**Minutes**

2013 American Society of Environmental History Society Executive Committee Meeting

Saturday, 6 April 2013, 12-5 pm

Toronto, Ontario

**In attendance:**

Officers:

John McNeill, President

Ellen Stroud, Secretary and Executive Committee member elect

Gregg Mitman, Vice President and President elect

Executive Committee Members:

Sterling Evans

Sara Gregg

Marcus Hall

Tina Loo

Linda Nash

Louis Warren

Graeme Wynn

Nancy Langston, Ex Officio, Past President, and Editor of Environmental History

Lisa Mighetto, Executive Director

Steve Pyne, Ex Officio, Past President

Harriet Ritvo, Ex Officio, Past President

Greg Rosenthal, Graduate Student Representative

Doug Weiner, Ex Officio, Past President

Guests:

Steve Anderson, Forest History Society President

Lisa Brady, Editor elect of *Environmental History*

Kathleen Brosnan, Vice-President and President Elect

Colin Coates, Chair 2013 Local Arrangements Committee

Tom Dunlap, Co-chair Journal Management Group

Sarah Elkind, Executive Committee Member elect

Marty Reuss, Chair Public History Advisory Committee

John Soluri, Chair 2013 Program Committee

Paul Sutter, Executive Committee Member elect

Jay Taylor, Co-chair Journal Management Group and incoming Secretary

Trish Thomas, Oxford University Press

Absent:

Mark Madison, Treasurer

**John McNeill called the meeting to order.**

Colin Coates and John Soluri were thanked for organizing a great conference.

The minutes for the 2012 meeting were moved, seconded, and approved.

Lisa Mighetto announced the ASEH election results:

Kathleen Brosnan is Vice President and President-elect to follow Gregg Mitman.

Mark Madison is Treasurer

Jay Taylor is incoming Secretary

Brian Black and Robert Wilson are on the nominating committee.

Sarah Elkind, Paul Sutter, and Ellen Stroud are incoming executive committee members.

A) Conference Reports

Colin Coates reported on the organization of the this year’s conference. Four schools (McMaster University, University of Toronto, Trent University, and York University) and NiCHE raised $35,150 for the meeting and tour book on Canadian urban environmental history distributed to each attendee via thumb drive. There were 607 registered attendees in Toronto. This was the second highest attended conference, and some canceled at the last moment due to the U.S. federal government’s 2013 fiscal sequester. The conference should net about $10,000.

John Soluri reported on the program. The committee rejected 40 percent of the submitted proposals. Work was time consuming. Soluri suggested that a database and software might ease the burden of future committees. The ASEH has purchased a new system, but it has yet to be implemented. Roundtables have been another programming problem. The committee needs more information on the purpose and content of proposed panels. Quality has varied widely.

Discussion ensued on conference details. There was general agreement that travel, lodging, and meal costs were unsually expensive, but also that the conference fee ought to be raised and maybe scaled to income. The committee also discussed the ex-officio role of the Local Arrangements Chair on the Program Committee. Local Arrangements is a huge task, but ex-officio status and regular interaction between committees is necessary to coordinate work. Attendees expressed frustration with the lack of wifi signal at the meeting, but dedicated conference wifi would have cost $15000. There were renewed complaints about too little time for audience participation at sessions. Members noted the usual problems of 90-minute sessions, 4-paper panels, and lax control by panel chairs. Conversely, participation grew in Toronto, forcing the program to expand to ten panels per breakout session, and it is only becoming more important to include as many as possible on the program so participants can obtain institutional funding. Finally, the border was a factor in several instances. Despite frequent communications with Canada Border Service, one book seller did not receive their shipments in a timely manner. Several delegates had visa problems. Many attendees restrained from tweeting to avoid the very expensive international roaming charges. The committee agreed that these concerns should be communicated to future program and local arrangements chairs, and that the executive director must continue to incorporate such considerations in negotiations with hotels. Coates and Soluri finished by thanking Lisa Mighetto for her advice and labor in organizing the meeting.

B) Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Public History

Marty Reuss presented a committee (Reuss, Heather Miller, Cynthia Ott) recommendation to create two awards for public history and public historians: “Distinguished Contributions in Public Environmental History” and “Environmental History Public Outreach Award.” The first award will recognize “substantial and sustained work outside the classroom” in the “awareness and appreciation of environmental history.” The second will recognize “projects and programs that engage the public beyond the academy.” Both will be biennial awards. Members discussed the proposals at length in order to delineate more clearly the intellectual and fiscal issues in each award. A motion to establish the awards and seek funding for permanent financial was moved, seconded, and approved. Reuss left the room.

C) Fundraising

In response to growing pressure on ASEH finances, Sara Gregg gave a committee (Gregg, Marcus Hall, Mark Madison) report on proposed changes to membership dues and conference fees. Proposed changes will bring the ASEH in line with other associations, most of which charge much higher member dues and conference fees. Membership for non-students could increase to $80 in 2014 and $90 in 2015; student memberships would stay at $40. Conference registration will continue to rise ($100 last year; $110 this year) to $150 or $200. Finally, a fundraising committee should be created. Discussion focused on creating a tiered dues structure based on income. A tiered system for conference registration seems too complex. Members asked the committee to report back within a month with final recommendations. The executive committee will vote on rates later this spring.

D) Journal Reports

Trish Thomas reported that Oxford University Press is distributing 800 copies of *Environmental History* gratis to academic institutions in the thirty-five poorest countries and at reduced rates to the next thirty-five poorest countries. Subscriptions total 4600, but we are seeing a shift from institutional to consortia, and individual subscriptions are falling as well. Production costs have also increased due to increases in material costs and labor and larger issues last year. Finally, the publishing contract with OUP ends at 31 December 2014, but it will automatically renew for three more years unless the parties announce termination by the end of 2013. Dunlap left the room.

Jay Taylor reported for the Journal Management Group. The journal’s online usage and citation indexes still rank high in comparison with other history journals, and there is broad satisfaction with the publisher and the editors. The online system for authors must be more user friendly. They also discussed falling revenues and the mixed signals in the current subscription data. The JMG needs better and more consistent data from the societies and OUP to get a clear sense of what is happening and whether recent shifts are signaling the long-suspected consequences of digitization. The group discussed the need to survey ASEH members about how they use the journal. The society is getting more revenue from JSTOR, but the online income does not offset losses from individual and institutional subscriptions. We ended with a discussion of open-access policies, MOOCs, and the contract renewal. The JMG was asked to survey all parties about the relationship with OUP and report to the ASEH and FHS by May 15. Trish Thomas and Steve Anderson left the room.

**10 minute break**

Reconvening after break, Nancy Langston reported on editorial functions. Lisa Brady will be taking over the journal as of July 1, but because of the lag time in publishing the January 2014 issue will be her first edited issue. Neil Maher and Cindy Ott continue to do great service as the graphics editors, and Jack Hayes gets the greatest number of compliments from authors for his work as book editor. The relationship with OUP is very good. We have better image quality now, and the publisher has extended the reach of *EH* globally. There is an ongoing problem with relying on thousands of hours of volunteer labor to support the journal, and the independent journal website requires a dedicated, paid webmaster and greater thought about its role and functions. John McNeill ended the discussion by thanking Steve Anderson, Tom Dunlap, Nancy Langston, Jay Taylor, and Trish Thomas for their hard work.

D) Treasurer’s Report

Mark Madison was unable to present the Treasurer’s Report because of the federal government sequester. Lisa Mighetto conveyed a few points about income projections in the current budget, which anticipates a $10,000 deficit. Society finances are okay, but future income seems less certain due to changes in journal subscriptions and dwindling grant budgets. Thus the treasurer is being conservative about conference and journal income, although both might earn more than expected. General discussion followed on rising conference costs, especially in bigger cities, but all agreed on spending priorities. The operating budget for 2013-2014 was moved, seconded, and approved.

E) Oxford University Press Contract

The committee had a second discussion about the contract with OUP to publish *Environmental History*. The contract is scheduled to terminate at the end of 2014, but ASEH and FHS must inform OUP by 31 December 2013 whether they wish to terminate the contract; if the date passes, the contract will automatically roll over for another three years. General discussion ensued on the working relationship with OUP.

F) Advisory Board for Professional Development and Public Engagement

Lisa Mighetto reported on efforts to create ASEH-sponsored internships for graduate students and employment opportunities for recent PhDs. The advisory board has arranged a post-PhD placement for summer 2013, which its members hope will launch a new, ongoing program. The first project is with the National Park Service to study Death Valley pupfish. The position will be advertised in June 2013. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to an environmental history internship for next year. Both programs stress expertise in environmental history. In a discussion about what to call the post-PhD positions, all agreed that “post doc” did not fit the circumstances, but no replacement term seemed obvious. The group eventually settled on “research consulting project” as interim phrase.

G) Sponsored Sessions

Lisa Mighetto gave a report on fundraising for the 2014 meeting in San Francisco. The local arrangements chair has been approached about the possibility of creating sponsored panels. There was considerable discussion about how organizations sponsor panels at other meetings, such as the affiliated society sessions at the American Historical Association’s annual meetings. All agreed on the principle of maintaining the scholarly independence of the program committee, and that sponsorships should not influence who gets on conference programs. At the same time, all agreed that fund raising is crucial to the continued solvency of the society and the meetings. The discussion resulted in a policy statement:

Individuals and organizations may provide financial sponsorship for ASEH conference activities outside the regular schedule of sessions. Such events include, but may not be limited to, plenaries, field trips, workshops, and receptions. Tiers of sponsorship, reflecting different levels of prominence in ASEH publications, will be determined by the executive director, president, and local arrangements committee.

The policy was moved, seconded, and approved.

**10 minute break.**

H) Awards

Paul Hirt was nominated for the ASEH distinguished service award. Discussion followed and the motion passed.

James McCann was nominated for the ASEH distinguished scholar award. Discussion followed and the motion passed.

I) New Business

Advocacy: Lisa Mighetto raised the subject of society advocacy. The executive committee had adopted a formal policy on this issue in 2007. The policy (<http://aseh.net/about-aseh/policies-and-guidelines/copy_of_advocacyguidelines.pdf>) advises members that the society will only take positions on issues within its expertise as an scholarly society. Discussion ensued on the ASEH’s tax status as a 501(c)3 organization and the importance of protecting that status. The executive committee agreed that this point should be incorporated into the formal policy statement. Lisa Mighetto was tasked to edit the document posted on the ASEH website.

**John McNeill adjourned the meeting at 4:17 pm.**