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Minnesota Ground Water Association
Board Meeting Minutes
Regular monthly meeting

Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Location:

- Meeting was called to order at 11:34 AM. The meeting was held as an online Teams meeting.

Attendance:

- Jere Mohr, Past President; Sandeep Burman, President; Rebecca Higgins, President-Elect; Michael Ginsbach, Secretary; Sean Hunt, Management; Jennie Leete, Management; Sherri Kroening, Newsletter

Agenda:

- Additions to agenda from Sean: membership dues, conference pricing, potential donation of financial surplus to Foundation
- Higgins moves to approve previous meeting minutes, Mohr seconds, minutes approved

Fall conference planning update:

- Heritage Center is reserved, meeting in Carriage Hall (same room as previous Fall conference)
- Cost for previous Fall conference was \$24,000; \$7,500 was for post-conference gathering. Had 195 registrations. Estimated cost \$85-\$100 per person for meeting room and food. Last in-person conference was \$190 for members, \$240 for non-members, \$75 student/retired, pre-registration deadline was 2 weeks before conference, additional \$50 if registered after deadline.
- Keep price the same as last time? Burman says pros and cons. If keep price the same, need to make clear that we were happy to be able to do this, but won't necessarily be able to do this moving forward.
- Jenni - Consider potential changes to membership dues in the conference pricing. Historically, conference pricing has been such that it effectively gave a \$5 discount on membership.

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- Higgins suggests that we should have a written proposal with options to respond to. Suggests that dues increase could be helpful in supporting efforts to draw in young professionals which is important to sustain the organization.
- Hunt - Need to make change to membership dues now in conjunction with conference announcement.
- Mohr asks about history of membership dues. Last time membership dues were raised was in 2016. Typically, prior practice was to raise approximately every 5 years.
- Higgins indicates that MGWA conferences are still a very good value relative to other conferences, Mohr and Kroening agree.
- Burman and Mohr agree that the proposal is very fair given the current year.
- Leete asked what the amount of increase would be for a regular member. Higgins said it would be almost unnoticeable to have a \$10 increase, especially if it was explicitly called out as being the first due increase since 2016. Kroening said that she would not see any complaints from her group.
- Leete said that the retired rates are generally half the professional rate but the sustainer rates are half above. Leete said that there's no harm in keeping student rates the same. She suggests students could be \$20, \$30 retired, professionals would be \$60, and sustainers \$90 - which is a \$15 increase from the current \$45 fee for professionals. Leete notes that a number of retirees are actually paying the sustainer rate but it is a good option to keep the reduced rate.
- Burman suggested drafting an email from the board announcing the changes in due and explaining the rationale for the dues increase to be as transparent and upfront as possible. Leete agreed that this is a good idea.
- Per Leete and Hunt, the proposal is to have the membership rates change as such: students would be the same rate, retired would increase \$5, professionals would increase \$15, and sustainers would increase by \$25.
- Price to attend the conference for a member would be the same but a non-member conference fee would increase to \$255 because in the increases in membership costs.
- Higgins asked if the sustainers might be concerned by that increased rate; Leete said that she is a sustainer and is not concerned about it. Leete said there is also a place to add extra donations on the membership renewals that goes to the Foundation.
- Burman motions to vote on the increased membership fees for all but the student rates and increased conference fees for non-members. Mohr seconds. All in favor, motion passes.
- Burman asks if someone could utilize their writing skills to share these updated rates to the membership and explain the rationale for the changes. Higgins asked if the announcement has been drafted for the conference and the membership renewal. Hunt said that he could look to see what has been announced for conferences in the past and put something in draft format about what has been discussed. Leete said this is the time of year where it is put together and this is generally the meeting where the drafts are discussed and updated - change the title and date, update the website, etc.
- Hunt said that he likes to keep one message per email. He suggests that one email would be sent announcing that membership renewal is opened and, once those numbers start to decrease, compile the paper reports and provide a conference notice.

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- Higgins asks if Hunt would draft some language about the changing costs - something generic and short that could be run by the Board for comments. Hunt said that all of this could also be in one big message - Higgins agrees with this approach, as does Burman.
- Hunt suggested looking back at the conference planning - the venue - now that the financial part has been settled. He notes that the conference will be run just like the last one and asks Burman if he can recall anything about the audiovisual setup that should be changed. Leete said that the instructions for how to use the lights in the room were not provided during setup last year. She said that this needs to be different this time to ensure that extra light is not cast on the screen. Leete suggests appointing a “custodian of the lights” to ensure that things are done properly. Higgins also noted that the temperature was a potential issue last year with temperatures being lower than some attendees may have liked. Leete agreed and said that there might be fewer attendees than the room can hold which might impact the temperatures in the room.
- Burman reiterated the last points ensuring that the discussion about the lighting be addressed to ensure that the presentations are clearly visible.
- Burman asked about exhibitors or for poster presentations. Hunt said that he noted there was some discussion at the last meeting regarding this issue and it seemed like there was little interest in having exhibitor space but there is one exhibitor that generally is interested in this. Hunt said that if there is still interest, there could be a table for the exhibitor and including a conference ticket for the exhibitor. Hunt said that the table rental at the University was \$500 but the table space at this location would likely be more.
- Burman asked if the heritage center would be okay with this or if there would be any additional costs aside from the table rental. Hunt said that we are renting the room and it is our choice who is there - he said there would likely be space near where the food is being shared in the entryway area or that the exhibitors could be located in the lunch room. Leete said that for the Midwest Groundwater Conference at the same venue there were six exhibitors in the hallway near where the meeting room was located; she also notes that we would be lucky to get six exhibitors. Leete said that she is looking for the price schedules as, last time, there were no tables aside from the ones being used as part of the conference.
- Hunt said that at the podium area, a stage riser is approximately \$40 and that a larger piece for the table might be in the \$80-90 range but it is unclear. Leete said that if there is a linen cover the cost may be more expensive. Higgins said that an option could be a hightop table instead of the traditional lower table style. She suggests looking into having one or two high tops per vendor to see as it might be more inviting and cheaper. Higgins also said that we could potentially ask the vendors to bring in their own linen.
- Leete said that this is usually the Foundation that organizes this and notes that at the previous venue the exhibitors would usually fold up the provided linen and use their own and the high top tables are already present. Hunt said that this needs to be discussed with the venue; Leete said it is possible but that there needs to be a discussion first if there will be any exhibitors.
- Mohr said this was discussed at the last Foundation meeting and he said that he told the Foundation that Board was potentially looking for exhibitors. Mohr said that they were generally supportive of having the exhibitors. Leete said that Bob Tipping was generally the one who organized the vendors in the past due to professional connections. Leete said that Foundation is overspending the undedicated funding at the moment. Leete said that

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the only fundraising the Foundation had initiated was the fundraiser at last fall conference.

- Higgins suggested including a line item in the conference invite to advertise potential exhibitors. She said this seems like a straightforward approach to getting vendors here for this meeting. Kroening said that the newsletter is sending out the September newsletter soon and that this can be included in this update.
- Hunt will provide a draft including what Burman shared yesterday to the Board and what was discussed during the board meeting. Kroening said that once the conference announcement is completed it can be included in the newsletter as well.
- Burman asked if there were any loose ends related to the conference. No loose ends aside from Leete reminding the Board there will be a need for help the evening before the conference to prepare for the conference.
- Burman noted there is one spot open for the conference and if the Board has any suggestions for speakers or talks to share them with him. He also asked for feedback on the timing of the agenda. Burman reminded the board that the general theme is the 50 Year of the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Burman stated that he currently has the lunch set as an hour but asks if there would be any interest in extending the lunch to an hour and fifteen minutes. Burman said that the Education Committee has expressed interest in providing a photo sketch on the water well clinic during the presentation and suggested increasing the amount of time allocated to this group to accommodate that. Burman asked if the awards needs to be given out during this meeting. He notes that if there is a longer lunch and a little bit longer for the MGWA business updates, the last talk might be taken up.
- Ginsbach asked for a definition of “photo sketch”. Mohr said there was no additional information from the person who suggested the topic and the idea will likely be to share photos and stories from the clinic.
- Higgins said that she likes that the conference is always a crescendo and asks if there could be a presentation at the very end related to infrastructure and how dollars impact groundwater and drinking water. She also said that there are also other potential funds for drinking water that may be headed to Minnesota.
- Burman said that MDH talks about this at all and notes that it is more about the built environment than the natural environment. He said the question is about making sure that this is not a misfit and still has a connection to the rest of the topics. He said if the Board is interested that he would not have any issues trying to find a speaker on the topic.
- Higgins asked the rest of the Board for their opinion, Mohr said that it is a little outside of the scope of what he does so he does not have a good perspective. He did note that it could be interesting if it is tied in to groundwater. Kroening said it is also outside of what she and her group typically thinks about but echoes Mohr’s comment. Ginsbach said that he is not interested in money in general and will abstain from sharing his opinion on this discussion. Hunt said that it could be a good option if the talk could be related to source water protection.
- Burman said he might be able to have someone from the Attorney General's office about the national settlement. He said that it would not be directly groundwater related but would be related to money that cities in Minnesota may get to fix their drinking water issues related to PFAS. He could also have someone give an update about the infrastructure bill as well. He notes that there was a talk related to the funding of Superfund for the 30 year anniversary of CERCLA.

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- Burman asked how the Board felt about this potential topic. Higgins said that unless there was a distinct need to expand the lunch time, she would be in favor of having the last talk. Mohr looked back at last fall's meeting and said that it was an hour last year. He notes that if there are exhibitors that this might be a case to extend the lunch.
- Higgins asked if there could be an extra 10-15 minutes for lunch, keep the MGWA business talk short, and have a quick, short talk at the very end. Higgins said that it would also be good to have another meeting at the end to make sure that there wasn't just one talk after the afternoon break.
- Burman will look to see if he can find a presenter for the last spot in a somewhat shorter presentation.
- Burman asked about the timing of getting the candidates for Board positions and if this should be shared as part of the fall conference. Higgins suggested discussing this at the October board meeting. Sandeep asked if that would be enough time if it was discussed in the October meeting; Hunt said it was. Kroening said that a call for nominees is generally included in this newsletters.
- The secretary position is up for a vote this year; Ginsbach noted that he will run again for this position. Kroening will include both the secretary and president notices in the newsletter.
- Hunt reminds the Board that there will need to be exact verbiage and phrasing for the theme and a blurb about the conference. Burman will send that to the Board for review and will send to Hunt after review for finalization.

Membership drive - U of M ESCI Career Fair:

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Reports:

- Burman asked if there were any pressing issues to discuss for the report-out due to the time

Treasurer:

- The treasurer was not present.

Management (WRI):

- No items were discussed.

Newsletter:

- No items were discussed.

White Paper Committee:

- Higgins notes that Ginsbach is the contact for the White Paper Committee.

Education Committee:

- No items were discussed.

Foundation:

- Burman will include an item about the Foundation for the October meeting to discuss spending and revenue.

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Social meeting options: in-person

- Burman said that he was overcommitted during the previously proposed time for an in-person Board meeting but would be in favor of another attempt at having an in-person meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:00 pm.

Action Items:

- Burman will include the finances of the Foundation as a topic for the october meeting.

Next Meeting:

- The next meeting will be held on Microsoft Teams on October 17, 2023 at 11:30 am.