

SHAFR Council Fall Budget Meetings

September 6, 2023, via Zoom, 8:00-11:00 a.m. (U.S. Eastern)

October 2, 2023, via Zoom, 10:00-11:00 a.m. (U.S. Eastern)

Part I of Fall SHAFR Council budget meeting

Council members in attendance: Mary Ann Heiss (chair), Laura Belmonte, Megan Black, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Gretchen Heefner, Daniel Immerwahr, Mitchell Lerner, Sarah Miller-Davenport, Andrew Preston, Vanessa Walker, Molly Wood, Kelsey Zavelo

Others in attendance: Clelly Johnson, Amy Sayward (ex officio)

Introductory matters:

SHAFR President Ann Heiss opened the meeting by pointing to the set of financial decisions that Council needed to tackle to ensure SHAFR's long-term financial stability. She pointed out that she had developed a proposal for Council's consideration but was happy to have members offer their best ideas for how to accomplish cuts before delving into it. There was discussion about reductions that might be made to the annual conference budget, including snacks and AV. There was also discussion about offsetting some of the luncheon costs with higher ticket prices or possibly offering less of a discount on student tickets.

Diplomatic History editorial team renewal discussion:

Council then discussed the *Diplomatic History* (DH) editorship renewal proposal. Council members discussed their hesitancy about non-renewal, despite the costs, especially given the diversity and quality that the editorial team featured. Council stated its desire to support an institution that supported its graduate students and its reluctance to eliminate the graduate-student position at Indiana State University. There were some questions about the figures in the proposal, especially the cost of course releases, which are determined by the institution. Council members also raised questions about the challenges of finding new, quality editors on a relatively short timeline. When questions were raised about lowering the overall cost of the Temple renewal, Heiss reported that she and Sayward had had several meetings with the editorial team leading up to this meeting and that the figures before Council were effectively its final offer. Conversation then shifted to the proposal from Oxford University Press (OUP).

Oxford University Press renewal proposal:

Council discussed the provision in the OUP proposal for print-on-demand for *Diplomatic History* and *Passport*, with SHAFR collectively or individual members paying these costs, which OUP estimated would be \$30/person/year; Mitch Lerner asked for clarification on these numbers, and Sayward said she would seek it. She also stated that she had estimated (for the long-term projections spreadsheet) that about half of the 600 members currently receiving the journal in

print might shift to on-line only. Several Council members expressed their strong preference for print copies of the journal but stated that they thought that members, rather than the organization as a whole, should bear those costs.

Daniel Immerwahr moved that Council approve the recommendations from the report by Melvyn Leffler and Nick Cullather that SHAFR seek better financial terms and a three-year renewal of the contract rather than the proposed five; Emily Conroy-Krutz seconded the motion. There was discussion about whether the print-on-demand discussion should be part of the current discussion and vote. At this point, Council voted in favor of the Immerwahr proposal to negotiate better terms and a shorter contract term with OUP by a vote of 11-0-0. Council will consider OUP's response at its next meeting.

Continuation of *Diplomatic History* editorial team renewal discussion:

Conroy-Krutz then moved to accept the proposal from the *Diplomatic History* editorial team, including retention of the ISU graduate student; Immerwahr seconded the motion. It was pointed out that the projected loss of some \$20,000 or more from the new Oxford contract in addition to the higher cost of renewing the editorial team would mean a net loss of almost \$50,000 for the SHAFR budget. Given this budget shortfall, Council members expressed the desire to first identify where in the budget cuts could be made to offset this significant deficit.

Preliminary discussion of potential budget cuts:

At this point, Heiss returned to her proposed set of cuts to offset the OUP and Temple proposals.

Electronic communications

In regard to the electronic communications line-item, Council members expressed the need for on-going outreach using electronic means and expressed their appreciation for the work already done by the Electronic Communication Co-editors (ECCs). Heiss pointed out that the two-year term had been set by Council when the position was originally established, and Andrew Preston recalled that in that conversation Council created the position as a trial run with no firm targets. There was discussion about the podcasts initiated by the ECCs and their educational value as well as discussion of electronic programming in general. There was general agreement that given SHAFR's straitened financial situation, this was not an initiative that Council could afford to continue. Council discussion shifted to what would happen if the ECCs were not renewed. Sayward explained that she would take up the Twitter responsibilities she had performed before the ECCs had taken up that role. She also explained that responsibility for the website—with the update the ECCs had spearheaded now almost complete—would remain with SHAFR's IT Director.

Awards

In turning to what SHAFR spends for awards, there was general consensus that prizes at the senior level—not fellowships and prizes to assist junior scholars—were a target for cuts. Heiss

stated that she was specifically proposing to eliminate the Link-Kuehl Prize for Documentary Editing, as there have been only a small number of nominations in recent years. Sayward pointed out that the cycle of every-other-year awards had had to be adjusted because there were no submissions in one cycle. Belmonte, who had previously chaired this committee, agreed that this prize might no longer reflect the most recent scholarship in the field. Another Council member suggested that one way to trim some other award expenditures could come by shifting some prizes or fellowships into an every-other-year rather than an annual award cycle.

National Coalition for History

Lerner then called for elimination of SHAFR's contribution to and membership in the National Coalition for History (NCH), which currently costs just over \$6,500. Sayward provided an update on SHAFR's relationship with the NCH, stating that our long-time representative, Amy Offner, had been pleased with the work of the declassification subcommittee; Sayward also explained that Tom Zeiler had succeeded Offner and that SHAFR's dues were paid through September 2024.

Continuation of *Diplomatic History* editorial team renewal discussion:

Heiss said that she sensed an emerging consensus that cuts could be made to the general budget and asked Council if it was ready to return to the Temple renewal process, which needed to be settled at this meeting. Sayward reiterated the motion made earlier by Conroy-Krutz and seconded by Immerwahr to accept the editorial team renewal terms. Council's vote on this motion was 9-2-0.

Continuation of discussion of potential budget cuts:

Heiss then asked about other budget cuts that Council wished to discuss, for example, her proposal that the *Passport* editorial staff should manage their own copy-editing rather than outsourcing that task.

Electronic communications

Heiss also stated that Council could circle back to make a decision about electronic communications. Immerwahr moved to strike the electronic communication budget, which was seconded by Gretchen Heefner. There was further discussion of the value of the work conducted by the ECCs and the continuing need to expand SHAFR's reach, but there was reluctant consensus that SHAFR could not afford to continue paying ECCs for this work. Council then voted on the motion to strike the electronic communications budget line item, which passed 10-0-1. Heiss expressed her regret that such cuts had become necessary.

National Coalition for History

Lerner then moved to cut SHAFR's funding for/membership in NCH, which was seconded by Belmonte. Preston agreed that this cut should be made. Belmonte asked about the status of

what had been relatively regular meetings between the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and historical organizations, including SHAFR. Heiss and Sayward stated that they had not seen any effort to schedule a meeting lately, which Belmonte pointed out was after the confirmation of the new Archivist of the United States. Preston suggested Offner and Zeiler be consulted before the January meeting to assess this decision. Council supported the motion to end SHAFR's membership in NCH by a vote of 11-0-0.

2026 conference proposal

Sayward asked for Council's reaction to the proposal from the Blackwell Inn for the Columbus conference, with room rentals and service charges that make the costs equivalent to a conference at the Arlington Renaissance. Heiss wondered if it might be possible to utilize classroom space for breakouts and/or to seek a reduced price for the room rentals. Sayward pointed out that being in separate buildings can be confusing for conference participants and might accrue additional transportation costs. Lerner indicated that he thought it might be possible to identify alternative spaces.

Awards

Heiss indicated her interest in reducing some of the awards that did not benefit graduate students and junior scholars, and there was reiteration of the earlier discussion about eliminating the Link-Kuehl Prize. Heiss explained the "clickable" citations for award winners on the webpage of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), which may be an additional way to lend prestige to SHAFR awards beyond cash prizes.

Conference social events

Lerner then shifted the discussion to social events at the annual conference, pointing out that Sayward had cut those in the long-term projections for the 2025, 2026, and 2027 conferences. He thought that merited further discussion. Council members expressed the value of the social event and discussed alternative ways to raise additional funds to cover the cost. Sayward pointed out that Conference Coordinator Kaete O'Connell's report had noted that a less expensive social event could well be possible. Council suggested that a budget of \$8-10,000 might provide a sufficient amount for a nice social event. There was also discussion of cutting alcohol from the welcome reception budget, which also included the cost of hiring bartenders. Kelsey Zavelo added that she thought that the social event and welcome reception were especially valuable to graduate students.

Executive director stipend

Lerner then shifted to a conversation about the cost of the executive director position and proposed a reduction of \$5,000. Sayward said that she supported this proposal and had already proposed (per the agenda) to donate the \$5,000 raise that she had earlier received to fund the transition in the coming fiscal year that was called for in the job ad for the position. Heiss agreed that the base rate for the new executive director, who will—by definition—have less

experience, should be less than the current rate. Lerner also stated that he thought additional savings could be found in the current budget that can bring the budget into balance that he would work with Sayward on following the meeting.

2027 conference

Belmonte discussed a recommendation she had made previously to the Ways & Means Committee of SHAFR hosting a biannual meeting rather than having a conference every year. Preston noted that having the conference in DC was especially valuable for international scholars, as they could combine the conference with research. Lerner suggested canceling SHAFR's contract with the Arlington Renaissance for the 2027 conference, and Sayward pointed out the contractual ramifications of doing so. Belmonte talked about Virginia Tech's Innovation Campus, which she had recently toured. It has its own Metro stop and would have all of the conference facilities (but not housing) that SHAFR would need for the annual conference. It was agreed that this might be something to consider for the 2027 conference, but a decision to cancel the 2025 conference would have to be made by December, which would be before the Innovation Campus opens. Lerner agreed that the Innovation Campus might be a good alternative for the 2027 conference, but SHAFR would need to understand the costs of a conference there before making a decision.

Non-budgetary business items:

As the time for the meeting was nearing expiration, Sayward asked Council to look at the additional non-budgetary business items (renewal of the conference coordinator, updating of Myrna Bernath award language, acknowledgment of the approval of the June 2023 Council minutes, and *Passport* editorial board replacements), to see if there was any substantive discussion about these issues. Lerner stated he was in favor of each of the non-budgetary business items and moved that not only the Myrna Bernath prize information but all of the gendered (he/she) language in the by-laws be changed. Sayward welcomed the suggestion and said she could provide a set of revisions that Council could approve before June that would go onto next year's ballot for approval by the membership. Immerwahr seconded Lerner's motion, which was passed 10-0-0.

Endowment draw:

Sayward then requested a vote from Council on the Ways & Means Committee proposal that the organization increase the endowment draw from "up to 3% annually" to "up to 4% annually" of the three-year rolling average of the endowment. The motion passed 9-0-1.

Agenda for second part of the meeting:

Discussion moved to the agenda of the next meeting, which will include the response of OUP to Council's counter-proposal (and either acceptance of OUP's response or opening the bidding process to all presses) as well as a final budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, which will begin on November 1st. Sayward said she would also provide revised estimates of the conference

expenses based on reducing/cutting snacks and at least projectors and screens from the AV costs as well as other suggestions that surfaced during the Council discussion. Sayward reminded Council that their terms end on December 31st, but the presidency changes hands on November 1st.

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m. Eastern.

Part II of Fall SHAFR Council budget meetings

Council members in attendance: Mary Ann Heiss (chair), Laura Belmonte, Megan Black, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Gretchen Heefner, Daniel Immerwahr, Mitch Lerner, Sarah Miller-Davenport, Andrew Preston, Vanessa Walker, Molly Wood, Kelsey Zavelo

Others in attendance: Amy Sayward (ex officio)

Passport Copy-Editing:

After welcoming everyone to the meeting, SHAFR President Ann Heiss provided context for the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with a new copy-editor for *Passport*. Andrew Johns, *Passport* editor, had reported to Heiss and Executive Director Amy Sayward that the long-time copy-editor was retiring; approval of this MOA would ensure continuity of operations for *Passport*. Heiss moved to approve, Molly Wood seconded, and Council approved unanimously, 11-0-0.

Trimming Expenses:

Given Mitch Lerner's proposal to reduce the Council travel budget, there was a discussion about whether subsidizing Council travel was needed any longer, given the move to Zoom meetings that Council had approved previously. Heiss recalled from a previous Council discussion the expressed need for Council members to interact regularly with the membership, especially the graduate student members and teaching-centered member. Lerner stated that he believed that \$7,000 was sufficient to cover all reasonable needs. Daniel Immerwahr moved to approve Lerner's proposal, Vanessa Walker seconded the motion, and it was approved 11-0-0.

Council also moved to cut the budget for support services for the Executive Director to \$4,000, another proposal from Lerner. Immerwahr moved the proposal, Kelsey Zavelo seconded, and Council approved 11-0-0.

Other matters:

Emily Conroy-Krutz, co-chair of the Development Committee, discussed some suggested fundraising initiatives. Council discussed affirmation of the electronic approval of the minutes and requested some additional revisions to those minutes as well as integrating them with the

minutes of this meeting, as the two were essentially the same meeting about budget issues. Sayward agreed to make these changes.

Oxford University Press Contract Proposal:

After a brief discussion of Oxford University Press' response to Council's counter-proposal, Laura Belmonte moved to approve the offer, Andrew Preston seconded, and Council approved 10-0-1.

Heiss then shifted to the question of pay-for-print options. She summarized Sayward's suggestions, which were followed by a conversation of the by-law requirement for providing members with a "copy" of its publications without additional cost. Council members pointed out that the language of the by-laws does not specify a hard or digital copy. However, there was a stated preference for providing members with at least a year-long transition, judging members' preference for a print copy and providing an option to "opt-in" to continuing print issues. Heiss clarified that a final decision was not required ahead of the next, regularly scheduled Council meeting in January. It was pointed out that electronic access to issues would potentially end if a person did not continue their SHAFR membership. Sayward added that she had clarified that Oxford's estimation was of \$30 per volume of *Diplomatic History*, and she was still awaiting clarification on whether that included *Passport* issues. She also ensured that Council's vote to approve the proposal included empowering the President, with guidance from SHAFR's legal counsel, to move toward a final contract, which Council averred. In answer to a question, Sayward also explained that she had included the lower income projections from OUP on the long-term projections spreadsheet to hedge against the possibility that OUP's projections were overly optimistic.

Conference cost savings:

Heiss turned to the cost of the proposed 2026 SHAFR Conference at Ohio State's Blackwell Conference Center. Sayward observed that the costs were on par with the Arlington Renaissance costs. She said she would liaise with Peter Hahn of the Local Arrangements Committee to discuss ways to save money, including—for example--shifting away from the Blackwell for the Saturday break-out sessions, although this might cause logistical challenges.

Turning to conference costs, Sayward noted that abandoning the use of AV and microphones at the Arlington Renaissance conference in 2025 would largely solve the projected budget shortfall for that year, saving some \$30,000. She pointed out that she had inquired specifically about the cost of the breaks, because of Council's pointing that out at its last meeting, but an entire day of snacks and coffee packaged for a day were \$6,000. There was general assent from Council about cutting AV but keeping the snacks and coffee. Sayward then noted O'Connell's suggestion of combining the social event and welcome event offsite in a way that would significantly reduce costs but not affect the contractual Food and Beverage minimum. This would not preclude additional, no-cost social options, such as a baseball game or arranging for group dinners. Heiss noted the shocking increase in just the price of a podium. Given Council's assent

to these suggestions, Sayward said she would have O'Connell begin planning in these directions. Lerner raised the question about whether he might liaise with the Arlington Renaissance team to see if additional pressure could allow the organization to amend or possibly cancel its 2027 contract. Council members agreed that the financial practices being implemented by the Arlington Renaissance are a growing concern. There was discussion about alternative conference sites and general agreement that Lerner should do his best to promote SHAFR's financial interests.

Approval of budget reports:

Council discussion then shifted to the updated budget for the upcoming fiscal year (FY2023-2024) that incorporated the cuts that Council had approved in the first part of this meeting and that brought the budget generally into balance. Lerner moved to approve, Belmonte seconded, and Council approved by a vote of 11-0-0. Sayward then directed Council's attention to the long-term financial projections report, which included Council's changes as well as the proposed conference savings to bring SHAFR's long-term projected budgets generally into balance as well.

Concluding matters:

Heiss offered her heart-felt thanks especially to those Council members who were rotating off after this meeting: Emily Conroy-Krutz, Daniel Immerwahr, Shaun Armstead, and Andrew Preston. She commended them for adding immensely to the Council conversations over the years, evidencing their hard work and dedication. Heiss offered her personal thanks to each of them.

Sayward reported that the election results would be posted soon, and then planning for the January Council meeting would begin. The meeting ended 3 minutes early! Belmonte motioned to adjourn, Lerner seconded, and Council voted 11-0-0.