

MINUTES – DRAFT FOR BOARD REVIEW

ASCE TEXAS SECTION

WINTER 2020-2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

January 30, 2021 | 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM CT | Hybrid Meeting

BGE, Inc., 101 W. Louis Henna Blvd., Suite 400, Austin, TX 78728, and Zoom Meeting



1.0 Convene

1.1 Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by President Sean P. Merrell PE at 12:01 PM Central Time.

1.2 Installed Vice President for Educational Affairs Elect Clay Forister PE. Past President Susan K. Roth PE led attendees through the installation ceremony to formally install Clay Forister.

1.3 Zoom Screen Capture and Photo by Jenni Peters.

1.4 Roll Call, Determination of Quorum. The Executive Committee convened for a hybrid meeting. Some committee members attended by means of video conference. Secretary Mike Sosa took roll and a quorum was present.

Position	Name	Present/Absent
President	Sean Merrell PE	P
Past President	Susan Roth PE	P
President Elect	Patrick Beecher PE	P
VP Educational	Natalie Chaney PE	P
VP Educational Elect	Clay Forister PE	P
VP Professional	Griselda Gonzales PE	P
VP Professional Elect	Patricia Frayre PE	P
VP Technical	Robert Stevens PhD PE	P
VP Technical Elect	Ron Reichert	P
Senior Director at Large	Alik McCoy PE	P
Treasurer	Chris Nance PE	P
Executive Director	Lindsay O’Leary PE, CAE	P
Board Secretary	Mike Sosa	P

P = Present; A = Absent

Guests

- Jenni Peters, TexASCE Communications Specialist
- Kelly Mahmoud, Edward Jones, Financial Advisor
- Art Clendenin PE, ASCE Texas Section Past President

1.5 President Merrell welcomed the guests listed above to the meeting.

1.6 President Elect Patrick Beecher PE led attendees through the Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation.

1.7 Kelly Mahmoud from Edward Jones Provided a Texas Section Investment Report.

Discussion: Mahmoud recommended an annual spending of 4 to 5% to avoid dipping into the principal of the Texas Section’s investment. This equates to approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually. Treasurer Chris Nance noted the adopted FY2020-2021 operating budget includes a \$53,000 investment draw to balance the budget.

Mahmoud explained that the Texas Section has four different funds (Texas Section investment account and three trust fund accounts) and provided updates:

- Investment Account** – Current split is 61/39% equity/fixed income. This account needs to be balanced to realign with investment strategy (50/50%). Since September 2015, the account has averaged a 9% annual rate of return.
- John B. Hawley Fund** – 62/38% equity/fixed income. Started in July 2018 and has gained \$63,000 (8% return per year).
- Walter J. Porter Fund** – 61/39% equity/fixed income. Started in November 2017 and has gained \$12,000 (6% return per year).
- Texas Civil Engineering Foundation (TCEF) Texas Section Past Presidents Educational (TSPPE) Trust Fund** – Started as growth oriented and switched to conservative in early 2020. 23/77% equity/fixed income. Mahmoud recommends revisiting that decision in 2021.
 - President Merrell noted that he recently spoke with Past President Jack Furlong and use of the TSPPE Fund is being considered to help students attend the Student Symposium, supporting their travel to/from the event.

Action: O'Leary to discuss re-balancing Texas Section investment account with Mahmoud, along with anticipated cash needs. (Post meeting update: O'Leary & Mahmoud to meet February 19, 2021.)

Action: Merrell and O'Leary to coordinate with TCEF TSPPE Trust Fund trustees regarding their investment strategy.

Guest Kelly Mahmoud left meeting.

1.8 Region 6 Governor Sean P. Merrell provided Region 6 comments.

Discussion: Governor (and President) Merrell provided a brief update on behalf of Region 6 Director Jerry Paz. He noted that the new ASCE [Code of Ethics](#) has officially been released and suggested everyone review that document. He also mentioned the discussion is still ongoing by the ASCE Board of Direction regarding whether or not to allow student members to vote.

Action: All Executive Committee members to review new ASCE [Code of Ethics](#).

1.9 President Merrell Provided the Executive Summary

Discussion: President Merrell requested a moment of silence to honor Vice President of Educational Affairs Elect Rusty Gibson, who passed away unexpectedly in November 2020. Merrell spoke about Gibson's significant impact on ASCE Texas Section. Gibson served on the ASCE Northeast Texas Branch Board and on the Texas Section Infrastructure Report Card Committee. He was active in the geotechnical engineering community and served as president of Texas Council of Engineering Laboratories (TCEL).

Next, Merrell congratulated the Texas Section for winning two ASCE Awards for 2019-2020 including the Outstanding Section/Branch Award for the Very Large Section category and the Outstanding Website Award for the new [Texas Civil Engineer](#) news website. Both awards will be presented during CECON 2021.

2.0 Administrative Items for Board of Direction Action

2.1 The Executive Committee adopted the agenda.

Discussion: None.

Motion to adopt agenda as presented. Move to adopt. Seconded and passed without dissent.

2.2 The Executive Committee was asked to disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

Discussion: No conflicts of interest presented.

Motion to continue meeting. Move to approve. Seconded and passed without dissent.

3.0 Items for Discussion

3.1 Section Finances

Discussion: Treasurer Nance noted the Section's 2019-2020 actual revenues were about 93% of projections (or about \$68,000 under projections). The Section only reached 95% of budgeted dues revenue. He also noted 2019-2020 actual expenses were about 101% of projections and current fiscal year (2020-2021) revenues and expenses are tracking to be within budget to-date. VP Educational Elect Clay Forister inquired about direct dues collection by the Section. O'Leary noted the Section is not permitted to collect dues per the Section's Governing Documents (Constitution).

President Elect Beecher and President Merrell spoke about the need to foster more membership champions within companies across Texas. Branches play a critical role in transitioning student members to professional membership upon graduation. Past President Roth noted the need to continue to spread the word about the separate cost for Section/Branch dues.

Treasurer Nance noted that Section Leadership needs to evaluate how/where it spends its money. The goal isn't strictly to find budget cuts, but to make sure efforts and finances are being put towards projects and events that benefit and impact a significant portion of our membership.

VP Technical Bob Stevens noted ASCE recently approved a policy that will go into effect in July 2021, automatically transitioning student members to a professional member for one-year upon graduation.

Executive Director O'Leary provided an update on the Section's FY2019-2020 tax return. CPA Ron Meyer has drafted the return. CECON 2020 expenses and revenue will be recognized within the FY2020-2021 since the conference was held in that fiscal year (November 2021).

Action: President Elect Beecher to discuss revenue generating activities with the Strategic Planning Committee for consideration in their deliberations. Committee should also consider overall expenses. Is the Section equitably spending funds to the benefit of all members?

Action: President Merrell to discuss office space with Executive Director O'Leary and Office & Personnel Committee.

Action: O'Leary to review FY 2019-2020 tax return and provided draft to ASCE's Finance Department and Section Board prior to filing with the IRS. (Post meeting update: O'Leary reviewed return and CPA Meyer filed an extension request with the IRS, to allow additional time for small adjustments to the Form 990 and review. Return is now due August 15, 2021 and O'Leary will coordinate review with ASCE and Board.)

3.2 Recruiting

Discussion: President Merrell provided an update on the status of various committees, institutes, and trust funds.

- **Engineering Management Institute Chapter.** VP Technical Stevens has not received official confirmation from any of the potential volunteers he has contacted to serve as chair.
- **Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee.** President Merrell noted two co-chairs have been identified to review [ASCE MOSAIC](#) guidance when available and provide the Section Board with recommendations to implement best practices: Kate Osborn PE and Dora Marin-Robles PE. Additionally, a diversity statement is posted on the Section's website.
- **CECON Review (Internal) and Evaluation (External) Task Committees.** President Merrell noted the review committee will be tasked to conduct an independent review, interviewing a variety of CECON stakeholders to assess the internal operations of the committee. Members will likely include Past Presidents and former Executive Directors Crespín Guzman and Martha Juch; Past President Nancy Cline, and former Executive Director Ottis Foster. This committee will be tasked with providing recommendations to the Section's Board of Direction during the September 2021 meeting. The evaluation committee will review and analyze the conference itself to determine ways to continue improving the conference and attracting a larger audience. Members may include Clay Forister.

Action: Contact President Merrell to volunteer for the Evaluation Task Committee.

Action: President Merrell to oversee CECON Review and Evaluation task committees and obtain report(s) with recommendations for the Board by September 2021.

- **STEM Committee.** VP Educational Natalie Chaney noted a member has expressed interest to sever as the committee chair and two other volunteers have expressed interest in helping with committee efforts.

Action: Chaney to follow-up with interested volunteers and keep Younger Member Committee Chair Joe Alvarez abreast of activities as he may be able to assist.

- **John B. Hawley Trust Fund.** President Merrell noted the fund will have an open trustee position at the end of the fiscal year (September 30, 2021) and the Section is seeking trustee candidates for the 2021-2027 term.
- **2022-2023 Texas Section Officers.** President Merrell noted Executive Committee members should start thinking about potential candidates now. The Section's Nominating Committee considers a wide range of diversity characteristics including underrepresented minorities and geographical location.
- **Branch & Section Relations Committee.** President Merrell noted the Section is seeking volunteers.

Action: All Executive Committee members to recommend candidates for 2021-2027 Hawley Trustee, 2022-2023 Texas Section Officers, and Branch & Section Relations Committee.

Break from 1:20 to 1:30 pm.

3.3 **Strategic Dialogue: Post-Pandemic Meetings & Events**

Discussion: Topic tabled until Spring 2020-21 Board of Direction Meeting, to be held March 26, 2021.

Action: All Executive Committee members to consider the following in preparation for the March meeting: How will virtual meetings impact/change the way Texas Section does business? Will most members return to meeting in-person, or will there be a need for hybrid events?

3.4 **2021 Texas Infrastructure Report Card**

Discussion: VP for Professional Affairs Griselda Gonzales PE noted that the [2021 Texas Infrastructure Report Card](#) (IRC) Summary is set to be released initially on February 10. The Section will hold a virtual press conference via Zoom to release the 2021 Texas IRC. There will be 75 spots available for stakeholders and members and another 25 spots reserved for media members. The full report card is expected to be released in mid-February as well, for use during the 2021 Texas Legislative Drive-In.

3.5 **Professional Activities**

Discussion: VP Professional Gonzales noted the [2021 Texas Legislative "Dial-In"](#) will be held February 22-26 and registration is open. She also gave an update on the current activities of the Flood Mitigation Advisory Task Committee, which is meeting monthly and may be asked to conduct a document review for the Texas Water Development Board related to their new Flood Infrastructure Funding plan.

3.6 **Student Symposium**

Discussion: VP for Education Affairs Natalie Chaney noted sponsorship opportunities for the 2021 Virtual Student Symposium are now available and encouraged everyone to consider supporting this event. The event will also feature professional development (PDH) sessions planned by the Austin Branch. Chaney also noted Head Judge/Student Competitions Coordinator Jessica Hilscher has identified a success who will begin training: Shannon Jungman.

President Merrell gave an update on ASCE's Student Conference Realignment process. ASCE decided to realign student conferences based on existing Region boundaries, which means combining schools from Texas, Mexico, New Mexico, and Oklahoma into one student conference. The initial proposed solution is to host a "Region 6 Student Symposium" where schools from all four sections come together to compete.

Art Clendenin provided an update on various efforts in progress to help recognize former Texas Section VP for Educational Affairs Elect Rusty Gibson as well as provide some aid to his family. The Northeast Texas Branch discussed renaming an event such as their annual Clay Shoot or their scholarship in his honor, Gibson's employer (ETTL) discussed donating or creating a scholarship in his honor, and the Texas Section discussed renaming the technical paper presentation competition held during the Student Symposium in Gibson's honor and will dedicate the 2021 Texas IRC to Gibson. Nothing has been done to-date, but Clendenin offered to help the Section with these efforts to officially honor Rusty.

Action: All Executive Committee members to consider sponsoring the [2021 ASCE Texas Student Symposium](#), including participating in the Career Fair.

Action: Chaney, Forister, Merrell and Sosa to hold call with Student Activities Committee Chair Heather Guillen and Head Judge/Student Competitions Coordinator Jessica Hilscher to discuss a possible Region 6 Student Conference. (Post meeting update: Call was held February 8, 2021 to discuss possible logistical challenges and identify items to discuss with Region 6 stakeholders.)

Action: Board to discuss renaming the Student Paper Presentation Competition to include all Region 6 schools. Also discuss donating to the TCEF PPETF in Rusty's Honor.

Action: O'Leary to coordinate with Budget & Finance Committee and provide Rusty Gibson's wife with a gift card (restaurant and/or spa suggested).

3.7 2021 Leadership Development Weekend

Discussion: President Elect Beecher noted that LDW 2021 will be held in Houston this July (hot and humid!). He is exploring the option of hosting the event at a local hotel space, but also hopes to facilitate a virtual attendance option.

Action: All Executive Committee members to contact Beecher with suggestions for leadership speakers.

Guest Art Clendenin left meeting.

3.8 Technical Activities

Discussion: VP for Technical Affairs Stevens noted institute chapters provided six sessions at CECON 2020 and secured three lightning round speakers. There is a current election going on for Texas SEI that is set to end in mid-February; four volunteers have been identified to serve as leaders. He also noted webinars reached 126% of the budgeted goal for FY 2019-20 and he anticipates that the Section will hit its budgeted revenue for webinars again in 2020-21. He has secured speakers through March 2021 and has one each for April and May. President Merrell congratulated Stevens, Sosa, and Past VP Tech Andres Salazar.

Action: Stevens to coordinate the execution of CECON and Webinar Memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with Texas Construction Institute Chapter (TxCI).

3.9 Texas Civil Engineer (TCE)

Discussion: Senior Director at Large Alik McCoy thanked Jenni Peters for her research and obtaining quotes for an annual print version of the TCE. The best quote received (for a full-service printing and mailing) was around \$7,000 total for 7,000 copies (approx. \$1 each), but postage will vary based on the exact mailing list. President Merrell noted that the Section could solicit sponsorships to cover the cost. McCoy noted due to the expected workload, the Editorial Committee would need approval soon if the Section plans to produce this for 2021. O'Leary suggested placing this project on hold until 2022 for a variety of reasons including an already tight budget and the continued uncertainty of 2021. Chaney and Beecher agreed with this thought process. Merrell agreed as well, but also noted that the Board needs to consider the members who aren't attending our programs and whether receiving this would add value to their membership. In addition, he noted that it serves as a marketing tool for all the Texas Section's programs, initiatives and events.

Next, McCoy brought up the *Excellence in Journalism Award (EIJA)* and current plans to revamp the criteria to allow for a greater diversity of nominations and to ensure that the winner can accept recognition. She expects the award solicitation to begin again in June 2021. The Executive Committee agreed the form associated with the EIJA should be updated now.

Action: Discuss the need for a comprehensive/annual sponsorship plan that includes a full catalog of opportunities to each company, during a future meeting. Such a plan would consolidate the "asks" received by target sponsors/companies 5+ times for support on various projects/events.

Action: All Executive Committee members to submit TCE article ideas via Share@TexASCE.org, submit EIJA nominations, and consider [advertising](#) on the Section's website.

Action: Directors at Large to provide updated language for next [Rules of Operation](#) update to reflect changes to the EIJA solicitation and award process, to document current best practices.

3.10 CECON

Discussion: President Elect Beecher thanked the committee for their commitment to CECON and efforts in pivoting CECON 2020 to a virtual format, including Co-Chairs Matt Singel, Jennifer Bohlander, and Tiffany Reed-Villarreal. Next, he shared a handful of positive responses from the 2020 post-event survey. He also noted there were about 280 attendees at CECON 2020 virtual, and the event had lower participation from sponsors and exhibitors due to the virtual format (approx. \$31k loss). Lastly, he noted the current plan for CECON 2021 is to hold the conference in-person, in San Marcos in September and he is impressed with the committee's leadership (Bohlander, Reed-Villarreal, and Andrew Domke). The theme will be "Laying the Foundation for Sustainability" and the initial plans for a program and budget will be laid out in the coming months prior to the Spring 2021 Board Meeting (scheduled for March 26, 2021).

The Executive Committee agreed the recommendations provided by the CECON Site Selection Committee, as summarized below, should be presented to the Board for approval in March.

- CECON 2022 – Frisco
- CECON 2023 – San Marcos (per existing contract)
- CECON 2024 – Denton
- CECON 2025 – San Marcos (per existing contract)
- *CECON 2026 – Site Selection Committee to provide recommendation in 2023*

Action: Approve CECON Site Selection Committee recommendations for 2022 to 2025 and receive CECON 2020 financial report and CECON 2021 preliminary budget at Spring 2021 Board Meeting. Beecher to coordinate with respective Committee Chairs.

Action: President Merrell requested CECON Planning Manual be reviewed and updated annually. Beecher to coordinate with CECON Planning Committee.

Action: All Executive Committee members to [suggest CECON 2021 speakers & topics](#) by February 26.

4.0 Items for Executive Committee Action

4.1 The Executive Committee adopted the consent agenda*.

Discussion: None.

Motion to adopt the consent agenda. Move to adopt. Seconded and passed without dissent.

*Items on the consent agenda included:

- 4.1.1 Receive all Reports marked [I] on the Agenda (including the November 2020 Financial Report).
- 4.1.2 Establish Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Committee & Appoint Dora Robles PE and Kate Osborn PE as Co-Chairs.
- 4.1.3 Approve Student Symposium 2021 Budget (Approved by 2019-2020 Board on September 25, 2020 and subsequently revised for Virtual Event).
- 4.1.4 Endorse Slate of Officer Nominees for 2021-2022.

4.2 The Executive Committee endorsed Past Presidents Council Recommendations for 2021 Texas OCEA Award & Award of Merit.

- 4.2.1 OCEA: Able Pump Station Project *submitted by Ramon Miguez and Lance Ferland (HDR)*
- 4.2.2 Award of Merit: Mansfield Road Improvements Project *submitted by Sindhu Avalokita and Spenta Irani (Jacobs)*

Discussion: None.

Motion to endorse recommendations. Move to endorse. Seconded and passed without dissent.

5.0 Closing Remarks and Final Comments

Discussion: President Merrell thanked everyone for their time and invited everyone to save the date for ASCE's Multi-Region Leadership Conference (MRLC) 2021 in July (which may be held in a virtual format). He is happy to have such a supportive team on the Board and Section Staff, and thanked everyone for their hard work to-date!

6.0 President Merrell adjourned the meeting at 3:00 PM Central Time.