

MARAC

Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference

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MARAC Steering Committee

2023 April 21

Zoom

Attendance: Jessica Webster (Chair), Ali Zawoyski (Chair-elect), Mary Mannix (Meetings Coordinator), Kevin Clair (Secretary), Amy Fitch (Treasurer), Carley Altenburger (Member At Large), Dyani Feige (Member At Large), Amanda May (Member At Large), Deb Schiff (Member At Large), Diane Bockrath (Delaware Caucus), Allison Fischbach (Maryland Caucus), Tara Maharjan (New Jersey Caucus), Danielle Glynn (New York Caucus), Taylor Mason (Pennsylvania Caucus), Zachary Hottel (Virginia Caucus), Lori Hostuttler (West Virginia Caucus), Sara Predmore (MARAC Administrator), Sara Borden (Past Chair), Arian Ravanbakhsh (Parliamentarian), Lauren Brown (MARAC Historian), Jan Zastrow (NCH Representative), Brian Keough (Development Coordinator), Michael Martin (Communications), Molly Tighe (Communications), Elliot McNally (Education), Vicki Russo (Membership), Sheridan Sayles (Nominations and Elections), Matt Testa, Laura Christiansen, Josette Schluter, Laura Montgomery (Web Team), Christie Lutz, Jenny Mitchell

Regrets: Christopher Anglim (DC Caucus)

Meeting called to order at 9:04am.

A round of introductions was held.

9:14: Approval of agenda. Zach moved to approve. Many people seconded. The agenda was approved.

9:15: Approval of steering committee minutes:

- A. Williams was the DE Caucus Proxy.

Taylor moved to approve the minutes, Zach seconded. Minutes approved with corrections.

Reminder of the voting members of the Steering Committee.

9:16: Officers' reports:

- Chair report: Nothing to add. More details to come later in the agenda.
- Administrator's report: 488 people are registered for the virtual conference. Of those, 84 are students – many from across the country and Canada. Lots of membership renewals alongside the registrations. Please make sure you have accepted the Zoom invite.
- Chair-elect report: Nothing to add.

- Meetings Coordinator report: Registration will be capped at 600, so register soon if you haven't already. Recommendation that the next in-person meeting we have be held in "mid-Pennsylvania" to maximize revenue, in line with past experiences.

Brian Keough gave a brief Saratoga Springs update – everything is on schedule. The budget is on track as well. Lots of local arrangements are lined up; only a few things left to get finalized.

Amanda gave a report on the program, which is very strong and almost finalized. 15 sessions are lined up; 11 are finalized and four more are wrapping up their titles and descriptions. One plenary will be a documentary about Black settlers in northern/upstate New York, with the filmmaker on hand. There will also be an author who does local history research in the area who will be co-presenting. Taking pains to be inclusive and welcoming throughout the conference – three panels that are round-tables of presenters with similar interests. Also a mini-workshop on creating contracts for vendors. There will be a debate with Q&A from the audience (topic TBA).

Discussion of what is to happen after the virtual symposium will be added to New Business later in the meeting.

- Secretary report: Nothing to add.
- Parliamentarian report: Nothing to add.
- Treasurer's report: (technical difficulties, followed the advisory positions):

3Q is over, financial positions are reported in the Treasurer's Report. P1 has our spending, P2 itemizes spending by committee. We had a \$4,720 net gain in revenue for the quarter. It looks like expenses for the virtual conference will come in under budget, and that vendor support is approximately double our expectations. Our net loss was \$6,970, which is less than expected.

Saratoga budget is in progress. Hoping to share with Finance Committee soon. If committees anticipate changes to their budgets, please let Finance Committee or the Treasurer know as soon as possible.

Summary of the investment report: Our investment income has been near zero for many consecutive quarters. A sub-group led by Brian Keough, and including Jane Cross and Amanda May, was convened to investigate this and identify new investment options. Currently we have four accounts; we would like to have six. We have a checking, savings, and two Vanguard bond accounts. We would like to keep the checking account (but remove some money from it to two Vanguard bond accounts to increase interest income). We would like to close the savings account and move that money to a CD Ladder account at PNC, as well as to Vanguard funds.

The two new funds we would like to add are higher risk, but higher growth potential, with low fees. They are still considered "safe" investment options. Recommendations follow professional association guidance that 75% of the annual budget be in checking account to cover emergencies, with the rest in interest-accruing accounts such as these.

There were no questions but much appreciation for Brian, Jane, and Amanda's work to identify these options, and the impact they will make on our operations.

Amy moved that Steering adopt the recommendations of the sub-committee on investments toward a FY2023 investment strategy, as reported. **The motion carried without objections.**

9:28: Advisory positions' reports:

- Historian report: Nothing to add. Distinguished service award – will the award winner(s) be recognized at the virtual meeting next week or the in-person meeting in October? Consensus is that we should announce winners next week and do an in-person recognition in Saratoga as well.
- Archivist report: Joni not present, no additions.
- Development coordinator's report: Most of the report focuses on work done with the Finance Committee regarding bank accounts and investments. Made recommendations that Amy will discuss in the Treasurer's Report.
- Web Team report: Nothing to add. Please submit caucus updates to the Web Team e-mail address.
- RAAC report: Andrew not present, no additions.
- NCH report: Nothing to add. Lauren asked about our advocacy regarding NARA. Jan will check with NCH about this; it may be that SAA's statement is sufficient for MARAC, NCH, etc.

9:46: Old business:

- Google Drive (Kevin Clair): *Write this up later*. There will be more information about this as committee transitions take place.
- Strategic Planning update (Sara Borden): Things have been delayed due to professional obligations at her institution. Sara will be putting out a poll to Steering about how often to meet to discuss the plan. Sara will have a report on strategic plan activities coming up soon.
- Meetings manual updates (Sara Borden): There will be a meetings manual refresh coming soon, led by Tara Wink (with Sara Predmore and Mary Mannix). This will include the production of two new manuals in addition to edits to the existing manual.

9:50: break until 10:00am

10:00: New business:

- Committee Interest Google form (Jessica): Finding ways to organize documentation about committee rosters, length of terms, eligibility to serve, rotations on and off. Working with Lauren and Heather on Web Team to keep that information up to date on the website. Generally trying to maintain business continuity.

There is a form for expressing interest in committees, but people often fill it out once a year and then do not remember what they signed up for. This makes committee assignments difficult. Sara Predmore recommended developing a form so we can solicit volunteers much closer to the time when we fill rosters for the year. The form provides for including information about qualifications for various committees. So far the results have been positive – about fifteen submissions have come in so far since the form was published. A few have been students, which has allowed for a good mix of veterans and new MARAC members.

- Eliminating paper ballots (Sara P.): Many other official MARAC communications (conference programs, etc.) are already electronic, so we would like to move elections fully electronic as well. This eliminates mailing costs. Sheridan reports that about "six or seven" people used paper

ballots for this year's election, not enough to affect results. Some concerns about accessibility but otherwise in favor.

MARAC bylaws state that Elections Committee can issue ballots in whatever form they deem appropriate at least 75 days prior to the election date. Arian feels that Elections Committee can simply decide to go fully electronic without a vote from Steering. Sara Predmore recommends leaving a paper ballot option open for people who would like to request one due to accessibility concerns, or for any other reason (Josette concurs). Sara Predmore will need some language to this effect by May 15 so that she can include it on membership forms.

- Voting for Caucus Reps (Sara P.): The problem lies with people paying to be members of another caucus. Do people understand what that additional fee gets them? There is confusion related to voting for caucus reps. We use SurveyMonkey for this; we normally tell people to vote only for the caucuses for which they are a member. Normally these elections are unopposed so it hasn't been an issue. When we switched voting platforms to ElectionBuddy, people had to choose to abstain from those elections instead of simply not voting for that question. In addition, the PA Caucus Chair election was contested in the most recent election. We noted that many more people voted for PA Caucus Chair than are actually members of the PA Caucus. ElectionBuddy also restricts us from allowing an individual to vote in multiple caucus elections. If people vote out of caucus, we have to spoil that entire election and re-run it; because we pay per ballot, this could be very costly for the organization.

Vicki Russo suggested making an "I am not a member of this caucus" option prominent on the ballot – as the first/default choice. Sara P. will look into this.

Lauren asked if we could give people a "primary caucus" for voting. Many members are on out-of-state caucus lists to keep track of nearby lists without necessarily being in that caucus. Sara P. said that members can be on a caucus e-mail list without being a member of that caucus. Question: How important is it to members to vote in multiple caucuses (as opposed to just being informed of their events)? Getting a voting membership is the primary benefit of paying for multiple caucuses.

Could write an MAA piece about this? There was support for this and for Vicki's suggestion.

- Structure of Symposium (Sara B.): As a reminder, the symposium will run from 10am-3pm on April 8, 2024.
 - *When should the Steering Committee meet?* Late in the week prior to the meeting? If funding is available for Steering members, hold it on-site the day prior to the symposium? (Amanda May said that the funding was meant for off-schedule Steering meetings not held as part of a larger MARAC meeting.)
 - *When should the Business Meeting be held?* Matt asked if we need to have a business meeting. The answer is yes, once a year, in the spring, as it serves as the reference point around which elections are scheduled. (This year's is April 27 at noon – the time was chosen to give people the option to attend over their lunch hours if they couldn't get leave / funding to attend the full conference.) Consensus was to hold it virtually on a date close to (but not actually on) the date of the symposium?

- The consensus was to hold Steering and Business virtually – Steering prior to the symposium, Business after. Arian’s one concern as Parliamentarian was how to determine quorum (which is one quarter of the registered attendees of the meeting) if the Business Meeting is held separately from the symposium. Could announce it in the symposium and include mention of it in registration beforehand.
- There was a discussion of how to open Steering Committee meetings (as required in bylaws) when they are held via Zoom.
- What to do after the spring symposium? If we’re looking for fall 2024 (or even spring 2025) events, we should be close to lining up hotel contracts now.

It sounds (based on our previous conversation) that it is more convenient to hold in-person meetings in the spring, when we have more obligations related to awards, election business, etc., and reserve the fall for virtual meetings. For federal employees, it’s also easier to get funding for professional meetings in the spring.

Amy reports that generally speaking, from her conversations with vendors, they are more excited about fall in-person events than spring. There doesn’t seem to be a particular reason for this. Because there are two MARAC events per year, they tend to pick only one, and it’s usually fall; it may be that they would commit to spring if it was the only option we gave them for in-person attendance.

Do we have data about which season’s conferences are better attended? Mary says this is based more on geography than on time of year.

We had a meetings committee in the past that considered these questions. Do their notes provide any guidance about this? (Many people suggested revisiting this question now that people are more comfortable with virtual meetings. **Sara Predmore will include questions about this in this conference’s evaluation form.**) Also re: fall meeting scheduling, need to be aware of local large universities’ football schedules.

Amy said for informational purposes that we make money on virtual meetings and, recently, have tended to lose money on in-person meetings. Jessica asked if we should hold virtual meetings in the fall to raise money that can then subsidize the spring meeting? Amy isn’t sure if the math would work out for that. (Jessica suggests that perhaps attendance will increase in spring if it is reliably the only in-person meeting we hold.)

Steering will convene in May to consider the conference evaluations and make a recommendation on how to proceed with 2024/25 conference scheduling. This fits with Mary’s desired timeline for getting arrangements in order – we still have time to finalize details for fall 2024, though the longer we wait, the more date-and-location-restricted we will become. *(Updated to add: This meeting did not take place in May as scheduled. Steering discussed at its August meeting instead. kmc 2023-10-02)*

- Next Steering Committee date (Jessica / Sara P.): Normally we meet in the last week of July, but this year that is during SAA. Sara suggests the week before or the week after. Jessica would like the first week of August. Everyone was on board with this. **Sara P. will send out a save-the-date for August 4 as the next Steering meeting.**

10:59: Standing and Operational Committee reports:

- Awards: No report; Angela not in attendance.
- Communications: Molly Tighe is rotating off. She has been a very effective co-chair of the Communications committee. Michael is looking for attendees who are attending SAA and are willing to serve as volunteers for the MARAC informational table. We're not distributing free MAAs but we can let people know about the electronic version. We are looking for other materials about MARAC to distribute.
- Distinguished Service Award: No report; Angela not in attendance.
- Diversity: Rayna not in attendance.
- Education (Elliot): Nothing to add.
- Membership (Vicki): Nothing to add. Many thanks to Jessica Webster for recruiting new members for the committee.
- Nominations and Elections (Sheridan): Report submitted. Congratulations to the new elected members of Steering (in the report).

11:08: State caucuses:

- DE: nothing to add
- DC: Christopher not in attendance.
- MD: Nothing to add.
- NJ: Nothing to add.
- NY: Nothing to add.
- PA: Nothing to add.
- VA: Nothing to add. Thanks to Amy Fitch and Sara Predmore for their help with the recent caucus event.
- WV: Nothing to add.

11:10: New business. No new business was proposed.

Josette moved to conclude the meeting, Sara P. seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:10am.

Kevin M. Clair

8/4/2023