

LOUISIANA BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

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



REGULAR MEETING OF LBOPG

Tuesday, May 12, 2020, 1:00 P.M.

Virtual Public Meeting Hosted on Zoom

MINUTES

Chair William Finley called the meeting to order at 1:18 p.m., Tuesday, May 12, 2020.

He commenced roll call.

Present: William Finley, Elizabeth McDade, Todd Perry, William Schramm, and David Williamson, Board Members; Machel Hall, Legal Counsel; Brenda Macon, Executive Secretary; Chantel McCreary, Assistant Executive Secretary

Absent: Lloyd Hoover and Melanie Stiegler, Board Members

Guests: David Frey, retired from Louisiana One Call; Paul Heinrich, Louisiana Geological Survey; and licensee; and Mason Broussard, Dovetail Digital Marketing

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

Public Comment Period

Guests Frey and Heinrich introduced themselves. Frey had expressed interest in applying to become a board member; Heinrich, a licensee, attended to hear board discussion of license issues.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the March 10, 2020 meeting were reviewed. Williamson moved to approve the minutes; Schramm seconded. Finley called for discussion; there was none. He then called for a vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Board Treasurer Schramm mentioned that deposits were down slightly, apparently because of economic uncertainty during the pandemic. He reported that, during March, deposits totaled \$11,986.05 and expenses totaled \$10,799.56; during April, deposits were \$6,618.15 and expenses were \$10,200.60. The balance in all accounts at the end of April was \$252,832.19. He presented a graph showing the last two years of activity and totals in all accounts. He then turned the board's attention to the monthly budget-to-actual comparison report. He pointed out that, again, the spending is below the projected level and revenue is above the projected level. Perry moved to accept the treasurer's report; Williamson seconded; the motion passed.

Standing Committees

Application Review Committee: No applications were put forward for recommendation at this meeting. The shutdown effectively stopped all activity by applicants during the period March through April. Board members discussed ways to reach potential applicants, especially students in university/college geology and other geoscience programs. Williamson reported that he had met with about 10 LSU students in Shreveport before the pandemic shutdown. Macon reminded board members that she had created text that can be used to develop flyers and slides for presentations to college and university students. This material is based on a PowerPoint presentation that was borrowed from California's board and modified with Louisiana's information. Macon explained she had also incorporated ideas from LAPELS' presentation to college/university students. Finley asked Macon to send the file to board members again.

License Examination Committee: Williamson reported that the March ASBOG examination day had been cancelled because of the pandemic shutdown but that those candidates who were scheduled to take the exam in March would be added to those taking the exam on October 2, 2020. Discussion ensued regarding the need for a larger testing facility. Board members also suggested that a true testing facility with proper security may be required in the future and discussed options, including contacting LSU regarding the use of one of their secure facilities. Board members also discussed the possibility of moving the examination location based on the number of candidates from various regions of the state; examples were Lafayette (ULL), Shreveport (Centenary), or Natchitoches (Northwestern). Frey suggested checking with the Louisiana State Fire Marshall's Office in Baton Rouge for use of a large venue. Macon and Schramm mentioned the conference rooms offered by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ).

Compliance Committee: Returning to a topic that had been continued from the March meeting, Perry submitted the document created for his company, PPM, as a template for providing licensees with specific information regarding what types of reports and figures and other documents are required to be sealed. Board members discussed adding generic examples to the document to explain the use of the seal more graphically. Schramm suggested adding examples of signature pages.

Discussion then turned to use of electronic seals. Board members could not recall if a decision had ever been officially made regarding the use of electronic seals. Macon offered to research the minutes from previous meetings to find information on this point. Hall explained that electronic seals can be just as secure and binding as either an embossed seal or a stamp. She mentioned that the electronic seal would look the same as the physical seal, with the licensee's name and license number, and would be certified through a secure app, such as DocuSign or Adobe Acrobat. Discussion ensued, with Perry suggesting research to determine the ways other boards allow electronic signatures.

Office Committee: Macon reported that contracts are due in the Office of State Procurement system by May 15, 2020. The board previously approved both the Department of Justice contract for legal services and the L.A. Champagne contract for accounting services at the March 10 meeting. The contracts are currently in process and should be submitted on time to meet the May 15 deadline.

She also reported that the FARB membership has been renewed, as approved by the board in March.

She told board members that her raise, approved by the board in March, had been submitted and approved by Louisiana Civil Service.

She then mentioned that Dovetail Digital, currently working on the migration of the board's online application system from Adobe Business Catalyst to the Treepl platform and on redesigning the board's website, had submitted a draft design for the new home page. She then introduced Mason Broussard, a member of Dovetail Digital's staff. Board members had been sent the new design draft and gave Broussard suggestions for improvements, including the suggestion that the geologic map that serves as the background for the license certificate may make a good background for the website. Macon offered to send Broussard a copy of the license. Broussard agreed to work with the design in response to board members' suggestions.

Macon also reminded board members that plans are still ongoing to change financial institutions because of problems with Campus Federal Credit Union's business services inadequacies.

Legal Opinion on the Board's Authority

Finley asked Hall to report on the Attorney General's opinion the board is seeking; Hall responded by conveying the news that the Department of Justice has decided not to issue an opinion, citing a conflict of interest. She pointed out that, because the Attorney General's Office represents the board as legal counsel, the same attorney that serves as general counsel should not draft Attorney General Opinions on board matters that they have discussed with the board. She provided the board with the option of having their legal counsel (Hall) give them an opinion, and that the board should only then seek an Attorney General opinion on the question if it is necessary. Perry moved to accept that option; Williamson seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Feasibility of Creating an Online Ethics Course

The board then discussed the possibility of creating an online ethics course that would stream through the board's website. One suggestion was to link to an organization that already offers such a course. McDade offered to contact John Jordan, who had recently presented an interactive ethics course to the New Orleans Geological Society and to research courses offered by different geological organizations.

New Business

The board considered this representative question from licensees regarding continuing education under stay-at-home orders:

"I usually go to the Water Conference that was scheduled in March but cancelled, to get most of my professional development hours, including my ethics requirement (and then finish any hours needed by going to the BRGS monthly lunch meetings). With the 2020 Conference being cancelled what are those of us who anticipated getting a large portion of our hours there to do? My renewal is in June 2020, so I would have to have all my hours before the next Conference that I know of, The GeoGulf 2020 scheduled for September. Do you have any suggestions for those of us that are in the position or is there a plan for an extension on meeting our 2020 PDHs?"

Board members agreed that online opportunities already provide licensees with adequate possibilities for fulfilling the continuing education requirements of licensure beyond physically attending conferences and meetings. They also agreed that the rules allow for a three-year accumulation of hours that can be used when licensees cannot attend conferences for short periods. The idea of providing an opportunity to apply for an extension for meeting the 2020 professional development hours was discussed; the consensus was that such an extension is unnecessary.

The board then discussed a request from a licensee for permanent exemption from continuing education requirements. Ultimately, board members decided to decline this request. They agreed unanimously that all licensees must keep themselves apprised of new developments in the profession to ensure the mission of the board is maintained. This request also prompted the board to revisit the possibility of creating new categories for licenses, including one for retired geoscientists. However, such a designated category with reduced requirements would carry restrictions that would also reduce the types of activities such a designee would be allowed to perform. They pointed out that only full licensure, with its attendant requirements, can ensure that the holder maintains the level of professional expertise that will ensure the successful mission of the board.

Board members then discussed a recent request for regulatory clarification from an environmental services company and Finley's response to that request. The board unanimously approved Finley's response.

Adjourn

The date of the next regular meeting of the board is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14, 2020, at 1:00 pm. Perry moved to adjourn; Williamson seconded the motion. Finley adjourned the meeting at 4:25 pm.