

LOUISIANA BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

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



REGULAR MEETING OF LBOPG

Thursday, January 14, 2025, 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 David Ray Williamson called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m., Tuesday, January 14, 2025, and commenced roll call.

Present: David Ray Williamson, William Finley, David Culpepper, Elizabeth McDade, and William Schramm, and Michael Simms, Board Members; Sadé Dennis, Project Coordinator; David Peterson, Legal Counsel; and Brenda Macon, Executive Secretary.

Absent: Kaycee Garrett and Melanie Stiegler, Board Members; Seija Meaux, Project Coordinator, and Chantel McCreary, Assistant Executive Secretary.

Guest: Jessica Littleton, DENR.

Quorum was established.

Public Comment Period

No comments were forthcoming.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the November 12, 2024, regular board meeting were reviewed, and Williamson called for discussion. Finley moved to accept the minutes, and Schramm seconded the motion. Williamson called for a vote; the motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Finley reported “an expected surprise,” that revenue was beginning to increase. He explained that, in the past, the months in which revenue increased offset the deficiencies in revenue during the rest of the year. However, in recent years, increased costs have erased that balance. The new fee increases are correcting that imbalance. He suggested that a ceiling be established in the savings account that feeds the expenditure accounts. He recommended opening a new 91-day timed deposit account when revenue exceeds the approved ceiling. Discussion briefly ensued, focused on planning for the coming year and the future.

Finley then presented the year-to-date budget versus expenses and called for questions and discussion. With none forthcoming, he concluded the report.

Standing Committees

Application Review Committee: In the absence of Stiegler, chair of the committee, Williamson and McDade reported on the committee's work. Williamson said seven applications for licenses, three applications for GIT certification, and six testing (ASBOG) requests had been reviewed. He said the committee members are requesting more information on one of the license applications, and they are recommending approval of license applications 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The reviewers pointed out that Candidate 7 simply needed a more up-to-date reference, which should be available by the March meeting. Finley moved to accept the recommendations; McDade seconded; the motion passed. Williamson said the committee recommends testing applications 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Finley moved to accept the recommendations; Culpepper seconded; the motion passed. Finally, Williamson said the committee recommends applications 1, 2, and 3 for GIT certification. Finley moved to accept the committee's recommendations; McDade seconded; the motion passed.

Williamson asked McDade to recap the issues surrounding the question the committee had with the need for an up-to-date reference. McDade explained that the issue was not with having enough references from geoscientists; she said the issue was that, although the applicant had numerous geoscientists among her references, she had no references that were more recent than three years ago. She said that the issue arose from a misunderstanding with the applicant, who has not worked with licensed geoscientists in several years and only recently began her current job. The applicant was concerned that her current employer would not have sufficient experience with her work to be able to serve as a reference, and her previous employer was also not a geoscientist. McDade reported that the committee would much prefer the reference from a non-geoscientist—since the applicant already had several references from geoscientists—with current knowledge of the applicant's work ethics and professionalism.

License Examination Committee: Williamson reported that the score reports have been received for those candidates who took the ASBOG exams in October 2024. He said of the eleven candidates who took the ASBOG Fundamentals of Geology exam, three passed and eight failed, for roughly a 27% success rate. Of the five candidates taking the ASBOG Practice of Geology exam, three passed, for a 60% success rate. Finley asked if the candidates who took the exams were mentored or whether they had access to study materials. His question generated discussion that included mention of a newly implemented senior seminar at UNO. Mark Kulp, a faculty member at UNO, and Chase Cromwell, a board member of the New Orleans Geological Society, have incorporated a segment on ASBOG testing, GIT certification, and licensing in Louisiana into that senior seminar. Discussion also included information on ASBOG's newly created training materials, as well as volunteer efforts by young professionals to help get access to study

materials and testing information to geology students. Finley suggested that board members contact those candidates who did not pass and offer assistance. Additional discussion ensued, with Culpepper volunteering to contact ASBOG candidates to offer his help.

Compliance Committee: Schramm asked Dennis to report on the audit response and activities during the period between board meetings. Dennis reported that the 2024 audit is still not complete, and she asked for guidance on what to do about those auditees who had either not responded at all or who had been instructed to resubmit materials but did not. Schramm asked how many did not respond; Dennis said about 10 out of the total of 30. Discussion ensued, with consensus that attempting to contact nonrespondents by certified mail is ineffective and expensive. Schramm pointed out that the number of non-respondents is approaching 50% per year. Peterson told the board that any auditee who does not respond must be sent a type of notification that can be tracked. He agreed that USPS certified mail is ineffective but mentioned that other mail services, such as Federal Express, may be used instead. on the effect of the audit on retention of licensees. Discussion continued, with Dennis asking Peterson if the board could legally send text messages as reminders. Peterson responded that any form of communication is fine, as long as it is official. Culpepper asked if creating a single expiration date would make notifications easier; Peterson said that the board would need to address that change as a policy issue and that the policy would need to conform with both the statute and the rules. Culpepper put forth the idea of making the renewal date for all licenses July 1.

Schramm reported that, as of the date of the meeting, seven additional auditees (five licensees and two GITs) from the 2025 had responded. Of those, two passed immediately; three needed additional credits; and two needed to find different activities that fit the board's requirements. So far, he said, seven audits have been approved.

Schramm then addressed the agenda item, "Discussion to decide if licensees should be required to send the board a copy of their license seals." He said the statute (R.S. 37:711.22) and the rules (Title 46, Part LXII, Chapter 15.B(1)) require that *all* licensed PGs in Louisiana *must* have a seal. McDade asked if that applies even to those licensees who are not actively filing reports or other documents that require a stamp; Schramm repeated *all* licensees *must* have a stamp. He asked if, going forward, all new licensees should be required to send a copy of their stamp to the board for verification that this requirement has been met. Discussion ensued, with Simms reporting that both Alabama and Mississippi require seals, but they do not follow up on requesting copies from licensees. He argued that licensees should get their seals in order to get the most use out of their licenses, but if their area of work does not require them to use a seal, then they should not be required to have their seals made. Williamson requested that Schramm research how other state boards handle this issue.

Outreach Committee: Culpepper continued the discussion of having a single expiration date. He pointed out that making the renewal process as simple as possible, including this innovation, could improve timely renewals and, thereby, help with license retention. Peterson outlined the steps for such a change: making the change to the rules; advertising the change to the licensees; figuring out a fair way to prorate fees from the previous renewal periods; helping licensees navigate the change; and creating a budget system that accommodates this annual influx of revenue. Culpepper suggested that he work with Macon to investigate how other boards with a single annual renewal date handle their renewals and report at the next meeting.

Schramm asked about the board's ability to offer seminars or other continuing education opportunities for licensees and GITs; Culpepper said he is working on this area and will report at a future meeting.

Strategic Five-year Plan & Rules Review Ad Hoc: McDade presented the committee's final draft of the vision, values, and missions statements for the board's approval. Discussion ensued, with the primary question of whether the statement should echo R.S. 37:711.5 ("moral and ethical character") or go with the committee's pared down version ("ethical character"). Williamson called for a vote on this point. McDade moved to approve the version without the words "moral and," which failed. She then moved to approve the version with the words "moral and," which passed.

She announced that the committee will be working on rules changes as its next charge and invited other board members to help with this process. Peterson told the board that he had found the previously drafted changes in Mabelle Hall's files, and he will be sending them to McDade.

Office Committee: Macon reminded board members that the 29th Annual Joint Engineering Societies Conference (JESC) would be held in Lafayette, Louisiana, February 5 and 6, 2025 and that the board would once again have a booth at the conference. As has been the case for the last two years, the conference would include a session dedicated to geology topics.

She reported that the furnishings of the previously bare conference room were obtained through the Louisiana Property Assistance Agency. The used furniture was purchased in total for \$212 and was cleaned by Macon, Dennis, and Meaux.

She further reported that the board's contract with the Office of the Attorney General is still in queue to be processed on their side.

She also reminded board members to be aware that state travel rules change often and without notice and provided them with links to the best sources of information for state-sanctioned travel and to the most up-to-date travel forms. She further reminded board members of the required annual state ethics training and the May 15 deadline for submitting their financial disclosure statements for 2024, providing them with the link for the site and the appropriate forms to complete.

Old Business: Advisory Committee to the Board

Finley reported on the recent energy forum in New Orleans. He said the first day was not as relevant as he had hoped, but the second and third days were much more productive. In particular, he found the discussions about projects involving carbon capture to be particularly useful. Discussion ensued.

Regarding a letter from the Office of the Attorney General about the change in required participation in the Occupational Licensing Review Program (OLRP) sent to board members October 7, 2024, David Peterson, Assistant Attorney General, reported that he had new information on this program. Whereas he had originally thought the program would not be beneficial for a small board, he has begun to think differently about it. He said he will provide additional information as he receives it. Discussion of the expense (\$3000 per year) for this program continued.

New Business

Board Member passes: Lloyd G. Hoover, one of the original members of the board retired from the board in late October 2024 and passed away on January 2, 2025. Board members held a moment of silence to remember him. Culpepper suggested that the board create a resolution of appreciation for his service. Williamson also suggested that donations can be made in his memory to Ducks Unlimited.

Board Member succession: Because Hoover was the engineering representative on the board, his replacement must be nominated by the Louisiana Engineering Society (LES). Mary Claire Ruckert, the Director of LES, attended the meeting to facilitate this process. She asked the board for information on the position and said she would be asking the LES board members to nominate candidates for the position to be forwarded to the Louisiana Office of Boards & Commissions.

Executive Secretary succession: Macon announced that she plans to retire from the position of Executive Secretary of the board on December 31, 2026. She said she hopes the board will start planning for her replacement soon. Macon explained that State law requires that financial duties be split between at least two people. For example, the Legislative Auditor's Office recommends that the person who makes financial deposits is not the same person who records those deposits in the bookkeeping software. Macon suggested splitting her position into two positions of nearly equal duties to facilitate filling two full-time positions. She also recommended that the board continue the practice of hiring LSU Geology students to work in the office. Schramm pointed out that, to offer benefits, which is essential, the board needs to plan for at least 40% over salary. Discussion ensued, with McDade suggesting that some duties can be streamlined and Culpepper suggesting that an updated job description is needed.

Announcement of the Next Meeting and Adjournment

Williamson encouraged board members to report on their activities on behalf of the board at the next meeting. The date of the next regular meeting of the board was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 1:00 pm in the Engineering Center conference room at 9643 Brookline Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA. Suggestions were entertained to change the date to Thursday, March 13, 2025, and Williamson asked Macon to conduct a poll to determine the best date for the meeting. Schramm moved to adjourn; Finley seconded. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 4:10 pm.