

NAI Region 6 (South Central) Conference

Board Meeting Minutes 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm February 19, 2023

Columbia, MO

In attendance: Ken Forman, Jeanne Spencer, Amber Myers, Casey Watson, Lauren Marshall, Pat Silovsky, Jerrel Geisler, Michelle Soenksen, Heather Manier (Corporate Engagement Manager), Kayla Gomance, Rusty Scarborough

2023 Conference Report (reported by Pat Silovsky)

- As of 2/15/23, there are 102 full registrations, which is over breakeven point of 80 registrants.
 - With partial registrations, there are 116 total for the conference.
- 6 of the 7 field trips scheduled currently have registrants signed up.

Director's Report

- No Regional workshop for 2024 due to Little Rock National Conference November 7-11, 2023.
- Heather Manier highlighted some new positions for the National Office.
 - New NAI Executive Director appointed – Paul Caputo
 - New Marketing and Branding roles filled at national office.
 - Currently hiring Director of Education
 - Added 2 remote staff (for the certification department)
- 2025 Regional Workshop location proposal is Amarillo, TX.
 - Lari Jo Edwards is the Workshop Chair for 2025.
 - There was continued discussion of partnering with 4 corners region (New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Utah).
 - **ACTION:** What is the status? Jay Schnieder and Lari Jo Edwards are contacts.
- National NAI dictated to change official names of regions from number (6) to actual region "South Central".
 - **(New Business)** New marketing materials will be needed to change name from region 6 to South Central
 - **(New Business)** Ken Forman brought up name change will affect "Visions" Regional Newsletter, because the name includes an homage to region 6 with the roman numeral #6 in the name.
- **Fall Regional Meeting will be scheduled for August and the board decided a zoom meeting (all agree) was the most efficient and convenient way to meet.**
- The meeting for March 2021 does not have any official meeting minutes posted.
 - **ACTION:** Amber asked Secretary to create official meeting minutes to post to regional website.

Deputy Director's Report

- Pat has nothing other than 2023 conference report to add to meeting minutes.

Secretary's Report

- Casey has nothing to add currently, she is still learning her role.

Treasurer's Report

- As of February 2023, Regional account balance: \$35,594.77 on Quarterly Report as of 12/31/2022
 - The actual balance should be \$36,594.77.
 - \$1,000 in scholarships was coded to our region in error by National in December, it is being corrected and will show \$1,000 credit on our next Quarterly Report.
- Scholarship and Professional Development Expenses
 - \$3,175 in financial aid to send two members to National Conference in Cleveland, Ohio.
 - \$620 in financial aid for 3 members to attend this Region Conference.
 - \$1710 to award two student scholarships for this conference
 - Each received \$700 scholarship check (to be awarded this week), free registration to conference, and a travel stipend as needed.
- Other items
 - Due to new job promotion and a full schedule Kayla Gomance is resigning her position after workshop.
 - It will be officially announced in the Wednesday lunch meeting, so that the Elections chair can re-open for nominations and voting.

Awards Chair

- Lauren still working through resignation date, also announced at lunch meeting.
 - "Hit by the bus plan" being developed for her successor.
 - Would like to be officially resigned by July 1.
 - Awards Chair can be "pass down" award motioned by Lauren. She will brainstorm a replacement during conference.

Elections Chair

- Robin Gabe was not in attendance, no report provided.

Membership Chair

- Total membership for South Central Region is 1,015 members (713 region only).
 - Membership level is predominantly professional.
 - Membership numbers are available on dashboard (for board members only).
 - An announcement will be made at Wednesday lunch meeting for all members to check and update their email contact information, because Michelle noted that as she asks MO members to contribute to Visions Newsletter, she was getting lots of emails bouncing back unread.
- Jeanne wants to do more with membership chair position.
 - Increase formalization platform for board members to connect with potential members.
 - The suggestion Jeanne tabled was to create Board business cards.
 - Cards would include Region Name, Board member name, title, regional website address, national website address, and relevant phone number.
 - Recommend use of Vista Print
 - Jeanne offered to create one uniform design.

- Business cards would be offered free to all board members, which would decide whether they felt value in use (per role) or not. Cards will not be required.
- **ACTION:** Jeanne and Amber will continue to research the use of cards and bring forward information at August zoom meeting.

Newsletter Editors Report

- The newsletter due dates are the 20th day of March, June, September, and December.
 - Content can be short or long, and the editors will work with the author if needed.
- Region 6 members are encouraged to read the newsletter each quarter.
 - Submissions can go to Ken Forman (ken.forman.nai@gmail.com).
 - Images of the Living World, a member's site, or anything of interest in our region can go directly to Jerrel Geisler (jerrelgeisler@sbcglobal.net).
 - Jerrel Geisler – send more pictures so he doesn't have to use "canned" pictures.
- Jerrel tabled potential issue with newsletter format: Is the format the most viable for the newsletter, currently using Adobe and it is very expensive. No one else has Jerrel's same platform, so it is not transferable.
 - Some ideas were shared from the group:
 - Constant Contact, like what Interpretive Naturalists is doing. Subscription based, annually (it will not look like a magazine)
 - Mail Chimp is another possibility, but we have a subscription already.
 - Erin is using it, what does her subscription entail? How much would it cost to add newsletter.
 - **ACTION:** Jerrel will discuss with Erin how the Newsletter is being distributed, it is not clear, Ken doesn't have "bounce back" information he used to have access to – could she send report?
- Ken Forman – content, content, content – from every board member!
- Heather M. mentioned **the Interpreter's network** could be used to increase submissions for newsletter.

Arkansas Report

- Chris Pistole not present, did not send report.
- Ken Forman reported for Arkansas.
 - National Conference (November 7-11) in Little Rock.
 - April 2023 – The conference committee will be meeting for a site walk.
 - New state park's interpreter – focus on outdoor education.

Kansas Report

- Amber Myers reported for KS, because KS doesn't have representative, Board Members need to recruit.
 - Great Plains Nature Center –
 - Recently implemented "Agents of Discovery", a digital education technology platform that features a web-based dashboard where educators can turn their educational content into augmented reality games using our cloud-based

Library or using their own, customized materials. However, it needs good connectivity to work.

- New Director – Amanda Alessi, MPA, CIG
- New Director of Education – Emily Davis, CIG
- Flint Hills Discovery Center receiving \$200,000 Tourism Attraction Sub-Grant for Kansas (TASK grant), which will be matched by its foundation to fund a new immersive virtual Flint Hills experience.
- KS Dept. of Wildlife and Parks launched Kansas Birding Trail (<https://www.ksbirdingtrail.com/>), developed by Mike Rader and his team.
- Kansas Wetlands Education Center (KWEC) was recognized as one of the world’s best wetland visitor centers. Their success was announced at the Conference of the global Wetlands Convention, known as Ramsar COP14, underway in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - The Star Wetland Centre Award is a new initiative to recognize best practices in eco-tourism and education at wetlands.

Louisiana Report

- Rusty Scarborough reported for LA.
 - Walter Jacobs Memorial Nature Center: Expansion Project – newest designs have the expansion now encompassing 16,000 square feet, costing ~\$15 million. Grand opening of expansion planned for spring 2025.
 - The expansion includes the addition of an events venue (with catering kitchen), new exhibits, administration offices, gift shop, and restrooms.
 - Mark Brink @ Poverty Point World Heritage Site reached out to Rusty to get his entire staff CIG certified.

Missouri Report

- Michelle Soenksen reported for MO.
 - In September 2022, the Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI) conference was held in St. Joseph, Missouri. The theme was “Let Your Interpretive Roots Lead You to the Western Frontier!”
 - September 10-14, AMI will convene in Maken, MO for their 2023 conference. The 2023 theme is “Planting Seeds of Interpretation”.
 - Missouri State Parks is hiring full-time and seasonal employees.
 - There is a scheduled CIG class for May 21-24, 2023.
 - AMI preparing events for partial and annual eclipses. Stay tuned for more information.
 - Jana Price has a new book out.
 - Missouri State Parks planning a George Kastler Mentor of the Year Award in his honor.
- Michelle announced that after 10+ years as the Missouri State Representative, she will be resigning her position on the board, as soon as she can find a replacement.

Oklahoma Report

- Amanda Markey not present, no report sent.

Texas Report

- Erin Holley not present, so Jerrel reported for Texas.
 - Starting on 01/01/2023, every Texas State Park will be celebrating 100 years of state protection. All 88 Texas State Parks will host ranger-guided and self-guided walks, bike rides, paddling trips and polar plunges for the entire year of 2023.
 - Each park doing something custom.
 - Many parks offering a variety of events, including several that commemorate Black History Month.
 - The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) in Athens is partnering with Fishing's Future and the George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar Education Fund to provide convenient fishing education opportunities for families throughout Texas.
 - February 2023 – June 2023.
 - 24 in-person family fishing events through June 25 in the greater metro areas of Houston, the Rio Grande Valley and Dallas-Fort Worth. All equipment needed to fish will be provided.
 - Bi-lingual and virtual sessions also available.

New Business

- Jeanne tabled idea – do we need board bylaws? If we have then, can we send out to board?
- Jeanne's idea spurred further discussions. Amber and other new board members have struggled with knowing what their role is, when they are supposed to complete actions, and how to complete assignments.
 - Amber and Kayla both motioned the idea to create officer onboarding for training purposes.
 - There are position descriptions available for each board member role.
 - However, board members also need a position specific calendar of responsibilities along with actionable responsibilities (what are the minimal responsibilities of each role).
 - **ACTION:** There are some useful materials on the National Website, Amber will work through these to ensure there is no duplication of training documents.
 - Motion brought by Amber for use of a South-Central Region Google Drive so the board has a central location for documents, which will add organization and efficiency.
 - ***We approve the use of Google drive to organize board documents. (Motion passed)***
 - **ACTION:** Amber is our fearless leader; she will work on setting up account; afterwards board will decide who will maintain it.
 - Jeanne suggested: SouthCentralNAI@gmail.com as account name, one that is not attached to a person, so the account is able to be passed down.
 - NOTE: Government employees can't access Google for security reasons
- Jerrel – to Heather – if someone wins a national award, could part of their award be free registration to the national conference? **ACTION:** Amber to address with National Committee.

- Board members present agreed that South Central could/should create a scholarship or a stipend fund for sending South Central National Award Winners to the National Conference to receive their award without being financially burdened (~\$2000 to send 1 person).
 - **ACTION:** Follow up in August meeting after Amber obtains information from National Committee.