

LOUISIANA BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

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



REGULAR MEETING OF LBOPG

Tuesday, May 14, 2019, 1:30 P.M.

Louisiana Engineering Society Building Conference Room

9643 Brookline Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70809

MINUTES

Chairman William Finley called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m., Tuesday, May 14, 2019.

He commenced roll call.

Present: William Finley, Lloyd Hoover, William Schramm, Melanie Stiegler, and David Williamson, Board Members; Harry Vorhoff, Legal Counsel; Brenda Macon, Executive Secretary; Chantel McCreary, Assistant Executive Secretary

Absent: L. Todd Perry, Board Member

Guests: Elizabeth McDade, New Orleans Geological Society; Donna Sentell, executive director, LAPELS; Allison Alesi, Owner, Dovetail Digital Marketing (Usable Creative)

Quorum established. Roll Call sheet was circulated for signatures. Guest sign-in sheet was also circulated.

Public Comment Period

Finley called for public comments; none were made.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the March 12, 2019 meeting were reviewed. Williamson moved to approve the minutes; Stiegler seconded; the motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Schramm reported that deposits into total the checking account (income) for March was \$10,703.92; deposits into the new savings account totaled \$50,000 (transfer from checking). Total debits for March were \$8,827.79. The ending balance in the checking account in March was 181,609.81; the ending balance in the savings account was \$50,002.88 (with interest earned). The total deposits for April were \$10,073.59, and the total debits were \$7,566.61. The ending balance on April 30 was \$184,116.79. Finley called for a motion to approve the treasurer's report. Schramm reported the board has an average positive cash flow (more revenue than expenses) of about \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month. He directed the board to the profit and loss budget overview sheet in the meeting packets and pointed out that actual revenue exceeds the projected revenue for the given time period (July 1, 2018 through May 15, 2019) by over \$12,000. Actual expenses were more than \$10,000 less than those projected for the period.

Schramm then turned to discussion of the budget for 2019-2020. He mentioned the line item for “fees collected” is a new line of revenue that brought in over \$900 in 2018-2019; \$600 is projected for 2019-2020. The total revenue budget is \$135,550. In the section covering expenses, Schramm directed attention to board member per diem and travel. Last year, \$12,000 was budgeted for per diem, and the actual expenses were closer to \$7,000; therefore, the projected expense for 2019-2020 was reduced to \$10,000. Also, \$5,000 was set aside in 2018-2019 for board member mileage reimbursement, but actual expenses were about \$1,400, so \$1,400 was budgeted in this category for 2019-2020. He then mentioned an increase in the budget for board member travel to conferences, from \$2,200 to \$9,500, which relates to recent board discussions in favor of board members becoming more engaged with ASBOG and FARB by attending meetings of those organizations. Schramm also directed attention to a new line item for “professional services – online pay” that reflects costs associated with the licensee/applicant online fee payment system. Nearly \$1,400 was expended in 2018-2019, so that amount was added to the budget for 2019-2020. Schramm then pointed out the budget for “professional services – IT” for 2018-2019 was \$2,000, and \$5,000 was spent; this year, the board has a pending proposal for website and database improvements from Dovetail Digital that will cost \$12,815, so that amount has been set aside in the 2019-2020 budget for this category. Schramm mentioned \$15,000 was set aside in 2018-2019 for enforcement/legal proceedings and not used; then, \$50,000 was transferred to savings, a separate account, for this purpose; Macon explained, because a separate account earmarked for this category had been established, she proposed reducing the category to zero in the main operating budget document. Schramm and Finley concurred. The proposed budget totals \$135,550 in projected revenue and the same amount in expenses. Hoover asked if the line item for IT would be a one-year expense; Finley deferred discussion until later in the meeting when the proposed work by Dovetail Digital would be discussed.

Schramm then mentioned again that the board had incurred unexpected expenses related to the online \$933 in revenue generated as “fees collected” represents the \$5 convenience fee collected on each online payment transaction; the \$1,381 “professional services – online pay” expense represents the total amount charged by the bank and credit card processing services. She further explained most of the major credit cards accepted (VISA, MasterCard, and Discover) charge less than \$5, but American Express consistently charges more than \$5. Finley asked who uses American Express; Macon explained that companies tend to use the card, and many geoscientists use company credit cards to pay their renewals. Finley then asked for potential solutions; Macon said she was considering how hard it would be to go up on the per-transaction convenience fee and asked Alesi, whose company developed the online payment shopping cart for the board, to weigh in on that possibility. Alesi said a blanket increase would be very easy to implement. Finley said he would not want to penalize others using the cards that charged cheaper rates by implementing a blanket increase; both Macon and Alesi expressed concern that it may not be possible to implement a separate charge for American Express. Discussion ensued, with Finley reminding the board that the convenience fee was initially implemented so the board would not lose money on online payments. Hoover again asked if a separate, higher fee could be implemented for American Express; after Finley’s original question, Alesi had communicated with her staff and was ready with an answer: through Authorize.net, the staff at Dovetail Digital can set up the fee as an additional payment option (“credit cards” and “American Express”). Finley asked for a motion to make this happen. Schramm moved, in the upcoming revision of the website, for the online billing, a separate option for American Express would be included; Williamson seconded the motion. Finley called for discussion; none was forthcoming. Finley called for vote; the motion passed.

Finally, Schramm directed attention to the graphic representation of the board’s revenue and expense over time. This graph shows that average expenses are \$10,755.41, and average revenue is \$15,012.18. Finley then called for a motion to approve the treasurer’s report. Stiegler moved to accept the report; Williamson seconded the motion; the motion passed. Macon asked if approval of the proposed budget would require a separate

motion. Finley indicated it would and called for a motion to approve the budget. Stiegler moved to approve the proposed budget; Hoover seconded; the motion passed.

Standing Committees

Application Review Committee: Chair Melanie Stiegler reported that six candidates applied for Professional Geoscientist licenses; all – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – were recommended for approval. She further reported that the committee had two candidates who recently passed the ASBOG FG exam and have applied for GIT certification; she said both candidates 1 and 2 are recommended for approval. Stiegler moved to approve these candidates for licensure and testing; Williamson seconded the motion; the motion passed.

License Examination Committee: Williamson presented a graph of ASBOG exam performance over time. He reported that five people took the ASBOG Fundamentals of Geology exam on March 15; three passed. Four people took the Practice of Geology exam; all four passed. Finley observed that candidates seem to do better on the Practice of Geology exam than on the Fundamentals of Geology exam; Williamson commented he is interested to see if that trend continues over time because older geoscientists seem to have a harder time with the Fundamentals of Geology exam. Discussion ensued, drawing on experiences at the recent ASBOG Council of Experts meetings.

Williamson then mentioned his recent participation, along with Schramm, in the ASBOG Council of Experts meeting in Nashua, New Hampshire. He thanked the board for the opportunity to attend, commented on the value of his experience, and recommended that others attend in the future. He mentioned that he was impressed with the broad range of experience and generational diversity represented there. Among the 55 attendees, Williamson estimated that these participants collectively brought more than 1000 years of experience to the meeting. He also spoke highly of the ability of the group to meld differences of opinion and collective knowledge into creating better solutions. Both Williamson and Schramm spoke highly of the professional quality of the discussions. Williamson summed up by reporting that the process is very good, and the people involved are excellent, dedicated professionals. Discussion ensued. McDade took both exams for licensure in 2016. Schramm asked her for her impressions; she commented that geoscientists working in New Orleans who took the test in 2016 would not find many questions relevant to the geology in that region. Macon asked her about her study strategies. McDade explained that she invested in “the big green book,” and she worked briefly with a study group that came together through the assistance of Georgeann McNicholas. Schramm commented on the need to work with universities in the state to help them understand how to prepare their students to take the exam. He acknowledged that most state universities are unable to offer much assistance because of budget constraints and lack of resources and staff. Williamson suggested the board reach out to those universities to offer assistance and support in some way. Stiegler countered that, from a faculty perspective at one of those universities, the schools are already well aware of the exams and of their obligations to their students. She pointed out that no amount of support will help if no money is available. Macon asked if the professional community (geological societies, etc.) can provide assistance to help solve the problem. Stiegler suggested it would be helpful to provide students with study guides and to help fill in the educational gaps that inevitably occur because the geology departments cannot afford to offer courses in all areas of geoscience. Discussion ensued.

Complaint Review Committee: In Chairman Perry’s absence, committee member Schramm reported no additional audit letters have been sent out since the March meeting. He explained the letter has been revised (a copy of the draft was included in the meeting packets) and asked for the board’s direction. Schramm asked Macon if a list of potential continuing education providers had been posted on the website. She said the list has not been added to the website, but she had included information in Journal 6, which was sent out in February, on continuing education options. She also mentioned that she handles the situation on a per-call basis because

the board gets a large number of calls about continuing education. The board and legal counsel reviewed the draft letter and deemed it acceptable. Schramm suggested that Macon contact Perry and send the letter as soon as possible; Macon asked if the letter should be sent to those auditees in April and May who have not yet been contacted. Schramm said those people should be included. Hoover asked if the geological societies had been contacted about offering continuing education opportunities. Macon said they had not been asked but that most already offer those opportunities. Hoover explained that the Shreveport Geological Society organizes a seminar – an entire day of presentations – for continuing education credit Williamson added that the seminar is offered about twice a year. Hoover suggested sending the societies a reminder. Schramm commented that the Baton Rouge Geological Society co-sponsors two conferences in April – the Louisiana Water Conference and the Louisiana Oil & Gas Symposium – with the Louisiana Geological Survey and LSU. These meetings offer several hours of continuing education opportunities and even include the one-hour ethics requirement. Discussion ensued, with the consensus that the opportunities offered by the societies and local universities be included on the board’s website. Macon indicated her interest in attending some of the local university seminars and to include brief articles on the website to generate interest in those offerings.

Finley asked Vorhoff for an update on the progress of the seal use rules. Vorhoff reported that the rules must again go to the Occupational License Review Commission, which will not meet again until August. After the commission approves the final version of the rules, they must then go to the legislature for final approval. Finley asked about the version that will be reviewed; Vorhoff explained that he needs to draft the board’s response to the one comment received and modify the draft rule if necessary or advisable.

Office Committee: Macon reminded board members that the office computers need to be replaced. She proposed replacing one now and the other in the fall. She also proposed that the main computer will need to be a little more powerful than the auxiliary computer. She suggested replacing the Dell laptop with either a Dell desktop or an all-in-one. The cost is estimated at around \$1200. Eventually, she told the board, she would like to replace the existing auxiliary computer, a Toshiba laptop, with a Dell laptop. The prices range from \$650 to \$1,000. She said she intends to contact Lancer Winder with Silverwulf IT Services for advice on computers that will meet the needs of the office staff. Once both computers have been replaced, she proposed obtaining a second QuickBooks license so the office staff can load the accounting software on both computers. If in the future, a computer fails, the board will still have access to the financial files.

Macon then introduced Allison Alesi, the owner of Dovetail Digital, to answer any questions the board had about the proposed work in the contract that they had previously been given for review and to discuss changes to the website and additional functionality in the online database. Alesi pointed out that this is a good time to upgrade because Adobe is ending its support for Business Catalyst, and the LBOPG database will have to be moved to a new platform. She said the change will enable her company to provide improved functionality and security and additional storage. Finley asked about how this will affect the website; Alesi clarified that the website will be completely redesigned. Williamson asked how much storage LBOPG currently uses. Alesi responded that their clients with standard contracts are provided with two gigabytes of storage; currently, LBOPG is using 16 gigabytes of storage. Schramm asked if the new contract will cover the excess storage in addition to any new storage required; Alesi assured him that the new contract provides adequate storage for future needs. Finley asked how the archive function will affect the storage space; Alesi pointed out that the archived files will reside online and will have to be stored, just in compressed format. Stiegler asked if the contract will begin on July 1 or if it will be completed by that date; Alesi said the work will start on July 1 and continue until completed. Schramm asked if the contract must be approved by the Division of Administration; Macon responded that the contract does go through the online system of the Office of State Procurement and will be uploaded, if approved, by the deadline of May 17, 2019.

Finley asked how common it is for a company to stop supporting a database platform like Business Catalyst. Alesi explained that it happens occasionally, but when her company was informed that the platform would no longer be supported after 2021, they began researching other companies and database and website platforms. They were so impressed with Treepl, the software they eventually selected, that they became investors and beta testers. Hoover asked about the adaptability of the new software; Alesi assured him that it would be highly adaptable, with any updates installed automatically and transparently to the end users. Alesi explained that the site would have both a public face and a backdoor that will be accessible only to those with the secure credentials.

Williamson asked about the use of the word “State” to define the board and for clarification of who owns the site. Vorhoff explained that the board is a state entity, so the word is apt. Macon and Alesi explained that the language is boilerplate and should have no impact on ownership of the site.

Finley asked about allowing the licensees to print their own license cards. Discussion ensued. Alesi explained that it is all part of the workflow and that the process will include a failsafe to assure that cards are only printed by those who have paid their renewal fees and certified that they have completed their continuing education requirements. Schramm asked if any step of the proposed process will require human interaction. Discussion ensued, with Macon explaining that the current process allows her to review online transactions to verify that they meet board requirements.

Finley asked about the levels of access within the proposed redesigned site and recapped that the site will have different areas of access: A public area; an area for applicants; an area for licensees; and the administrative area. He asked if the area open to the general public could be designed to allow reporting of complaints. Macon pointed out that the site already incorporates a “contact us” form that provides anyone with a quick way to send messages to the board. Finley also asked about the proposed area for logging continuing education credits. Additional discussion ensued.

Finley called for a motion on the contract with Dovetail Digital Marketing. Schramm moved to approve the contract; Stiegler seconded. Finley called for additional discussion; none was forthcoming. Finley then called for a vote. The contract was approved unanimously.

Legal

Vorhoff presented the draft resolution requesting legal opinion/clarification of the board’s authority from the Louisiana Office of the Attorney General. At this point, one board member needed to leave. Before that board member left and a quorum was no longer established, Finley called for discussion on the resolution. After discussion, Schramm moved to send the resolution; Williamson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Adjourn

Finley adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m. The date of the next regular meeting of the board will be Tuesday, July 9, 2019, at 1:00 pm.