

LOUISIANA BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

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



REGULAR MEETING OF LBOPG

Thursday, September 19, 2024, 1:00 P.M.

Physical meeting at

Engineering Center Conference Room

9643 Brookline Avenue

Baton Rouge, LA 70809

and

Virtual Public Meeting Hosted on Zoom

MINUTES

Chair William Schramm called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m., Thursday, September 19, 2024, and commenced roll call.

Present: William Schramm, Michael Simms, William Finley, Melanie Stiegler, and David Williamson, Board Members; Sadé Dennis, Project Coordinator; and Brenda Macon, Executive Secretary.

Absent: David Culpepper, Kaycee Garrett, Lloyd Hoover, and Elizabeth McDade (though attending unofficially on Zoom), Board Members; Seija Meaux, Project Coordinator, and Chantel McCreary, Assistant Executive Secretary.

Guest: Laura LeBouef, LDEQ.

Quorum was established.

Public Comment Period

No comments were forthcoming.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the July 9, 2024, regular board meeting were reviewed, and Schramm called for discussion. Williamson moved to accept the minutes, and Finley seconded the motion. The motion passed.

New Business: Outreach Speaker, Laura LeBouef

Because the board's guest, Laura LeBouef, had another engagement later, Schramm asked board members if the item under "New Business" could be moved up on the agenda; board members unanimously agreed. LeBouef addressed the board regarding previous continuing education activities

created as a service by staff at the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). She pointed out that this service was well received throughout its duration, but that with the recent change in administration, the service will no longer be possible. She asked the board for help in finding a way to continue the service outside of LDEQ. She said, though the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources (LDENR) had assisted in the past, the lack of a suitable meeting space presented a challenge. Schramm mentioned that the original intent of the service was to allow state employees at LDEQ and LDENR, as well as at other agencies, to obtain continuing education without the need to travel away from downtown Baton Rouge. He suggested that the ideal location would be in or near the downtown area. Simms reminded board members that the Louisiana Water Conference, which had been jointly sponsored by the Baton Rouge Geological Society, the Louisiana Geological Survey, and the Louisiana Water Resources Research Institute, had served until just recently as such an opportunity; Simms reported that the conference was nonprofit but provided a range of topics for continuing education. Discussion ensued, with ideas including sponsorship by the state geological societies or by companies with an interest in ensuring that state geologists have access to continuing education opportunities and investigating access to meeting space through other state agencies in the downtown area. Schramm asked LeBouef to send the board materials to help with finding a new way forward with the continuing education effort.

Treasurer's Report

Finley reminded the board that the board had previously decided to move the dedicated funds on deposit at Capital One back to Campus Federal Credit Union (CFCU). He reported that all board funds have been consolidated at CFCU and that he and Macon had opened three timed deposit accounts (TDAs) at CFCU: \$100,000 was deposited into a nine-month TDA at 5.25% interest; \$75,000, into a seven-month TDA at 5% interest; and \$25,000, into a 90-day TDA at 4.5% interest. He said the 90-day account would serve to provide stability to the operating funds required by the board. The higher interest TDAs will provide additional revenue for the funds set aside for future board expenditures.

He then reminded the board that the fee increases authorized on August 1, 2024, have not yet impacted the board's financial bottom line. Now that the increases have been implemented, he plans to watch the accounts closely to monitor the impact. Discussion ensued.

Finley then shared the budget v. actual revenue and expenses. He pointed out that, once again, the increased fees have not yet made an impact on revenue, and that expenses in July and August were higher than they will be in later months because some of the board's highest costs are due at the beginning of the new fiscal year, beginning on July 1. For example, ASBOG dues are always paid in July.

Standing Committees

Application Review Committee: Stiegler reported that the committee reviewed applications for two licenses and three testing (ASBOG) requests. She said the committee recommended for approval 1 and 2 for license; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 for examination; and 1 for GIT certification. Stiegler moved to accept these recommendations; Simms seconded the motion. Schramm repeated the motion, called for discussion, and, when no discussion was forthcoming, called for a vote. The motion passed.

The board then discussed two similar questions posed by potential applicants:

Question: "I am interested in seeing if my military experience will also count towards my time requirements. I am an Oceanographer and have been doing side scan sonar surveys, coring, and grab sampling in support of Mine Warfare. My concern is that this work was not conducted under a Licensed Geoscientist."

Question: "I have work that has been overseen by licensed profession wetland scientists and licensed professional soil scientists, would this qualify?"

The discussion of these two questions was directed toward determining how to respond. Board members agreed that the response depends on the type of work performed and the experience of the references. Simms suggested that, if the potential reference has knowledge of geology but has experience in geology, then that person should be considered as a valid reference. McDade offered that, if the applicants have been getting additional education, continuing education, then they are already doing what they would be expected to do as licensees. Schramm concurred, adding that one of the persons is active military and should receive special consideration. Discussion continued. The final consensus was that the potential applicants should apply so that a more informed review of their experience and that of their references can be performed.

License Examination Committee: Schramm and Williamson reported on the Thursday, September 5, 2024, presentation to LBOPG's testing candidates. Three candidates attended; the candidates asked questions and participated in a brief practice session using materials from the ASBOG website. Macon pointed out that several candidates have expressed fear of taking the exams, and Williamson agreed. Discussion ensued, with Schramm explaining that, during the last testing session in March, the raw average passing score for the ASBOG Practice of Geology exam was 52 out of 110. Macon and Williamson reported that, as of the day of this meeting, six candidates had registered for the ASBOG FG exam, and four candidates had registered for the ASBOG PG exam.

Compliance Committee: Schramm asked Dennis to report on the effect of the audit on retention of licensees. Dennis presented graphics to describe the progress of the audit program, beginning with the voluntary audits of 2019 through 2021 and including the period 2022-2024, during which the audits were required. The graphics showed a significant number of audited licensees either relinquished their licenses officially or gave them up by not responding to the audit, even during the period in which the audit was voluntary. Discussion ensued, with Macon reporting that of the total of 1430 licenses granted in Louisiana, 859 are still active; the loss represents 40% of licenses granted.

Macon asked the board for clarification regarding the status of non-responsive licensees. She said her understanding is that a licensee who has been notified that the license is under audit must submit the log sheet and documentation and have board approval of the continuing education activities before the person can renew the license. If a licensee does not respond to the audit within the calendar year of that audit, the licensee still cannot renew the license until the audit materials have been submitted and approved, regardless of the length of time that has elapsed. Schramm affirmed this part of the process. Macon recommended adding this statement into the Standard Operating Procedures for the audit process so that the process is clear to the next person who serves as the board's Executive Secretary. The board concurred with this recommendation, and Macon offered to prepare this statement for approval of the board at the next board meeting.

Macon asked board members if they had reviewed the list of licenses that were presented at the September board meeting to be audited in 2025. The list was then approved by the board. Macon reminded board members that the audit announcement is sent by email to each licensee on the list. She said the cost of first class postage has risen to 69 cents per letter, and the cost of certified mail can top \$10 per letter, so sending the first round of announcements by email makes fiscal sense. She said reminders are also sent, as each license gets closer to the renewal date, and if she has not received information at that point, she attempts to call licensees who have not responded. She said sometimes the

announcements can be caught in the recipients' spam folders, so she contacts them to be sure they are aware of the audit. Discussion ensued, and board members agreed with this process.

Schramm pointed out that those who are not responding to the audit can be held accountable. They are in non-compliance, which should incur disciplinary action. Williamson suggested adding the disciplinary status to the online roster. Macon explained that the current roster does not allow for this, but that she would ask the website development team to investigate adding this feature to the online roster. Discussion of various issues related to non-compliance and the roster followed.

Outreach Committee: Finley presented a proposal to encourage licensees to share content with the board and other licensees through the board by providing space for this content on the website. The proposal further suggests that other licensees can respond to the content as a type of peer review. Discussion ensued. Schramm said the idea is great, but he asked several questions: Who would add the materials to the website? Who would monitor the site? Who would check documentation? Finley suggested that the content could be presented to the compliance committee as part of the continuing education requirements. Williamson pointed out that licensees already have several avenues for fulfilling the continuing education requirements, and many don't even take advantage of those. Discussion continued, with Schramm suggesting that Macon add the proposed idea to the resource page; Macon said she would see what she could do but cautioned that the more content is added to the website, the less people read it. McDade commented that she has some ideas for streamlining the website so that it can be more user friendly.

Strategic Five-year Plan & Rules Review Ad Hoc: McDade reported that she is in the process of setting up a meeting. She is working with the new legal counsel to determine how best to meet. Discussion ensued, with board members agreeing to abide by the guidance of legal counsel.

Office Committee: Macon reminded board members that the ASBOG Annual Meeting will be held in Fort Collins, Colorado, from October 21 through October 26, 2024. She reported that ASBOG Director Deana Sneyd has asked her to make a presentation, in collaboration with the staff of the North Carolina board, on challenges facing board management. She said one challenge board staff across the nation seem to agree upon is educating their various publics. Sneyd offered to share an ASBOG-produced publication with all member boards; this document succinctly describes what geology professionals do, something Macon said she hopes to put to extensive use. Another area board staff agree needs work is in helping licensees understand what types of continuing education count toward the requirements for licensure.

She then reminded board members that the 29th Annual Joint Engineering Societies Conference (JESC) will be held in Lafayette, Louisiana, February 5 and 6, 2025. LBOPG will have a booth at this conference, and a session dedicated to geology issues will be offered. She said that, as soon as she receives the call for papers and presentations, she plans to send it via Mail Chimp to all LBOPG licensees, GITs, and exam candidates, as well as board members.

She then reported that the lease agreement for board office space had been received from the Office of Facility Planning. She also reported that the approved contract for legal services has still not been received from the Office of the Attorney General. She reported that the required Annual Financial Report has been prepared and filed on the board's behalf by L.A. Champagne and Associates. The report was signed and submitted on August 1, 2024.

Finally, Macon reported that the board office was without Internet service for nearly a week after Hurricane Francine, so board staff have been improvising to get work done. She reported that staff have been working at home a good bit, and that Project Coordinator Sadé Dennis figured out a way to use her phone in the office to communicate with the printer. While they were unable to connect to the Internet with their phones, they managed to keep up with most of the daily work until the connectivity issues were resolved.

Old Business: Election of Officers for FY 2024-2025

Board Executive Committee:

Nominees for the offices were Williamson, Chair; Simms, Vice Chair; Stiegler, Secretary; and Finley, Treasurer. Schramm called for a vote. All were unanimously elected.

Advisory Committee to the Board:

Board members discussed possible nominees to an advisory committee to the board. The committee would be an informal and independent entity that would advise board members on issues of importance to licensees, to geoscience, and to citizens of the State of Louisiana.

Announcement of the Next Meeting and Adjournment

The date of the next regular meeting of the board was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 1:00 pm in the Engineering Center conference room at 9643 Brookline Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA. Stiegler moved to adjourn; Simms seconded. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 4:33 pm.