planning upcoming meetings. The Board endorsed this idea but Hernandez noted the question of how to implement this via amendment of the conference bylaws. More discussion of the bylaws occurred at the end of the meeting.

## **VI. AGC OPERATIONS**

Rice circulated a statement from Claire Burch, a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma and nominee for Student Board Member. The Board unanimously endorsed her joining the Board provided she is able to attend the conference and Board Meetings, but Hernandez again noted the necessity of amending the bylaws to add a Student Board Member.

Rice then provided an update on the conference generally. He said that the organization was in good order, but the demands of being Executive Director are quite heavy, at least 10 hours per week normally and well beyond 40 in the weeks leading up to the conference. Due to personal circumstances and the fact of already having a full-time job, he asked for assistance from the board in helping to undertake his duties, in particular the program preparation in the weeks leading up to the conference. Several ideas were suggested, but the most popular one was that a sub-committee of Board members be organized to deal with the task of arranging the conference sessions. This is expected to be discussed further but also would require an amendment to the bylaws.

## **VII. BYLAWS**

Hernandez led discussion of the current bylaws. The original bylaws had been located, and Hernandez had put in considerable effort in updating them. He had intended to distribute the current draft, but given the large number of things brought up in the meeting that would involve further amendments, he felt it best if all the ideas generated at today's meeting could be incorporated into a new draft before undergoing Board review. The Board agreed and deferred discussion or action on the bylaws until Hernandez could further update them. Besides the topics mentioned elsewhere in this document, other things that need to be considered in the bylaws are the creation of formalized subcommittees, succession management of both conference leadership and of Board Members, the role of emeriti members, the status and functioning of the *Papers*, and others.

The Board agreed this discussion could wait until the AAG meetings in Denver, CO in April 2020, but also the fact that meeting just twice a year in conjunction with conferences was limiting. The idea was raised of meeting quarterly, with the fall meeting still taking place at the AGC and the spring meeting at the AAG, but with winter and summer virtual Board meetings via conference call or Skype. This idea was strongly supported by the Board and we will work towards solving the logistics to ensure a timelier approach to completing the business of the conference.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

President Tom Dwyer adjourned the meeting at 3:46 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Jon Comer, Secretary, October 30, 2019

Minutes approved by: Murray Rice, Executive Director, October 30, 2019