

Minutes for a Special Meeting of the Waterbird Society Council and Committee Chairs

Virtual call, Zoom

Friday, June 19, 2020

Minutes approved with amendments by Council on December 5, 2020 (Council meeting, Zoom)

Councilors in attendance: Dave Moore [President], Patty Szczys [VP, Recognition], Chris Custer [Treasurer, Bylaws], Erica Nol [Past President, Publications], Kate Sheehan, Terry Master, Juliet Lamb [Student Activities], Kate Shlepr [Acting Secretary, Archives], Miyuki Mashiko, Clay Green [Past President], Caroline Poli [Student Council Rep], Sean Murphy, Dan Catlin, Danielle D’Auria, Gail Fraser [Student Activities], Gopi Sundar

Committee Chairs in attendance: Jeff Spendelow [Bylaws, Ornithological Council], Susan Elbin [Diversity, Future Meetings, Ornithological Council, Nominating], Ricardo Zambrano [Finance], John Anderson [Archives], Jonathan Cohen [Conservation], Nellie Tsipoura [Outreach and Communications, Research Grants], Amanda Haverland [Outreach and Communications], Chip Weseloh [Future Meetings], Liz Craig [Diversity], Woody Woodrow [Chair of Texas Local Committee]

8:33am EST Dave Moore called the meeting to order

Remembrance of Brian Palestis

Council meeting logistics: “How to Zoom” technological run-through for our first ever virtual council meeting. Why are we meeting virtually? Currently because of Covid-19 pandemic, but it may be useful to continue using this platform in the future (e.g., mid-year Council check-ins).

Review today’s meeting agenda

Update on 2020 Texas meeting: Woody Woodrow, chair of the Local Committee for the 2020 meeting that was scheduled for November in Clear Lake, Texas, reviewed the many uncertainties of the planned in-person meeting amidst the current global pandemic (e.g., host university’s event policies, financial unknowns). Patty Szczys and Ricardo Zambrano added that travel for attendees is also going to be difficult due to state budget freezes and the inability to plan travel in advance. Woody said there will be no financial hit (e.g., no binding contracts in place) if we postpone the meeting.

Motion: I move that the Waterbird Society cancel its in-person annual meeting, planned for November 2020 in Clear Lake, Texas. Patty Szczys/Clay Green, passed unanimously

Feasibility of postponing the Miami 2021 meeting: Ricardo Zambrano, chair of the Local Committee for the Miami area meeting that was on the books for 2021, says it makes sense and is feasible to postpone the meeting until 2022. There was general discussion about how realistic it is to plan in-person meetings in 2021-2022 amidst our current lack of a Covid-19 vaccine, and

Council generally agreed that there are many uncertainties and we will have to make decisions over time as information becomes available. Gail Fraser reminded us that Council started discussing the utility of virtual meeting components prior to the virus outbreak, so perhaps joint virtual/face-to-face planning is best anyway.

Motion: Shift our two currently planned meetings forward by a year each; Clear Lake, Texas to 2021 and the Miami area to 2022. Dave Moore/Danielle D’Auria, passed unanimously

Impact of virtual-only meetings on the future of the Society: John Anderson and Patty Szczys underlined the important role that face-to-face meetings have traditionally played in maintaining membership in our Society, particularly students. Ricardo Zambrano also pointed out that losing face-to-face may impact how we recruit WBS Councilors, Officers, and Committee members. Dave Moore, Gopi Sundar and Erica Nol and others shared their experiences with various virtual conference/teaching formats to-date, stressing the strengths (e.g., increased participation by shy students or non-North American participants) and weaknesses (e.g., potential for distraction due to each participant’s isolated setting) of these formats. Kate Shlepr and others suggested we have an opportunity to approach a future virtual event in a very different way from our usual annual meeting, and should think creatively about who our audience is, what the goal of the event is, and what format the event might take. Collectively, we identified two areas of membership that may get a boost from successfully hosting virtual events: students and international members.

Straw Poll (non-binding, all participants vote): Are you in favor of the WBS holding some form of virtual meeting in 2020? Results: 96% Yes, 4% No Opinion

Virtual event theme/structure brainstorming: The following ideas were suggested and should be considered by a newly formed WBS communications subcommittee:

- Twitter conference (~World Seabird Twitter Conference): 4 slides with text to get the whole point of your study across; timed and formatted like an in-person conference session (Dave Moore)
- Host smaller events
 - Spread talks and keynote speeches out over a couple of months rather than 2-3 days. Works well if speakers record their talks in advance (Gopi Sundar)
 - Additionally/alternatively, advertise regularly scheduled weekly or monthly virtual seminar or discussion (Kate Sheehan)
 - Additionally/alternatively
- Workshop format? Might keep participants focused/engaged (Kate Shlepr)
- Symposiums/breakout sessions
 - E.g., 5 lightning talks with a lot of time built in for small group discussion (Patty Szczys, Erica Nol, Caroline Poli)
 - Could be themed by taxa or geographic region (Clay Green)
 - Could invite international members to host a portion of the conference

- Slides could be in presenter's native language with English translation in-text (Gopi Sundar, Kate Sheehan)
- Mentoring session where students are matched with professionals (John Anderson)
 - Additionally/alternatively, attending virtual degree defenses by our Master's/PhD students may benefit both the students and the Society (Patty Szczys, Caroline Poli)
- Virtual event could be an explicit Diversity & Inclusion initiative (Kate Shlepr, Juliet Lamb)
 - Symposium or keynote speakers could be chosen to highlight members (Dave Moore)
- YouTube channel/video series of scientific talks or short videos to spotlight researchers/study locations (~World Seabird Conference/Juliet Lamb, ~Pacific Seabird Group/Dave Moore, Erica Nol)
 - May be especially important if technology limits the number of participants allowed during live events (Gopi Sundar)

Straw Poll (non-binding, all participants vote): What virtual meeting format do you support most? Full Conference 0%, 25% Small Events, No Opinion 0%, Combination 75%

Next steps - virtual event planning: Patty Szczys, Nellie Tsipoura, and others stated the need to broaden Council's current communications efforts. Liz Craig suggested soliciting feedback and participation from our general membership and/or our social media followers (which includes non-members). Council agreed to form a new communications subcommittee that includes a core group (Councilors/Committee Chairs from this meeting) plus additional volunteers from WBS general membership. **ACTION ITEM: Councilors/Committee members who are interested in participating in virtual event planning should contact Dave Moore/Patty Szczys/Kate Shlepr stating their interest. [Secretary's note: By 6/19/2020 at 12:30PM, the following individuals volunteered via Chat box or email to be on the committee: Sean Murphy, Patty Szczys, Kate Shlepr, John Anderson, Dan Catlin, Gopi Sundar, Caroline Poli, Danielle D'Auria, Kate Sheehan, Liz Craig]** The new group will review ideas generated from today's meeting to help them estimate the cost of virtual event options. A budget must be in place before a formal motion to host a virtual meeting in 2020 is entertained by the WBS Council. **ACTION ITEM: Jeff will verify that small virtual events with designated Council and Business meetings will satisfy the Society Bylaws.**

Other impacts of Covid-19 on the Society: Budget: Dave Moore said that the 2008 financial crash led WBS to suspending awards and grants for 1 full year and limiting the amounts for a further 3-5 years. We should anticipate some hits here too. Awards and Recognition Committee: Patty Szczys and John Anderson asked Council to consider if/how award winners should be recognized when in-person conferences are not held. Ricardo Zambrano echoed this

on behalf of the Conservation Committee. Nellie Tsipoura and Kate Sheehan suggested short presentations by grant/achievement award winners may boost our website and the winners' professional profiles. In general, there was agreement that winners should still be recognized and invited to virtual plenary addresses when possible. Diversity Committee and Student Activities Committee: Juliet Lamb reported that the Diversity Committee has been working on proposing a Society response to recent political events [racial protests] and emphasized that virtual events might be an excellent platform for both the Diversity and Student Activities committees.

Patty Szczys/Dan Catlin moved to adjourn

10:15 am EST meeting adjourn