

SHAFR Council Minutes

Friday, January 8, 2021
10:00 a.m. - 2:35 p.m. EDT
Via Zoom

Present: Andrew Preston (presiding), Shaun Armstead, Laura Belmonte, Vivien Chang, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Peter Hahn, Kristin Hoganson, Daniel Immerwahr, Andrew Johns, Barbara Keys, Kyle Longley, Kelly Shannon, Lauren Turek, Karine Walther, and Amy Sayward (ex officio)

Also Attending: Faith Bagley, Ryan Irwin, Paige Mitchell, Patricia Thomas, Lucy Oates, Petra Geode, and Anne Foster

Introductory Business:

Andrew Preston offered welcoming remarks, and everyone introduced themselves. He then requested a resolution of thanks to retiring Council members (Adriane Lentz-Smith, Lien-Hang Nguyen, Brian McNamara, and Mary Dudziak) and immediate past president Kristin Hoganson. The motion was made by Daniel Immerwahr, seconded by Kelly Shannon, and all voted in favor.

Amy Sayward recapped the Council votes taken by correspondence since the June meeting-- approval of the minutes of the June 2020 Council meeting, agreement on joining the new CREW lawsuit, and endorsement of the proposed Chris Murphy legislation. There was no further discussion of these votes. Sayward also offered an oral report that there had been no reports of breaches of the code of conduct in the past calendar year.

Conference Issues:

Preston gave background for the proposal to shift to an entirely online format for the 2021 conference. At the June 2020 Council meeting, Council had decided on a hybrid conference and reduced its room liability due to the uncertainties of conditions a year ahead of time and in hopes of offering the best possible conference experience to all SHAFR members. However, as subsequent events unfolded and as the Program Committee worked with the President to think through a hybrid conference, it became clear that the hybrid format was incredibly complex as well as expensive, as witnessed by the hotel bid for audiovisual needs for the hybrid format. Although they located a vendor—Pheedloop—that could be used for both a hybrid and an entirely virtual format, the rather low response rate to the call for papers and the very low number of these applicants who planned to attend in person have called into question the financial viability of any in-person element for the 2021 conference. Therefore, the SHAFR President and Executive Director sought advice from SHAFR counsel and have already opened discussions with the hotel through SHAFR's hotel broker to understand our options moving forward.

Ryan Irwin, co-chair of the Program Committee, joined the meeting. Hoganson offered the Ways and Means Committee's unanimous recommendation to shift to all-remote conference given the

financial implications. Irwin summarized the Program Committee's written report about the thematic design of the upcoming conference and thanked co-chair Megan Black, Preston, and Sayward for their work on the conference. He then offered to answer any questions as well as welcoming suggestions on how to optimize the conference and attendance.

Irwin agreed that moving to an all-digital conference seemed the best option at this point, and he mentioned that the Program Committee had already planned to extend the conference to four days (Thursday through Sunday) under the hybrid model. There was discussion about how to manage the timing and asynchronous content of the conference to maximize international participation across global time zones. There was also a suggestion to perhaps include sessions on late-breaking issues, similar to what the American Historical Association has done in the past. Finally, there was some discussion of how SHAFR might utilize some of the rooms and food if it had to pay for them even without hosting a conference on-site, including that some might want to attend the virtual conference from the conference hotel and/or connecting with local charities. Preston thanked the two Program Committee co-chairs for their tireless and invaluable work, and Irwin left the meeting. Peter Hahn moved that SHAFR should shift to an all-virtual meeting, Kyle Longley seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously, 14-0-0.

Discussion then shifted to a strategy for implementing this decision. After some discussion, Hahn moved to authorize the president in consultation with the executive director to renegotiate the hotel contract through the hotel broker and legal counsel on the best possible terms. The motion was seconded by Hoganson and was approved unanimously, 14-0-0.

There was discussion about how to set the registration fees for a virtual conference, building on the written report and modeling by the Ways and Means Committee as well as data from the Conference Committee's written report. There was discussion of creating an additional registration category between regular registration and the reduced registration rate traditionally charged to students, K-12 educators, and the precariously employed. Such a pandemic-related rate would recognize that many colleges and universities have cut conference funds entirely. There was also a desire to have rates low enough to encourage broad participation balanced with the recognition of the conference costs and on-going financial commitments of the society. Another suggestion was offered that the keynote speakers (which would be luncheon speakers at an in-person conference) might have an additional charge for those paying regular registration rates. Some Council members expressed concerns that such fees might deter attendance at these events and urged SHAFR to advance maximum access.

Hahn moved to vest authority in the president to develop an appropriate fee structure and circulate it to Council. This motion was seconded by Lauren Turek and passed unanimously, 14-0-0. Following the vote, Paige Mitchell, SHAFR's new conference coordinator in charge of the Pheedloop (on-line) elements of the conference, joined the meeting and shared her screen to allow SHAFR Council members to see what the Western Historical Association's Pheedloop platform looked like and what the elements of the conference site were. After answering several questions, Mitchell left the meeting.

Sayward then presented the proposal for a 2022 conference based at the Tulane University campus, offering both inexpensive dorm housing (\$40/person/night) as well as a room block and shuttle service to the Westin hotel with which SHAFR had had a contract for the 2020 conference. The Tulane campus also has public transportation access to the French Quarter, sufficient spaces for the conference that will be less expensive than a hotel conference, and additional opportunities for sponsorships of the conference. Hoganson reported that the Ways & Means Committee endorsed this shift. The motion to shift the 2022 conference to the Tulane campus was moved by Immerwahr, seconded by Turek, and passed unanimously, 14-0-0.

Shannon then highlighted the action items from the extensive report by the Conference Code of Conduct Task Force. One set of proposals were implementation procedures flowing from the current code of conduct, and the other set aimed at expanding of the existing code of conduct. Council opted to tackle the implementation issues first. The task force recommended keeping Sherry Marts as SHAFR's ombudsperson and to have her investigate all complaints received by the task force, which serves as the intake team and whose members rotate. Although there was general agreement during the Council meeting, Council discussions immediately following have identified the need for Council to further consider the implications at its next meeting.

The next implementation issues were creating a sanctions procedure and team (who would determine what sanctions should be imposed on someone found to have violated SHAFR's code of conduct) and an appeals team (who would determine an appeals process and rule on any appeals). Shannon pointed out that these two teams should be preconstituted, could contain the same people, and should have senior members of leadership. Hoganson proposed that the members of this/these team(s) could be determined by position, such as past presidents and/or senior members of Council. This would ensure that it was a rotating group. Council charged the president with convening the team(s) to draft specific language on the sanctions and appeals for Council approval. The final implementation issue was the question of the security of the email system for receiving reports. The president committed to following up on this issue and developing some concrete options.

Council then considered the question of expanding the current code of conduct, which only covers SHAFR events and only covers misconduct of a sexual nature. The task force report strongly suggested the need for a broader code of conduct for the conference to cover other protected categories and for a separate code of ethics that would cover behavior outside of the conference. The task force envisioned that this code of ethics could deal with egregious behavior and could cover academic misconduct. It was suggested that the President should work with the task force to develop a draft that would then be brought to Council. Karine Walther then moved that Council pass the broader code of conduct drafted by the task force and attached to its report as appendix D. Keys seconded the motion. In the discussion that followed it was suggested that Council should have SHAFR counsel review the proposed code before it is implemented, that SHAFR should determine how such a policy might interface with its insurance policy, and that SHAFR might include academic status as a protected category in its policy. The original motion was then withdrawn by Walther and replaced by a motion to approve the draft policy pending consultation with counsel. The motion was made by Walther, seconded by Keys, and approved by a vote of 12-

2-0, with those opposed being of the opinion that the policy should not be even provisionally approved before legal review.

Council also considered a proposal that was part of the petition from SHAFR members seeking greater internationalization of the society but that had been tabled at the June Council meeting--the proposal that the by-laws should be amended to require one in every ten conferences to be held outside of North America. Keys, who had originally brought the petition to Council, explained the petitioners' desire to broaden SHAFR's geographic range beyond North America. In the discussion, some of the concerns raised about the proposal were that a by-laws amendment would create a mandate that would potentially handcuff future Councils, that such a conference might be significantly more expensive for the organization and some members, and that the unknowns of the post-pandemic conference scene make it difficult to make such a commitment at this time. Positive aspects of the proposal that were discussed included that it could expand participation in SHAFR by overseas members and especially by international graduate students and that it would not necessarily be more expensive to host an international conference. There was also discussion about whether Mexico should be considered part of North America in terms of the resolution or whether the geographic language should be replaced with language about a country where SHAFR has not previously hosted a conference (currently only the United States and Canada). Council also discussed ways in which other, non-conference events can further internationalize SHAFR as well as the possibility that virtual content can make the conference more accessible--both for U.S. members if the conference is abroad and for non-U.S. members if the conference is in the United States.

Keys then moved that Council adopt the original language in the petition, that the SHAFR by-laws be amended to state "As long as SHAFR holds face-to-face conferences, at least one in ten should be outside the United States." The motion was seconded by Walther but was defeated by a vote of 5-6-3 (5 in favor, 6 opposed, and 3 abstaining). Hoganson then proposed a strong commitment--rather than a by-laws amendment--and moved that Council commit to hosting a conference outside of the United States and Canada within the next six to eight years. The motion was seconded by Immerwahr and passed unanimously, 14-0-0.

Financial Issues:

Sayward briefly reviewed the financial reports that she had shared with Council. They demonstrated that SHAFR was in sound fiscal shape, despite the issues posed by the pandemic; she also pointed out some upcoming financial commitments, including the update to the shafr.org website and the summer institute in 2022.

Hoganson then reviewed additional recommendations from the Ways and Means Committee, including support for a 5% raise for SHAFR IT Director and reduction of the prize money connected to the Ferrell Book Prize (which goes to a senior scholar who is not necessarily a SHAFR member) from \$2,500 to \$1,000, which would not impact the prestige connected to the prize. The committee did not make a recommendation about the proposal for hosting conferences outside of North America given the great difficulties in modeling hypothetical future situations.

The committee's recommendation for the raise for the IT Director and the reduction of the Ferrell Prize money was approved unanimously, 14-0-0.

Hoganson also raised the Ways and Means committee's recommendation that SHAFR's administrative staffing budget could be increased in line with Council's decision(s) about how to handle the recommendations of the Task Force on the Executive Director position. Although the task force's larger recommendations had to be tabled to the June meeting due to a lack of time, at the end of the meeting, Hoganson specifically raised the issue of creating an administrative fellowship specifically to help with developing a plan of action for advancing the website ahead of the June meeting (a need identified in the Executive Director's written report). Hoganson therefore moved that Council approve up to \$4,000 to hire an administrative fellow to begin coordination of website revamp. Turek seconded the motion, and Council approved it unanimously, 14-0-0.

Publication Issues:

Patricia Thomas and Lucy Oates from Oxford University Press (OUP) and Petra Goedde and Anne Foster, co-editors of *Diplomatic History*, joined the meeting. Thomas covered some of the key points of the written report, highlighting the additional traffic on JSTOR, the good impact factor (for the humanities) of the journal, and the timeliness of content delivery from the editors. Oates, who specializes in open access issues for OUP, presented some of the key issues within this continually changing landscape.

Goedde and Foster highlighted parts of their report for Council, including that submissions continue to be robust, that they expect to see a dip as the pandemic closure of archives impacts new scholarship, that they are preparing forums for future issues, and that they are encountering some difficulties in recruiting sufficient reviewers for the books that they have committed to review. They also pointed out that to date, OUP has handled the open access issue well for individual authors and that it has not significantly affected editorial operations. However, the concern over the long term is that since *Diplomatic History* is not an open access publication, there might be declines in submissions from the U.K. and Europe over time.

Longley (chair of SHAFR's Open Access Task Force) thanked Thomas for the report that was included in the Council packet and stated the task force's commitment to continuing to monitor the issue. He stated that the key work of the present is to educate SHAFR members, and Thomas indicated that it might be possible to organize some type of programming for the upcoming SHAFR conference if there is sufficient interest. At this point, Thomas, Oates, Goedde, and Foster left the meeting.

Final Issues:

Given that the meeting was running long, Sayward recommended that several items on the agenda could be treated as informational items, that several could be tabled until the June meeting, and that some committee issues could be resolved by the president. At this point, Preston asked Sayward to recuse herself and raised the question with Council of the procedure for evaluating the Executive

Director ahead of the June decision regarding reappointment. It was decided that the group of former presidents would carry out the evaluation and make a recommendation to the Council in June. Sayward then rejoined the meeting.

Council then considered the report and requests of the Task Force on Advocacy. Although there was general agreement that the task force should be empowered to advocate on behalf of SHAFR's core mission (e.g., preservation of diplomatic historical records and adequate funding for the governmental archives that preserve those records), discussion following the meeting about how these proposals interface with the existing by-laws governing SHAFR's advocacy led to a proposal to more fully examine this proposal and its implications at the next Council meeting. The request that SHAFR join the National Humanities Alliance at the minimum rate of \$1,000 per year can be accommodated within the existing Outreach budget ("Other" category), as reported by the Ways & Means Committee. The motion to do this was made by Hoganson, seconded by Turek, and passed unanimously, 14-0-0. Council believed that the task force's communications with the membership may be more frequent but should be channeled through the Executive Director after consultation with the President. The motion to authorize this was moved by Keys, seconded by Shannon, and passed unanimously, 14-0-0.

Council also approved a proposal to officially connect SHAFR with the workshop developed by Elisabeth Leake for SHAFR members in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Council expressed great interest in the proposal and expressed the hope that the model might be expanded to other regions of the world—perhaps within the existing structure or perhaps by replicating the model elsewhere. Andrew Johns pointed out that Leake would be publishing an article in *Passport* about the workshop, which could be a catalyst for expansion.

Meeting adjourned 2:35 p.m. EDT