

## SHAFR Council Minutes

Friday, September 20, 2024, 11am-1pm (U.S. Eastern) via Zoom

Council members present: Mitch Lerner (chair), Megan Black, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Mary Ann Heiss, Chris Hulshof, Melani McAlister, Sarah Miller-Davenport, Vanessa Walker, Kelsey Zavelo

Others attending: Amy Sayward (ex officio), Faith Bagley, Richard Immerman, Kaete O'Connell, Lauren Turek

### **Introductory matters:**

President Mitch Lerner opened the meeting with a welcome and expression of thanks because he was chairing his last meeting of Council. He reviewed Council's accomplishments of the year, including establishing a teaching award, completing the searches for SHAFR's next executive director and *Passport* editor, as well as hosting a complex but successful conference in Toronto. He was also happy to announce that Kaete O'Connell has decided to stay on as conference coordinator with a broader scope of responsibilities in the new year.

### **Financial issues:**

Lauren Turek, co-chair of SHAFR's Development Committee, joined the meeting to discuss the gift from Mel and Phyllis Leffler as well as the overall focus of the Development Committee. Lerner thanked Turek and the Development Committee for their work in securing this gift. He explained that a "thank-you" communication to the membership was forthcoming; it would also encourage others to donate. Turek updated Council on the work of the Development Committee, including setting up the new donor platform (DonorBox), which is much quicker and more streamlined than making donations through the website. It also allows recurring donations. The committee has already used this platform to launch the campaign to raise money for the new teaching award, which was doing pretty well. She highlighted that the Leffler gift was exceptional in being unrestricted, with the exception of a request to top off the LaFeber-Wood Teaching Prize. She sought, on behalf of the committee, Council's input on projects that might attract donors. Council discussion highlighted enhancing the endowment and funding support for graduate students, contingent faculty, and foreign nationals (especially students and early professionals).

Lerner moved to use funds from the Leffler gift to top off the LaFeber-Woods Teaching Prize; Chris Hulshof seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. In terms of deciding what to do with the remainder of the gift, a consensus developed in support of Lerner appointing a task force, which would contain at least one graduate student, to make a recommendation to Council based on the above options and others it might suggest, including restoring funds to projects initially funded by the *Diplomatic History* contract windfall but subsequently defunded or making a one-time investment in a project or component of SHAFR that will help ensure that

it thrives. The Leffler gift will be deposited in the endowment so that it can earn interest and dividends while the task force deliberates. Council expressed its thanks to Turek for her superb work as co-chair and for the changes the Development Committee has instituted. The committee will make efforts in the future to promote estate giving and student gifts in honor of mentors who have passed.

Executive Director Amy Sayward gave Council a budget update at this point in the fiscal year. It reflected some adjustments to expenditures based on Council's decisions at the June meeting and does not yet include the final numbers from the conference at the University of Toronto. Nonetheless, there is a projected income surplus (not including the Leffler gift), which is sufficient to cover the projected deficit for the upcoming fiscal year and the AV proposal for the upcoming conference.

Mary Ann Heiss, Chair of the Ways & Means Committee, then presented the initial recommendations from that committee's meeting earlier in the week. It had endorsed the reformulation of the SHAFR investment strategy, which removed some specific restrictions, and updated information on SHAFR's draw rate from the endowment. Additionally, the committee recommended giving TIAA 2-3 years to be more successful with these revisions before a Council evaluation of its performance. The vote to affirm this committee recommendation was 9 in favor and 1 abstaining.

The Ways & Means Committee had also endorsed Sayward's recommendation to continue printing SHAFR's publications with Sheridan and the AV conference recommendation from O'Connell. Discussion of these items appears later in these minutes.

### **National Coalition on History**

Lerner noted that the National Coalition on History had voted to dissolve, which may mean that SHAFR should consider membership in another advocacy organization. Richard Immerman, incoming Executive Director, requested, and was granted, authorization to reach out to the National Humanities Alliance to get more acquainted with its work. He identified the most salient questions as whether the discipline of History is a priority for the Alliance, whether it is likely to support the archival and declassification work that has been central to SHAFR's advocacy, and consequently, whether it warrants SHAFR's support in the future.

### **Publication matters**

Lerner gave an overview on the *Passport* search committee's recommendation, which supported the application of Kennesaw State University's Brian Ethridge and Silke Zoller. The committee very much liked the idea of co-editors, which ensures stability, and in this case Etheridge and Zoller bring different skill sets to the task. The proposal was particularly strong and innovative in terms of its digital components. Kennesaw State also offered significant support, including travel money and course reductions for the co-editors, as well as the

possibility of bringing student workers from the honors program into the production process. Jessica Gienow-Hecht noted that both editors have academic expertise in Europe; Sayward suggested that they might therefore seek members of their editorial board with complementary strengths in other geographic areas. The Council vote to support the search committee's recommendation was unanimous 10-0-0. Discussion then turned to the financial elements of the transition and the new editors' agreement, which will need further elaboration in line with the current budget and identified needs of the new co-editors. The Council tasked Lerner with negotiation with Etheridge and Zoller.

Sayward provided Council with an update on efforts to secure a variety of bids to print *Diplomatic History*. Despite reaching out to many different people, organizations, and printing firms, Sayward reported that Sheridan seems to be the primary printer for most, if not all, journals. A late bid from the printing office at Ohio State University was only marginally different. Sayward recommended that SHAFR continue to work with Sheridan through the upcoming calendar year, while continuing to seek ways to reduce printing costs which should include reducing the number of mailings, the size of *Passport* (both recommendations supported by the Ways & Means Committee), and the number of SHAFR print subscribers (via communications with those subscribers ahead of the dispatch of renewal notices on November 1<sup>st</sup>). Sayward suggested that Council reconsider the question of donations to cover the cost of print issues again in June to see if the donations and price reductions were sufficient to make this financially sustainable or if further steps prove necessary. Council expressed consensus to move forward in this way.

### **Conference matters**

O'Connell joined to discuss conference matters. She recapped her report on the Toronto conference, which—as an international conference—meant that most exhibitors could not sell books on-site; that some exhibitors encountered significant difficulties in transporting their exhibits through international customs; and that fewer graduate students attended. She also noted a couple of challenges posed by this conference as a campus conference: a significant number of the sponsorships pledged in the proposal did not ultimately materialize; having events in different buildings made the conference less walkable than those conferences where all events occur in a single building; the delays in finalizing room assignments due to campus events; and the absolute need to have a point person on campus—in this case, Sanjhana Dore (an administrative professional at the University of Toronto) was absolutely essential to the 2024 conference's success. Sayward highlighted the recommendations about contingent faculty and conference attendees outside of academia made in O'Connell's report. Lerner suggested that these be forwarded to the Conference Committee for a January report.

O'Connell then moved to a discussion of the 2025 conference. She highlighted that SHAFR has been able to secure an additional room bloc at the Holiday Inn (down the street from the Arlington Renaissance), which would be valuable because the Renaissance conference room

bloc always sells out. She also pointed out that these rooms are a bit less expensive and include an airport shuttle. O'Connell then detailed her efforts to identify AV companies that might be able to offer quality equipment and service at the Arlington Renaissance with the goal of equipping not only the two lunch talks but also all rooms with mics and podiums as well as three rooms with projection abilities. O'Connell stated that she intended to start by seeing if the Renaissance would match the external bids already solicited. The initial estimate from the Renaissance for AV services was \$47,000. There was consensus from Council to authorize O'Connell to seek the best possible AV at the best possible price.

Discussion then turned to exploring options for the 2027 conference as well as how this might affect SHAFR's current contract with the Arlington Renaissance. Council authorized Sayward, Immerman, and O'Connell to continue to explore options and to make a recommendation to Council in January or June.

### **Council and committee matters**

Council affirmed the vote via email approving the minutes of the June 2024 Council meeting. Vice President/President-Elect Melani McAlister then stated her preference for three Council meetings per year, with the dates set in advance. There was a general sense among Council members that this would be a good idea.

Hulshof provided updates on the work of the Graduate Student Committee. Targeted emails seem to have increased student memberships and engagement with SHAFR, with 71 new memberships since the start of the campaigns. Council expressed its delight and gratitude to Hulshof. Council suggested including American Studies programs in future outreach as well. He also discussed the two programs for the fall. The first one—on writing a successful grant application for the SHAFR fall fellowships—had about thirty people registered, half of whom attended the virtual session. The next one will be in October about forming a successful SHAFR conference panel. He noted that these events are open to the public, not just SHAFR members. Immerman suggested also utilizing H-Diplo to advertise these events. Hulshof also proposed expanding the graduate committee to allow it to place graduate students on other, appropriate, standing committees. He clarified that he was not requesting a change in the by-laws but was suggesting the President make efforts to put graduate students on committees. He intends to have a draft proposal for consideration at the January meeting.

The SHAFR Council meeting adjourned at 1:00pm US-EDT.