

2012 Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting Summary

The 2012 Mid-Year Board of Directors (BOD) meeting was held in Asheville, North Carolina from April 28 – 29th at the beautiful North Carolina Arboretum at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A lot of ground was covered as AEG faces challenges in these tough economic times and with large demographic shifts and changes in traditional models of information distribution.

The usual committee and society relations were covered along with Section reports, and I encourage you to talk with your Board representative (Section Chair) or a member of the Executive Council (EC) if you have any questions. However, for this article I think it's more appropriate for a broad, even thematic, discussion of the BOD meeting. In that respect, the meeting covered 3 primary topics: 1) evaluating the past and owning our problem(s), 2) discussing immediate strategies for addressing problems, and 3) taking a long and hard look at the future AEG faces in these challenging times.

The Past: Owning Our Problems

For the last several years, AEG has experienced increasing annual operational losses. Thanks to some of our most successful meetings in the Association's history, these losses have not developed into large net losses for the Association, however these trends are not sustainable for the future of AEG (I encourage you all to read the Treasurer's Report in June AEG *NEWS* for more details, or speak to your Board Representative). Regardless of the many reasons for this (and they were discussed in great detail), there is a problem and it is the duty of the BOD and EC to own the problem. This has been achieved, in no small part due to the leadership of AEG and the dedication of the Finance Committee. The leadership of President Bauer has paved the way for all of us to move forward in reminding us of the reasons for our passion for AEG and dedication to volunteerism as well as encouraging us all to lay everything out on the table.

Now: Addressing Our Problems

To avoid further operational losses, strategies must be implemented now. Through the foresight of the BOD, EC and Finance Committee, a cost savings contingency plan was developed when preparing the FY2012 budget. Potential budget cuts and savings identified in the contingency plan are being enacted now with planned cuts designed to cause the least amount of impact to our member services. Future budgeting will account for the recent membership trend of the Association and the overall economy of our industry. Many of these budget cuts and savings come through the generosity of our leadership and the companies they work for.

As we've all heard elsewhere, budget cuts alone can't solve things. Many of our operations have already been trimmed about as far as they can be and any additional cuts will result in impacts to member services. To avoid an impact to member services, revenue must also be generated. The primary ways AEG can generate large amounts of revenue at this time are through membership and our Annual Meeting.

Membership for full members is down. While our student membership is way up, this has not yet translated into more full members, and full members generate AEG's revenue. I ask each and every one of you to consider what you can do to increase our membership now. Do you know someone who hasn't renewed yet? Do you have a colleague down the hall, or client across the street, or across the country who is not a member, but could be? Do you see faces at meetings that you know belong to non-members? Ask them to join. Tell them what you love about AEG.

Consider volunteering as a Membership Chair for your section or joining any of our Operational Committees that support various membership goals.

Are you excited about the upcoming Salt Lake City meeting? Take some time to look through the insert in the June issue of the AEG *NEWS* and information posted on the website (www.aegweb.org) – it's going to be a great meeting. And we need each and every one of you to attend, as well as your colleagues. There is not a more significant, not to mention fun, way to improve AEG's finances than supporting the Annual Meeting. I hope to see you all there.

The Future: Assessing Our Needs

We all know times are changing. The Baby Boomer generation is facing retirement (or already there) and we have more student members than ever, but traditional funding sources everywhere are disappearing, information that was once only available from a distinct source at a price is now freely available on-line, data and communication are moving from paper to electronic, sustainability is the new buzzword, and the reasons we joined AEG appear to stand in stark contrast to our student members and the hundred thousand plus practicing geoscientists who haven't joined AEG. Statistics from the American Geosciences Institute clearly point to future growth in our industry, yet membership decline seems to be the norm for professional societies. The disconnect is clear, and something must be done about it.

As geologists we all understand the consequences of a failure to evolve. AEG follows a business model that is essentially over 100-years old. We face the strong possibility of becoming the equivalent of a buggy-manufacturer complaining about the invention of the automobile. AEG's COO Becky Roland, our Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) Chair Deb Green and SPC member Paul Hale have presented a plan for conducting a Needs Assessment to the BOD. With past SPC efforts, we feel that we have a pretty good idea about the needs of our current active members, however with a potential market-share of greater than 100,000, we have relatively little understanding of the needs of our potential members. With our professional membership in decline, the BOD feels that it is time that we start to understand those needs and has directed us to move forward with exploring strategies for assessing those needs. Based on the Board's direction the details of the Needs Assessment will be further evaluated by the EC and SPC.

As geologists, we often see the long-view of things and can be derisive of short-term-only solutions. The direction of the BOD to look toward the long-view gives me hope.

What Can We Do?

The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.

-M. Scott Peck

Everything you ever wanted is one step outside your comfort zone.

-Original Source Unknown

Each member of AEG can make an immediate impact, both to save current revenue and generate more. Go to the AEG Website (www.aegweb.org), log in and look at your member account. Now opt-out of receiving the *NEWS* as a print copy and opt-in to electronic only. This is

an immediate savings to the Association and promotes our goals of sustainability. Next, encourage any potential members you know to join AEG. Share your passion for the organization. Ask your company and those that provide services to you to become a Corporate Sponsor or advertiser in the AEG *NEWS* and website. And finally, join us in Salt Lake City this September – it's going to be a fabulous meeting.

Change can be uncertain, stressful, exciting and a lot of work. If you've made it this far into this article, you likely share my passion and love for AEG. We would love your help – contact anyone on the EC, your local Section Chair, a committee chair or technical working group chair. There are dozens of ways that your involvement can help AEG as it moves toward its future. We want and need your help. I and the rest of the leadership in AEG have a great hope for the future of AEG and we look forward to sharing it with each of you.