

MINUTES – DRAFT for BOARD REVIEW

ASCE TEXAS SECTION

SUMMER 2020-2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

July 9, 2021 | 2:00 PM – 5:15 PM CT | Holiday Inn & Suites Westway Park
4606 Westway Park Blvd., Houston, TX 77041 | Dallas Ballroom



1.0 Convene

1.1 Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by Texas Section President Sean P. Merrell PE at 2:08 PM.

1.2 Roll Call, Determination of Quorum. 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	P
Board Secretary	Mike Sosa	P

P = Present, A = Absent

Guests

1. Jenni Peters CAE, TexASCE Communications Specialist
2. Art Clendenin PE, TexASCE 2018-19 President
3. Tim Newton PE, Region 6 Governor
4. Surya Bhandari PE, Texas Transportation & Development Institute Chair
5. Andrew Domke PE, TexASCE CECOM Planning Committee Co-Chair
6. Jean-Louis Briaud PhD, PE, ASCE President 2021
7. Yan Linwood PE, TexASCE First Year Director at Large
8. Mark Boyd PhD, PE, TexASCE Incoming VP Technical Elect
9. Travis Attanasio PE, TexASCE Incoming President Elect
10. Tyler Huynh EIT, Dallas Branch Younger Members Chair
11. Anna Shidlorshaya, Texas A&M University Student
12. Anna Timchenko, Texas A&M University Student

1.3 Welcome Visitors. President Merrell welcomed the guests listed above to the meeting and allowed them each to introduce themselves to the group.

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

1.5 Lee Lennard PE, F.SAME from ACEC Texas provided remarks.

Discussion: Not present. President Merrell noted Mr. Lennard and he recently discussed the indemnity clause for private and public clients ([Texas HB 2116](#)). ACEC Texas is working to advocate for this effort.

1.6 2021 ASCE President Jean-Louis Briaud PhD, PE provided Society comments.

Discussion: ASCE President Briaud thanked everyone for their dedication to ASCE. He also noted that he is willing and able to provide support whenever the Section needs it. President Merrell thanked Dr. Briaud for his service and support in his time as ASCE President, as well as Dr. & Mrs. Briaud’s largest-ever donation of \$1M to the ASCE Foundation. President Merrell also asked Dr. Briaud for an update on the recent member vote regarding whether student members should be allowed to vote. Dr. Briaud noted that while most members voted in favor, the total vote was slightly under the 2/3 majority needed for it to pass.

1.7 Region 6 Governor Tim Newton provided Region 6 comments.

Discussion: Governor Newton noted he is here to support the programs and activities of all the Sections within Region 6. He also mentioned the Region 6 elections recently concluded, and Larry Goldberg PE (Past Texas Section President) was elected to the office Region 6 Governor in Texas (2021-2024). Governor Newton thanked Governor Sanford LaHue, Jr., PE for his service during his term as Governor. Next, he mentioned that the [Region 6 Grant Program](#) is still up and running and has awarded \$27,000 in support over the last four years. The maximum grant amount this year is \$1,250.

Lastly, Governor Newton briefed the group on a few society-level initiatives including the Future World Vision roll-out in late 2021 with the Mega City program and noted the Blue Sky Innovation Competition is being promoted as a feature competition in the newly realigned student conferences. He also encouraged members of the Texas Section Leadership to pursue interest in joining a committee at the ASCE level to ensure Region 6 representation at the highest level of the organization.

Action: Region 6 recommends forming Future World Vision committees and task forces now, to plan for 2023 events such as during Engineers Week. Necessary supplies may include VR glasses/headsets.

1.8 President Merrell reviewed the COI Policy, Diversity Statement, & Fiduciary Responsibilities.

Discussion: Each executive committee member was provided with a copy of the conflict of interest policy during the meeting. President Merrell expressed that it's important to remember all action taken as Board members should be in the best interests of ASCE.

President Merrell reviewed the diversity statement included within the Section's website, on the [Our Story](#) page. It states, "ASCE Texas Section supports and encourages the equitable opportunity for participation of all people within the civil engineering profession without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or physical challenges."

Additional items President Merrell urged members to keep top of mind during their term are the fiduciary responsibilities of all board members. Board members have a legal obligation to be informed and actively participate in the governance of the Texas Section. This encompasses three fundamental legal responsibilities – the duties of care, loyalty, and obedience. Board members need to take care to ensure financials are reviewed and prudent policies are in place. Board members also need to treat matters confidently, acting in the interest of the Texas Section and not for personal gain, and comply with governing documents.

1.9 President Merrell provided the Executive Summary.

Discussion: President Merrell provided an update on the status of CECON 2021 and the CECON Visioning Task Committee. He also congratulated Griselda Gonzales PE on receiving the ASCE Advocate of the Year Award!

2.0 Administrative Items for Board of Direction Action

2.1 The Executive Committee was asked for any changes to the agenda.

Discussion: None.

Agenda changes were not requested and therefore no vote was taken.

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

Discussion: None.

No conflicts of interest were presented and therefore no vote was taken.

3.0 Items for Discussion

3.1 Welcome to 2021 Leadership Development Weekend

Discussion: President Elect Beecher welcomed everyone to Houston for the event and thanked the staff team for their help in preparing for the weekend. He noted there are a record-high 65 people registered for LDW 2021 and reviewed the event's agenda, highlighting speakers.

3.2 2021-2022 Texas Section Tellers Committee Election Results

Discussion: Senior Director at Large McCoy reported the 2021-2022 election results noting that Director at Large Francis counted the votes, and she verified the report. The elected officers are:

- President Elect Travis Attanasio PE
- VP Educational Heather Guillen PE
- VP Professional Augustin Verrengia PE

- VP Technical Mark Boyd PhD, PE
- First Year Director at Large Michael Gurka PE
- First Year Director at Large Marita Moya PE

3.3 Section Finances

Discussion: Treasurer Nance noted that he has sought feedback from Executive Director O'Leary and ASCE regarding the question of whether to increase dues on a regular basis or not. He noted increases in dues have always equated to a reduction in membership even though it can also lead to an increase in dues revenue. In 2015-2016, Section dues were raised from \$45 to \$60 and there was an initial increase in revenue, but over time membership numbers have declined by approximately 1,000. Nance noted part of the power of the Texas Section is our membership size. He recommends making decisions to foster membership growth instead of revenue growth.

Considering data from the Texas Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, Nance discussed the total number of licensed professional engineers (PEs) in Texas versus the active membership in Texas and noted about 10-12% of the total PEs in Texas are members. (There are approximately 40,000 PEs in Texas and about 4,500 active dues-paying members.) Attendees shared ideas and suggestions regarding membership dues:

- Dr. Briaud noted that not raising the dues to keep up with inflation is essentially lowering the dues each year. He also noted the largest poll of future members is students and this July, ASCE will welcome 12,000 newly upgraded student members based on a recent ASCE Board decision to automatically transition students upon graduation.
- VP Technical Reichert asked what percentage of membership is reimbursed for their dues (41%).
- Treasurer Nance noted that Section dues have traditionally outpaced the consumer price index (CPI), until the 2017 dues year.
- VP Technical Stevens suggested the Section encourage life members to donate to the Section, similar to ASCE's communications with life members regarding the ASCE Foundation. He also recommends indexing dues to the CPI, increasing dues by \$5 increments. Governor Newton expressed support for a \$5 increase based on CPI.
Post-meeting addition, for Reference: [ASCE Rules of Policy and Procedure, 4.2 Dues Indexing](#). *Annually, the Program and Finance Committee will compute the amount dues would be in the Member Grade if increased to adjust for inflation, in accordance with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). If this adjustment is greater than two dollars and forty-nine cents (\$2.49), the Program and Finance Committee shall submit an amendment to the Board proposing an increase in dues to the nearest five dollar (\$5) increment for all grades except Student Member, Distinguished Member and President-Emeritus.*
- Incoming President Elect Attanasio suggested encouraging ASCE to provide members with an option to pay on a monthly basis instead of annually. Incoming VP Technical Elect Boyd mentioned employers would not be very receptive to the monthly payment idea because they would rather pay one invoice per year instead of each month to reduce administrative workload.
- Texas T&DI Chapter Chair Bhandari noted having "membership champions" at companies across Texas is an easy and successful way to recruit young civil engineers and recent graduates to join ASCE and become actively involved.
- President Elect Beecher suggested raising dues \$1 to \$2 per year so the increase isn't shocking to members. This may be an equitable way to keep up with the increase to the cost of doing business.
- VP Educational Chaney suggested coming up with a recurring plan so that this discussion doesn't have to happen on an annual basis and the Section has plan in place barring any unforeseen circumstances.
- President Merrell suggested having the Board discuss changes to the Rules of Operation and vote on the issues each Fall. In April of each year, the group would begin discussing potential changes so that the discussion in the fall has some guidelines. Stevens suggested adopting ASCE's policy regarding dues indexing with CPI.
- President Merrell recommends the Section promotes the ASCE partnership dues program.
- Past President Roth suggested initiating a discounted dues rate for government employees. She has continued to coordinate with TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams and indicated TxDOT would likely reimburse dues of those who are actively engaged within ASCE. O'Leary noted ASCE

does not currently offer a discount for government employees, and several attendees noted they were not in favor of a special rate for government employees (Forister, Attanasio, and Clendenin).

Action: President Merrell to present proposed changes to the Rules of Operation during the September 15, 2021, Board meeting (outgoing) and call for a vote to increase dues. He will also recommend the 2021-2022 Spring Board meeting include the review any proposed dues increases, to be voted upon in the Fall of 2022.

Treasurer Nance reviewed the budget and highlighted a potential drop in dues for the upcoming fiscal year (about 10%). He urged Section leaders to focus on the membership aspect of the dues issue and not directly on increasing revenue. An increase in membership could lead to better events, more sponsors, more advertising revenue and the opportunity to explore other methods of non-dues revenue.

Finally, Treasurer Nance noted that while the Section doesn't expect to meet its revenue projections for FY21, the expenses for the fiscal year have also been less than projected to help balance out the reduction in revenue.

Action: President Merrell requested that Roth discuss the creation of a TxDOT policy to cover dues for active ASCE members. Roth agreed and suggested setting a lunch with Williams, Merrell, O'Leary and her.

Action: Staff to send poll to gauge the Board's availability for a Zoom meeting to review the FY21-22 proposed budget.

Action for all Officers: Committee budgets for 2021-2022 are due to Treasurer Nance by August 6, 2021.

Break from 3:45 to 4:00 pm. Communications Specialist Jenni Peters took a group photo.

3.4 Strategic Planning Update

Discussion: President Elect Beecher updated the group on the progress made at the Strategic Planning Retreat in Marble Falls in June. While the changes and updates are already underway, he asked for more support and ideas for the Strategic Plan during Leadership Development Weekend.

3.5 CECON 2021

Discussion: President Elect Beecher encouraged the entire group to make sure they register before the fee goes up again in early August and to approach their company about sponsorship or exhibitor opportunities. He noted that the breakout sessions are 100% filled and the keynote sessions and panels are being finalized and will be announced to the public over the course of then next month or so. CECON Co-Chair Domke encouraged attendees to participate in CECON. He noted he has offered to sign up his coworkers so that they don't have to do any leg work. He finished by noting CECON is one of the Section's main opportunities to show off all the benefits that the Section has to offer.

President Merrell gave an update on the status for CECON 2022-2025. The conference will be held in Frisco in 2022 and 2024 and San Marcos in 2023 and 2025. He offered to serve on the CECON 2022 Planning Committee and leverage his Frisco-area knowledge, noting Domke will be Senior Co-Chair for 2022.

Action: Register for CECON 2021 before August 7. We also appreciate your consideration of a CECON 2021 sponsorship. **Reminder:** 2021-2022 Officers will be installed during CECON 2021, on Sept. 17.

3.6 2021 Younger Member Camping Trip

Discussion: VP Educational Chaney noted that the next Camping Trip is being planned for the spring, no dates or location have been selected yet.

3.7 2022 ASCE Region 6 Student Symposium

Discussion: VP Educational Chaney noted that Region 6 Symposium is moving forward starting in 2022. This change will mean that Oklahoma and New Mexico join the event. The Student Symposium Planning Manual will need up to be updated in accordance with these changes.

President Merrell noted he is considering the Region 6 Director position. If he were to become Director, he would like to set-up a Region 6 trust fund to support students. He also noted the Texas Civil Engineering

Foundation (TCEF) may be asked to provide some level of financial compensation for the Section, for administrative services provided to the foundation by staff.

Action: President Merrell to coordinate a Region 6 Governors discussion about the student paper competition, which is a current Texas Section requirement to be eligible for advancement to the national-level ASCE competitions and is awarded through Texas Council of Engineering Laboratories (TCEL) prize money.

Action: Chaney and Forister to keep track of high-level changes needed to the Symposium Planning Manual as the team proceeds through the planning process for 2022.

Break from 4:25 to 4:35 pm.

3.8 Institute Chapter Activities

Discussion: VP Technical Stevens noted that all six institute chapters in the Texas Section have signed a current CECOM MOU. Attempts were made to establish a Texas Chapter for other three institutes (COPRI, AEI, EMI), but so far not a lot of interest has been expressed. The Dallas Branch is working on creating an AEI Chapter and the COPRI efforts will continue to be focused on the Houston/Corpus coastal area instead of statewide.

Next, he noted that Technical Webinars have been scheduled through August and there is one opening in September and he encouraged all Executive Committee members to consider giving a presentation in the future.

Lastly, he noted that the 16th Annual EWRI Austin Continuing Education Seminar has been scheduled for July 30 and the 3rd Annual Texas UESI Conference is set for August.

Executive Director O'Leary and VP Technical Elect Reichert noted future coordination between CECOM and TxUESI for annual conferences.

ASCE President Briaud inquired about the relationship between the Section and Institute Chapters. He suggested each Texas Institute Chapter Chair become a corresponding member of the Section Board. President Merrell noted during the formation of several ASCE Dallas Institute Chapters, Chapters were required to meet in conjunction with the Branch. This has worked well and built a relationship, not splintered membership. ASCE President Briaud suggested that each Institute Chapter Chair be a corresponding member of the Board.

Action: Consider presenting a Texas Section Technical Webinar and send your presentation suggestions to VP Technical Stevens and VP Technical Elect Reichert.

3.9 John B. Hawley Trust Fund Trustee Appointment

Discussion: President Merrell noted that the fund is seeking a trustee to serve a six-year term from 2021-2027 and has three candidates at this point (Rohit Goswami, Chad Ballard and Russell Erskine). This fund provides fellowships for water resource engineering students, so the goal is to select a water resources engineer to fill the role.

3.10 Rules of Operations Updates

Attendees discussed the Rules of Operation and agreed to propose the following updates for the Board's review:

- Establish a standing committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Modify the President Elect's responsibilities to include selecting 3-number of strategic goals to focus on for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Add Agency Liaison to Past Presidents Council's list of responsibilities
- Sunset the Excellence in Journalism Award (EJJA)
- Note that Institute Chapters may find it helpful to prepare an annual budget

Timeline: Redline/Strikethrough provided to Board end of July. Comments will be due end of August. Approval to be requested during September 15, 2021 (outgoing) Board of Direction Meeting.

Additional Discussion: Executive Director O'Leary and President Elect Beecher noted that some extra support from volunteers in communications would be helpful to increase the Section's online presence. This could come in the form of a committee or new officer position.

President Merrell reported the DEI Task Committee has been charged with submitting a 1-page letter or white paper to various committees with recommendations for continued improvement.

Executive Director O'Leary suggested requiring institute chapters to create an annual budget and provide it to the Section. President Elect Beecher noted that requiring may not be the right approach, instead we should provide an example and work with them to establish the budget over time.

The development of policy that restricts Board Members from having multiple roles as well as a policy that specifies committee term limits was discussed. The Executive Committee discussed pros and cons. There was not a consensus on these items.

Post-meeting addition, for reference: *ASCE [Rules of Policy and Procedure](#), 9.1.3 Length of Service. Committee members typically serve a three (3) year term. Terms are subject to reconfirmation each year and may be amended based on the Society's needs. The term begins and ends at the conclusion of the Society's Annual Meeting. A member may be reappointed but shall not exceed six (6) consecutive years of service on a given committee. Having served six (6) consecutive years, a member of a committee shall be ineligible for reappointment to the same committee for three (3) years unless an exception is granted by the Society's Executive Committee. New appointments should be planned so about one-third (1/3) of the committee members begin each year to maximize experience and foster continuity on the committee.*

Action: Executive Director O'Leary to send redline version to Board members by July 19.

4.0 Items for Executive Committee Action

4.1 The Executive Committee Endorsed the Slate of ASCE Texas Section 2021 Award Recipients as recommended by the Honors Committee, with one exception.

Discussion: Past President Roth announced the list of recommended award recipients, including:

- Award of Honor: LeAnne Napolillo (Houston Branch)
- Government Civil Engineer Award: Mark Bouma (Dallas Branch)
- Professional Service Award: Jonathan Brower (Dallas Branch)
- Professional Service to Students Award: Heather Guillen (Houston Branch)
- Service to People Award
 - Joe Alvarez (Corpus Christi Branch)
 - Eloy Vera (Rio Grande Valley Branch)
- History & Heritage Award: None
- John A Focht Jr Citizen Engineer Award: Robert Patton (Dallas Branch)

Motion to endorse recommended award recipients except the Computing in Civil Engineering Award proposed by the Honors Committee. Move to endorse. Seconded and passed without dissent.

4.2 The Executive Committee adopted the consent agenda*.

Discussion: VP Educational Elect Forister inquired about holding off on the remaining of the event now and, instead, creating a naming competition. Executive Director O'Leary noted the Student Symposium planning team has also previously discussed a logo competition.

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

*Items on the consent agenda included:

- 4.2.1 Receive all Reports marked [I] on the Agenda (including the [May 2021 Financial Report](#))
- 4.2.2 Rename "ASCE Texas Student Symposium" to "ASCE Region 6 Student Symposium"
- 4.2.3 Approve proposed Bylaws Amendments of the Rio Grande Valley Branch (June 2021)

5.0 Closing Remarks and Final Comments

Discussion: President Merrell reviewed the calendar of events, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reminded the group that the hotel shuttle leaves at 5:45 for the restaurant.

6.0 President Merrell adjourned the meeting at 5:25 PM Central Time.