



American Water Works Association Pacific Northwest Section

Minutes Board Strategic Planning Meeting Thursday, August 11, 2022

Water Resource Education Center, Vancouver, WA

Call to Order

Chair Michelle Cheek called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Vancouver Water Resource Education Center. Also present were Chair Elect Dan Sleeth, Past Chair John Roth, Trustees Jamie Porter, Joel Cary, Tyler Clary, Tonya Reiss, and Libby Barg Bakke. Not present: Association Director James Dean, Trustee Nick Belmont and Treasurer Jason Canady. Also present: Executive Director Kyle Kihs

The Chair stated the agenda has been revised to include a motion to accept the slate of candidates for the next election.

Ms. Cheek led off an icebreaker and all participants told about their first AWWA experience and why they kept coming back.

The slate of candidates for the upcoming election was presented:

Chair: Nick Belmont, Jamie Porter, Doug Schlepp

Oregon/Idaho Trustee: Chandra Hingston, Tyler Palmer

Washington Trustee: Jolene Gibson, Joanie Stultz, Brian Wilson

At-Large Trustee: DeEtta Fosbury, Michelle Johnson, Erika Murphy

Motion: Sleeth moved to accept the slate of candidates as presented, seconded by Reiss. Motion carried unanimously.

Alternative Networking Options

There was lengthy discussion about new types networking and fundraising events. It was noted that currently the majority of events center around golf and/or wine and beer events. While they are excellent fundraisers, not all members are interested in the golf alternative.

There is no desire to replace current options but to add alternatives. Fundraising and networking may be different events. Factors for successful events included timing (for example, after work can be difficult). Subsections mostly do golf and shouldn't be discouraged but the aim is to spark the idea that it would make sense to provide opportunities for non-golfers.

Alternative fundraising/networking suggestions included:

Family picnic

Fun run/walk

Hockey games, paint and sip, go-cart, skeet shooting.

Bowling

Concert

Video game challenge

Poker

Bunko

Game night

Putt putt golf

Basketball, softball tournaments

Cornhole

Casino night.

Possible Zoom opportunities

Cooking class, cocktail making class

Fishing tournament

It was noted that some of these may initiate additional insurance requirements.

As a next step, the Executive Director will work with Trustee Libby Barg Bakke with input from other Trustees to use today's Board input to design a two or three question survey which will be distributed through the newsletter prior to the Fall training session. Response will be reviewed with subsections at the Fall training and discussed at a future trustee meeting.

It was agreed that starting competitions again is important and another great way to involve members. At ACE in Toronto next year there will be a discussion of how competitions encourage diversity.

Diversity and Inclusion and our Strategic Plan

Ms. Cheek noted we don't need to revisit the entire Strategic Plan but she is proposing a change to the Section mission to put more emphasis on inclusivity and diversity.

Current mission:

Foster a network of professionals to provide opportunities and leadership to the water industry in the Pacific Northwest.

Proposed language:

Advance a diverse and inclusive network of professionals to provide opportunities and leadership to the water industry in the Pacific Northwest.

**Motion: Jamie Porter moved to adopt the new Section mission language as presented, seconded by Tyler Clary.
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

PNWS 2022 Conference

Executive Director Kihs reviewed the conference survey results, noting that 140 responses were returned from the 800 conference attendees.

According to the survey, 28 percent of respondents were speakers or volunteers who attend with conference fees waived for at least one day. This indicates a lot of free registrations. During discussion, there was interest in considering a change to the system for awarding free registrations in the future.

It was considered doubtful that speakers would not come if not comped. In addition, the Program Committee is encouraging half hour sessions which means more speakers and more comps. Consensus was that a starting point might be comping only the lead author. Staff will research comp policies in other Sections. Other items to be considered are comps for volunteers and panel participants.

Other results:

- Surveys also indicated that obtaining CEUs is very important to attendees.
- Overwhelming attendance (82%) at the vendor hall.
- Attendance doubled at the Friday award luncheon as compared to the evening banquet in prior years.
- Smart phone app was not rated as helpful, and staff is looking at a new app.
- 25% were first-time attendees in spite of no scholarship opportunities.
- Attendees are trending younger with 30% in the first years of their careers.
- NW Oregon Subsection had the most attendees.
- About half of attendees participated in Subsection activities.
- Most memberships were individual paid by employer.
- Respondents enjoyed the conference and were happy they had attended.

Conference Financial Report

- Conference revenue budget was \$176,000 and actual revenue was \$146,000.
- There were about 200 fewer attendees than a typical conference.
- There was room for another 20 vendors.
- Noted that some utilities were not yet allowing travel at the time of the conference.
- Kennewick will be smaller space but lower overhead.

2023 Conference Agenda Changes

Opening ceremony

Feedback was that attendees missed the more formal Wednesday night kick-off to start the conference so it will return in 2023. Pending budget discussions, plan is for mariachi band, ribbon cutting, competition and food and bars Wednesday night for the kickoff.

Trustee Meeting Time Change

The time of the Trustee meeting will be changed to Friday morning instead of Friday afternoon. This means all the awards will be given at the same time at the awards luncheon. The gavel will be passed at this time as well. Attendees want to see awards and hear the incoming chair's vision message.

Awards Ceremony

There was discussion about facilitating conference attendance by the award winners and it was determined that notifying employers would be helpful so they can make sure the recipients are present. Also discussed surprise awards like Heart and Soul and how to make sure family and friends are in attendance.

Reengaging the Membership

There was extensive discussion about committees, how to make the best use of the volunteers who are active, how to attract and engage new volunteers and how to maximize the efforts of committees. Since the change in organizational structure to creating divisions, Board liaisons have more opportunities to examine the role of their committees and to look for efficiencies and opportunities.

There was considerable in-depth discussion about the status of committees and the overlap of committees.

- The role of SAC lately has been coordination of competitions. With Trustee responsibility for coordinating with subsections, the need for SAC to act as liaison is not what it used to be. The SAC needs a list of responsibilities and expectations so potential officers will know what the job entails.
- Reinvigorating Customer Service. Possible re-naming or re-branding or coordination/combination with other existing committees like Public Information or Training Coordination. Possibly combine and/or rename Public Information to Public Communication or Strategic Communication. Could any of these Committees be sunsetted or eliminated with a merger?
- Virtual meetings and trainings were an opportunity presented during COVID which could help bring training to small systems and people who can't leave the office; however, this eliminates the networking opportunities which are important to the organization. It was noted AWWA will eliminate virtual events because of the risk of losing networking opportunities and thus members. Training in a Box could become Training in a Video but do we want to go there? This was felt to be a Division discussion and we could hold off on trying to find more people to fill the offices until the Division weighs in.
- Membership and Young Professionals currently have the same membership, predominantly younger members. Diversity and Inclusiveness Subcommittee needs a chair but someone is being groomed for the position. The committees have good leadership but not enough resources to accomplish their goals.
- Excellent participation at the YP scavenger hunt but no one collected participant names and contact information which would have been used to grow the YP Committee.

- Most subsections don't realize they are supposed to have a YP liaison.
- Fresh Ideas poster competition may be funded again. Research Committee has shown an interest and has the University contact list and this presents another opportunity for committee crossover as Research can work in tandem with YP. Also needs coordination with LAC.
- Public Officials has been virtually inactive for several years although it was acknowledged that education of public officials is critical. Is there opportunity for training through Utility Management which has been focusing on asset management. There may be greater needs for the organization and a review of the guiding document may be useful to see if they are meeting stated goals and objectives. Ties through WUC to Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts may be an opportunity for collaboration.
- Overall, Committee work needs to be consistent with membership needs.
- Leadership training could be accomplished by one-day trainings rather than a symposium. Members are craving training in all positions; there is a very broad audience. Shorter trainings could be accomplished without spending a lot on venues and speakers.
- Committee chairs should be recognized at the annual awards ceremony.
- All suggestions will be explored at the Fall training.

Fall Committee and Subsection Officer Training

- Dan Sleeth noted the agenda is on the Board member page of the website.
- Regarding the breakout session division meetings with Trustee liaisons, it was noted that if your committee officers do not attend the training trustees should attend the subsection breakout being held at the same time.
- The Audit Committee and current Treasurer will put together a subsection treasurer's job description.
- The Friday Trustee meeting will be held following a Hot Topics discussion. Trustees will be asked for written division reports in advance of the meeting. During the meeting trustees will report any takeaways from their division discussions the day prior.

2023 Budget Process

- The Executive Committee met Tuesday to create a draft budget which will be e-mailed to Trustees. A meeting is scheduled for the 14th to get consensus prior to the Trustee meeting on September 30 when the budget will be officially adopted.
- After consensus is reached on the 14th, the budget will go to the membership with a request to contact the Finance Committee with comments.
- It was noted that if funds go unused by one committee, Trustees can use that money for another committee within their Division.

Water Infrastructure Conference will be held September 11-14.

Regional Meeting of Section officers will be held in Oakland August 25-27.

- RMSO Section Presentation:
 - Trustee Jamie Porter will present a report on our section "victories" at the RMSO. These will include:

PNWS-AWWA Summer Trustee Planning Meeting August 11, 2022

Page 5

- Return to in-person section conference with good attendance
- Our first ever diversity and inclusion track that was well attended
- National award winners Corianne Bennett and Melinda Freidman

Executive Director Kihs noted that PNWS is hosting the RMSO in 2025 so we should begin budgeting for this in 2024.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:30.