

# LOUISIANA BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

9643 Brookline Ave., Ste. 101, Baton Rouge, LA 70809



## REGULAR MEETING OF LBOPG

Tuesday, March 8, 2022, 1:00 P.M.

Physical meeting at

Louisiana Engineering Center

9643 Brookline Avenue

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

and

Virtual Public Meeting Hosted on Zoom

## MINUTES

Chair William Schramm called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m., Tuesday, March 8, 2022, and commenced roll call.

Present: William Schramm, William Finley, Melanie Stiegler, David Culpepper, Lloyd Hoover, Elizabeth McDade, Michael Simms, and David Williamson, Board Members; Machel Hall, Legal Counsel; Brenda Macon, Executive Secretary; Maria Mata de Leder, Administrative Coordinator; and Mallory Pilié, Project Coordinator.

Absent: Todd Perry, Board Member (attended unofficially through Zoom); Chantel McCreary, Assistant Executive Secretary.

Guests: Holly Poston, employee with Tetra Tech and Louisiana licensee; Donna Sentell, LAPELS; Mark Varhaug, Louisiana licensee and member of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists

Quorum was established. Roll Call and Visitor Sign-in are documented on paper and as part of the meeting registration record on Zoom.

### Public Comment Period

No comments were recorded.

### Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the January 11, 2022, regular board meeting were reviewed. Schramm pointed out that the draft minutes had been changed to include David Culpepper as having been absent. Finley moved to accept the minutes with the revision; Williamson seconded the motion. Schramm called for a vote, and the motion passed.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Finley presented the treasurer's report for January and February 2022, reporting that an increase of about \$5,500 occurred in January and a decrease of about \$500 occurred in February. He reminded board members that revenue from renewals fluctuates throughout the year. Currently, renewals are still coming in. He then presented two charts showing historical trends. He explained that he and the staff are working to segment the licensee population to determine how many renewals are received at each of the two rates: \$100 for those 60 years of age and older, and \$150 for those under 60 years of age. He pointed out that, if the licensee population is aging, the income from renewals will decrease over time because of the lower rate older licensees pay. By collecting the age data, as well as determining the ratio of new licenses to renewals, he and the staff can make better projections regarding the revenue stream. He said the goal is to assure that the board is continuing to bring in new licensees to replace those licensees who are lost over time. Discussion ensued. Finley also drew attention to the monthly budget report, which shows that board per diem payments have decreased as staff salary payments have increased, which indicates that the work that was once done by board members is now performed by the staff. He then reminded Hall that the board has not yet been billed for her service; Hall explained that she now has a new staff member who will be sending invoices. Finley summarized by pointing out that the budget report shows the board is breaking even, which is optimal. Schramm asked about the budget for board members to attend the upcoming ASBOG COE meeting. Finley explained that the funds have been allocated and will be available when needed. Schramm said he would like to give more board members the opportunity to participate; Finley said he saw no financial problems with that. Schramm then called for a motion to accept the treasurer's report. Williamson moved to accept the report; McDade seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## **Standing Committees**

Application Review Committee: Stiegler reported that the committee reviewed one application for license and one application for the ASBOG Fundamentals of Geology and Practice of Geology examinations in October. Schramm noted that the one license application was through reciprocity and asked if that entailed any additional discussion by the board; Stiegler explained that the review process for those seeking license through reciprocity requires documentation from the reciprocity state affirming that the person has held the license for the requisite number of years and is in good standing with their board. She then reported that the one license application was recommended for approval, and the one ASBOG examination application was also recommended for approval. Stiegler then moved to accept her committee's recommendations; Finley seconded the motion. Schramm called for a vote; the motion passed.

License Examination Committee: Williamson pointed out that the License Application Review Committee list includes a list of the ASBOG examination candidates for testing on March 18, 2022. He then asked Schramm to report on the ASBOG meeting on the Computer Based Testing (CBT) initiative. Schramm summarized the main points from that meeting, informing the board that the first CBT exams will be conducted in March 2023 over a two-day period. Discussion ensued.

Compliance Committee: Perry reported that the committee had sent out several responses to audit logs already received in the last couple of weeks. He said the completion rate is better than in the previous test audits. He also reported that he would be working on outreach to licensees at the upcoming Solid Waste Conference in Lafayette on March 17 and 18. His presentation, on Thursday, March 17, will describe recording continuing education hours and documenting those hours. Schramm elaborated on

the conference, explaining its sponsorship, opportunities, and reach. He also addressed the performance of the audit review, reminding the board that 24 licensees' activities are under review. Fifteen of those audited have responded. Eight have not yet responded, but responses are not due until just before the license is to be renewed. Schramm pointed out that one auditee who had not passed on the first attempt had asked for a phone consultation; the auditee listened to the advice from the reviewers and was able to successfully complete the audit that same afternoon. Schramm expressed the opinion that the percentage of those audited should be greater than the statute requirement of 2% of active licensees. Schramm suggested that, eventually, the audit percentage should be around 10 percent. Discussion ensued, with board members asking Varhaug what percentage of licensees are audited by Texas each year. While Varhaug did not immediately recall, he later answered that the Texas board audits 5% of its active licensees. Schramm asked Varhaug if Texas requires state employees to be licensed. Varhaug answered that some are, but they are not required to be. Williamson asked if the Texas State Geologist is required to be licensed in Texas. Varhaug answered that the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology is a research organization, and because it is an educational entity, those who work there are not required to be licensed; however, if individuals within the organization perform work for the public, they would be required to be licensed. Discussion ensued. Perry pointed out that, because of the confusion regarding whether Louisiana State employees, particularly those working for LDEQ and LDNR, are required to be licensed Louisiana Professional Geoscientists, a bill has been filed in the Louisiana State legislature to clarify that State and Federal employees are exempt from the licensure requirement; he was not sure what the bill number is but will alert the board as soon as he knows. Hall reported that the legislation is House Bill 169.

Outreach Committee: Finley reported that the declining enrollment in university geology departments indicates a need to educate people on the importance of geoscience. He suggested partnering with local universities to reach out to the community to provide this information to potential students. He presented board members with copies of ASBOG's list of geology activities and the definition of geoscience from the board's rules and explained that this information needs to be more widely distributed. Schramm commented that reaching out to university students is almost too late; he suggested getting this information to younger students before they get to the university. Williamson agreed, explaining that he regularly meets with elementary school students to make presentations on rocks and minerals. Pilié reported that LSU students participate in community events to educate youth and said LSU's new department head seems open to new ideas and outreach. She also pointed out that she has been sharing interesting articles and links through the board's LinkedIn account. Additional discussion and brainstorming ideas ensued. Finley asked that each board member write a brief paragraph on why geoscience is important to Louisiana. He also explained that the board needs to have a better idea of what the various state agencies look for when they evaluate geoscience reports.

Strategic Five-year Plan & Rules Review Ad Hoc: Simms reported that the committee has not yet met, but he asked committee members to meet with him briefly to schedule a public meeting for a later date. Hall suggested having the executive secretary collect strategic plans from a variety of boards of about the same size so that the committee will have a better idea of how to proceed in developing its own plan. Hall also advised the committee that she will work with the committee chair to determine the best approach for the rules of review. Macon also mentioned that the board's previous report to the legislature that provided some future planning information can provide a starting point. Finley presented board members with a copy of the board's current mission statement. Discussion ensued, with Schramm commenting that the board needs to provide service to its licensees and Finley adding that the board

needs to educate licensees on what constitutes appropriate continuing education. Macon asked Varhaug if the Texas board has a long-range plan in place. Varhaug explained that its long-range plan is tied directly to the state's sunset review. He said the board encourages its members to take every opportunity to reach out to the community – presenting guest lectures, working with public schools to educate students, participating in community events, etc. Finley asked Macon if the board's bylaws are on the website. She said they were on the old website but do not seem to be on the new one. She said she would check to see where they went.

Office Committee: Macon reported that she attended the FARB Forum, held in Fort Worth, Texas, on Thursday, January 27 – 29, 2022. With Shannon Lynd, a partner with Dovetail Digital Marketing, she presented “Collaborative Creativity: Working Together to Develop Websites that Really Work.” The presentation was well received, and they had several requests for additional information. The presentation was recorded and is available on the FARB website.

She said she found other sessions at the meeting to be particularly relevant, providing information on items to be included on the board's website and discussing the importance of collecting demographic information on constituents such as licensees, GITs, and applicants. Considered best practices for all boards, these two topics provided ideas for ways to serve LBOPG constituents better.

Macon then turned attention to Pilié and Mata de Leder for their report on the demographic database they have been creating. Pilié presented the board with graphs showing the geographic locations of Louisiana licensees and said more licensees live in Texas than in Louisiana. She said the board has licensees in 43 states, Puerto Rico, and Canada. She said age data has recently been completed. The median age of licensees is 57, with the minimum age of 30 and a maximum age of 91. She then explained the process of collecting this information and said this part of the project is 75% complete. She reported that the educational background component of the database is about 30% complete. Williamson pointed out that having this information in one place will be valuable for a variety of reasons and uses. Discussion ensued.

Macon then reminded board members that Louisiana Legislative Act 270 stipulates that all state agencies must adopt policies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, including a requirement to have employees take the state online training course. She reported that State Civil Service training videos for both supervisors and employees have been received. The video for employees is required for all State workers, is about 45 minutes long, and is designed for group settings in which discussion can take place. One option would be to set aside about an hour at an upcoming board meeting to allow all present to fulfill the state requirement; another option is to allow board members to view the video at their convenience and print the certificate included at the end of the presentation. She then asked board members which option they preferred. The consensus was to view the video at their convenience.

Related to this issue, Macon said, is developing policy regarding the prevention of sexual harassment. She said she has created a document to be considered for adoption by the board to fulfill the Act 270 requirement for an agency policy. She explained that she used the language of Act 270 itself to draft the document and consulted policy statements from LAPELS, DOTD, and the Department of Justice. She asked the board to review the document and to decide how to proceed. Hall suggested passing the draft document with an added statement that all board members and employees are required to participate in the State Civil Service “Preventing Sexual Harassment” training. Hoover suggested editing one of the steps in the process to clarify sanctions if someone is determined by an investigation to have harassed another board member or employee. The steps were then edited for this purpose. Williamson moved to

accept the policy statement with the discussed changes; Finley seconded. Schramm called for discussion. After briefly summarizing the proposed changes, he called for a vote. The motion passed.

Macon reminded the board that a new Civil Service WAE position was approved in January. She reported the position was created and Maria de la Luz Mata de Leder (Luzma) has been hired as a part-time employee. She then officially welcomed Mata de Leder.

Macon said she and the staff will be preparing a new journal issue to be sent as soon as possible. Topics to be included are:

- information on logging into the new website and database;
- location of information on the new website;
- new website functionality for licensees and the public;
- information on the demographic database, explaining the need and scope and requesting information; and
- information on the new, live audits and the types of geoscience activities that meet the requirements.

She asked board members for photos, graphics, and ideas for other articles and indicated that the journal would be ready for publication on the website by mid-April.

Finally, she thanked Mark Varhaug for attending and participating at the board meeting. Finley asked when and where the Texas board would next meet. Varhaug explained that the Texas board holds two-day meetings in Austin, Texas, and that the next meeting will be April 28 and 29, 2022. Schramm asked about the meeting frequency; Varhaug said the board usually meets in February, April, August, and November. Schramm also thanked Varhaug for his participation. Macon suggested that the Louisiana board may also want to consider two-day meetings so that committees can more easily meet. She also pointed out that she had learned from Varhaug that, in Texas, applications are reviewed first by staff, and if they are routine, are recommended for approval by the board. Varhaug added that applications for waivers or ASBOG testing are still reviewed, recommended, and approved by the board committee.

### **Legal Comments**

Hall had nothing additional to report, but she congratulated Macon for the success of the presentation at FARB.

### **New Business**

Schramm reminded board members of their responsibility to participate in the various required state training sessions and recommended that anyone driving on state business take the optional training on the Office of Risk Management site.

Schramm then asked board members to decide who would be participating in the upcoming ASBOG Council of Experts meeting in April 2022. Culpepper and Williamson expressed interest; Schramm said he would also be attending to participate in the Task Analysis Workshop.

Schramm then asked Hoover on what board committee he would like to serve; Hoover chose the Compliance Committee. Stiegler, who had been assigned to only one committee in addition to her service as Board Secretary, asked McDade, who was assigned to three committees, if Stiegler could take McDade's place on the License Exam Committee; McDade agreed. Membership on the Strategic Five-year Plan & Rules Review Ad Hoc Committee was clarified: Simms, chair; Culpepper, Finley, and McDade.

Finley asked if committee meetings are always public meetings; Hall said they are. Discussion then turned to how committees handle confidential information (application review and discussion, for example). Hall explained that notice and an agenda of the meeting must be posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting time, but the committee can decide to go into executive session upon calling the meeting to order and taking care of any business that was not confidential. The agenda should indicate the confidential nature of items to be discussed and note the possibility of executive session. Then the members would come out of executive session and make any decisions on the public record before adjourning. Members and Hall discussed the details of such meetings. Hall stressed the requirement that all meetings be held in person, and all board members must attend in person to establish a quorum or to vote, but guests can attend virtually. Hall agreed with Macon that the ideal time for committee meetings would be just prior to the main board meeting, but meeting at other times is possible. Hall recommended several publications that provide details about public meetings, and she, Macon, and Williamson recommended the Civil Law Training Sessions offered by the Louisiana Department of Justice.

### **Adjourn**

The date of the next regular meeting of the board was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at 1:00 pm. Finley moved to adjourn; Hoover seconded; the motion passed. Schramm adjourned the meeting at 3:39 pm.