



American Water Works Association

## Pacific Northwest Section

### **BOARD PLANNING MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2020**

**Attendees participated virtually via Zoom**

#### **Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 via Zoom by Chair Ronda Farmer. Also Present: Chair Elect John Roth, Past Chair James Dean, Trustees Cheryl Capron, Michelle Cheek, Dave England, Crystal Jensen; Karen Kelley, Doug Schlepp, AWWA Director Randy Black, Treasurer Bob Ward, AWWA Executive Board Member/MAC Chair Kristin Kihs and Executive Director Kyle Kihs.

Chair Farmer noted that the usual Board planning meeting is a two-day meeting but this year's virtual meeting will address the most critical issues facing the Section due to impacts of COVID-19.

- Virtual Training Guide Document
- 2021 Section Conference
- Trustee Expectations for the Remainder of 2020
- 2021 Budget

#### **Virtual Training Guide Document**

The need for a virtual training guide resulted when the Spokane conference was cancelled. A lot of good material had been gathered for classroom training and it was logical to convert it to webinars. In addition, the state of Washington has now adopted a webinar policy which allows both previously approved classroom and newly developed training to be converted to webinars for CEU credit. Oregon and Idaho had already done this. This is a permanent policy change so going forward any classroom material may be adapted to a webinar configuration.

A Section-wide training guide was drafted and distributed to the Board prior to today's meeting. The draft is presented for discussion and also to determine appropriate pricing for on-line classes.

Once approved by the Board, the document will be distributed to committee chairs with links for applying for CEUs in all three states. A group of resource people, possibly from the Training Coordination Committee as well as Program Committee, will be available to answer questions about the application process.

#### **Comments and Suggestions**

The Water Information Technology Committee has been consulted and will be a critical support and resource.

Tutorials for setting up registration, etc. need to be updated.

All Spokane spring conference trainings are available for on-line presentation. Participants need to resubmit for CEUs using a new reference number. (At this point, conference approval is tied to the three days of the conference. The new reference number will give the correct date of training to correlate to the three-year window for accumulation of CEUs.)

Both internet and direct connections can be unstable; if we can't make it work, need a refund policy. Alternative may be to record presentation for viewing and have presenter connect at the end for questions.

There are several possibilities for adapting to on-line classes, but consensus was the policy document should not contain too many technical specifications. Language on the class registration page could be provided regarding technical set-up.

Any feedback should go to Cheryl Capron.

## **Pricing**

Considerable discussion ensued regarding pricing for on-line training. Considerations included:

- Pricing must be set so that the costs support financial viability of the Section.
- Subsections have not done virtual training either and this will be a guiding document for them although Subsection training fees would likely stay with the Subsection.
- Member vs. non-member pricing should be set so that it is advantageous to become a member to take advantage of lower training fees.
- Training fees must be high enough to cover a large part of Section operational expenses for the year.
- Four trainings a year fills a good training calendar using resources available from Spokane conference and Boise submissions. Trainings could be planned as tracks for divisions.
- Committees have traditionally contributed 8-10K per year in revenue. Trying to recoup 100K from a conference may be difficult with small volume trainings.
- Classes must remain affordable but must offer value commensurate with the material and effort to create the training
- Take advantage of TCC ability to negotiate sharing of profit/cost; challenges in creating classes include moderating, developing, and getting approval. Subsections could assist, then roll to committees. It will be necessary to foster cooperation.
- Profit sharing with subsections – for in person training, the subsection did advertising, setting up room providing lunch so there was distinct division of duties. Now subsections could partner to provide moderator and apply for CEUs – potential to split profit if they are doing half the work. TCC is now asking \$20/head for trainings the subsections use while committee provides training. Committee provides platform and instruction.
- Get two parties together and they can negotiate a split.
- Adopting fee structure will be first step so committees can move forward.
- Washington minimum approval for CEUs is three hours.
- Some classes will have participants who do not need or want CEUs.

- Careful not to price ourselves out of the market with training budgets strapped.
- Trainings should be affordable, and we need to understand that committees will not save the budget.
- If new fee schedule is adopted, it will supersede and update the 2015 pricing policy.

**Motion: England moved to adopt a training fee pricing structure of \$40 per hour for non-members with a 50% member discount that replaces the current member – non-member pricing policy adopted in 2015, seconded by Dean. Motion carried unanimously.**

Hours	Member	Non-member	
1 hour	\$20	\$ 40	(Oregon/Idaho or Non-Washington)
2 hours	\$40	\$ 80	(Oregon/Idaho or Non-Washington)
3 hours	\$60	\$120	(Washington minimum 3 hrs for CEU approval)
4 hours	\$80	\$160	
5 hours	\$100	\$200	
6 hours	\$120	\$240	

Once language is added to the Training Guide for IT needs, the document will be distributed with caveat that there may be amendments and refinements regarding IT issues.

### **2021 Section Conference - Boise**

Executive Director Kihs reviewed issues relating to an in-person conference, three-day virtual conference, monthly or quarterly mini-conferences.

From a financial perspective the annual conference is the largest component of the annual budget. Cancelling the Boise conference could result in a loss of about \$75,000 in fees. However, if a traditional conference is held and sparsely attended, it will still be a considerable financial loss.

A software package that would allow a virtual conference similar to an in-person conference (vendor hall, social activities, sessions) would cost \$100,000 - \$180,000.

The option to do a much smaller conference with a few sponsors and technical content would cost about \$50,000. However, with anticipated much smaller attendance it would be difficult to break even.

Will operators and others be comfortable enough to move to a virtual conference? Should we ramp up virtual training so members get used to it before we go to all-virtual conference?

Going virtual with monthly or quarterly training would build bandwidth with members as well as creating an income stream. This could be done with the existing Zoom account.

### **Discussion**

Travel budgets have been cut and it is doubtful many could attend a three-day in person conference.

Issues with three-day virtual conference include difficulties in “attending” while at work with unavoidable interruptions.

Consensus: three-day conference, either in-person or virtual, is not a viable option.

The option of doing short schools should be considered although if conducted by subsections there would be no revenue stream to the Section. Alternative is for short schools to be done under auspices of committees.

Sponsors can still be incorporated as they are looking for opportunities to market. Materials could be linked to sponsor content and sponsor can be matched with appropriate trainings.

**Motion: Dean moved to direct Executive Director Kihs to cancel the 2021 Boise “in-person” conference, seconded by England. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Action: Task the Executive Director to negotiate with Boise venue to see if funds expended to date could be used toward a Boise conference in 2025.**

The Executive Director, LAC and the Program Committee will work with presenters who have submitted abstracts for the Boise conference to transition to the quarterly mini-conferences.

Executive Director and Conference Planner will look at sponsor packages and opportunities for vendors in conjunction with mini-conferences.

Given the recent lack of opportunities for CEUs, particularly in Washington, there should be a lot of interest in the quarterly conferences. Members are desperate for virtual opportunities to accumulate CEUs, especially in Washington.

The Executive Direction will work with appropriate parties to come up with a plan for quarterly trainings and with the Program Committee to restructure.

The LAC for Boise will not be much affected as only one individual from Boise SUEZ was working on the conference and she has been notified that there would likely be cancellation.

The next E-newsletter will have a State of the Section update with information about budget issues and transition to on-line trainings.

## **Competitions**

**Consensus to assign SAC to report to the Board at the Fall meeting with ideas regarding virtual competitions.**

## **Trustee expectations**

Farmer emphasized the need for Trustees to communicate to divisions regarding the new training format and determine if there are obstacles that need to be considered. Trustees have an Important role in helping their Divisions adapt.

## **2021 Budget Process**

The Finance Committee will create a draft budget for Board review at the October meeting. Committees can weigh in before August 15. Committee budgets must be revenue neutral or show a net gain. The Finance Committee will be taking a hard look at expenses.

Trustees will be meeting with their committees and divisions to gather input as well. Trustees will work with their committees to prepare input for a draft budget. Each Trustee received a budget spreadsheet.

An Executive Committee meeting will be held on Aug. 18<sup>th</sup>, and a rough agenda will be provided for Board feedback.

A town hall meeting will be held the week of August 24 for subsection and committee leaders. The format is anticipated to be about an hour of communication to participants with feedback via chat feature or e-mail. The meeting will be recorded so will be available for those who can't attend.

After State of the Section webinar for the membership, there will be opportunities for members to weigh in and then a training and trustee meeting will be planned for October.

Board members will share the training documents and updated pricing, continue communicating with divisions and offer a consistent message as well as soliciting feedback.

Communication will start next week with the E-newsletter. The website will be updated with documents and pricing. The Executive Director will work with Program Committee and Conference Planner on breaking the Boise conference into smaller quarterly conferences and pursue sponsorships.

## **Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.