



Actions of the AASLH Council

The Council of the American Association for State and Local History met on January 13 by conference call and in-person on February 26th at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, the latter being the day after several Council members participated in the American Alliance of Museums' Museums Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. AASLH Chair John Fleming led the Council's meetings, and Council took the following actions:

January 13 Meeting

1. Approved the minutes from the June 22-23, 2019, Council Meeting in Sarasota, Florida.
2. Approved the minutes from the August 28, 2019, Council Meeting during the AASLH Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.
3. Reviewed the minutes from the November 19, 2019, meeting of the Executive Committee.
4. Accepted the minutes and first-quarter financial reports from the Finance Committee and Investment Committee. Heard from Treasurer Brent Ott and President & CEO John Dichtl on finances and investments. The endowment had reached nearly \$2 million by 9/30/2019, and \$98,000 of the amount was temporarily restricted grant funding. Membership revenue was ahead of budget expectations. Annual Meeting surplus also was ahead of budget thanks to second largest attendance ever at an AASLH conference. Council discussed creation of an operational reserve fund if there are surplus funds at end of fiscal year.
5. Approved changes to the Financial Policies and Procedures Manual recommended by the Finance Committee to strengthen the check-signing process, simplify appointments to the Finance Committee, and align the manual itself with changes over the past year regarding bylaw citations, staff titles, and the name of AASLH's accounting firm.
6. Discussed critical issues in the field: historical institutions and places as forums for dialogue during increasingly politically polarized times; unpaid internships and equity and inclusion; supporting small museums and other small history organizations, particularly in approaching how to have difficult conversations.
7. Heard a report from staff on AASLH's involvement in planning for the nation's 250th anniversary. AASLH will receive a 15-month, \$150,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to create historical themes, conduct a census of history organizations, and convene the AASLH's national 250th coordinating committee.
8. Heard a report from staff on the National Visitation Survey which launched January 13, its second year.

February 26 Meeting

1. Approved the minutes from the January 13, 2020, Council Meeting.
2. Heard a report from Governance Committee Chair Kim Fortney and member Alex Rasic on exit interviews with departing Council members, annual survey of all Council members, and recommendations for the Leadership Nominating Committee.
3. Discussed critical issues in the field:
 - a. Unpaid internships. Council made changes to draft statement on unpaid internships (which reflects AASLH's own practices) for consideration before next meeting.

- b. History institutions as places for dialogue in polarized times. Discussed a range of resources to help institutions and created a task force (John Fleming, Dina Bailey, Melissa Bingmann, and Stacy Klingler) to collect these materials and models for dialogue.
 - c. Needs of small organizations. Council members discussed their roles as ambassadors of AASLH and working with organizations such as the Field Services Alliance and the State Historical Administrators Meeting. Created an ongoing discussion group of select Council members and staff.
 - d. Facing a potential downturn in the economy. Reviewed factors such as a drop in the market and the impact of the coronavirus on AASLH programs and revenue.
4. Approved the workplan for the Diversity & Inclusion Committee as presented by its chair, Richard Josey, with five goals: a) Conduct regular diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion assessment and training for Council and staff; b) Prioritize diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in programs and operations and encourage all history organizations to do the same; c) Advance a more diverse and inclusive field through continuing education offerings and other programmatic efforts; d) Make the next generation of history practitioners and leaders more diverse and the field more inclusive through professional development opportunities for graduate students and emerging professionals; and, e) Continue building collaborative relationships between the committee and entities within AASLH and external to it.
5. Reviewed the minutes of the Finance and Investment committees. Heard from Treasurer Brent Ott and President & CEO John Dichtl on finances and investments. After all bills were paid, the 2019 Annual Meeting net surplus was approximately \$40,000 more than the average for the previous four years. Membership was up \$24,000 over the same period last year, and AASLH is diversifying its revenue sources. Technology infrastructure costs have increased most rapidly in the budget, due to investment in better IT and in online learning management system. Concurred that the decision of the Finance Committee to take the annual draw on the endowment in February instead of waiting until later in the fiscal year, and to establish a reserve fund, was most appropriate.
6. Heard the president & CEO's report. Dichtl emphasized attention to serving the needs of small organizations in the field, such as the StEPs Enhancement project, attention to expanding AASLH's professional development program, and attention to new research, such as the visitation survey, the Frameworks Institute project, and a census of history organizations.
7. Agreed that the Governance Committee should draft a proposal for a history to be written of AASLH.
8. Voted a resolution of thanks to Carol Kammen for her twenty-five-plus years of writing the On Local History column in *History News*.
9. Received a presentation by staff on AASLH's new Professional Development Framework, which resulted from a two-year grant project funded by IMLS. The new framework is a planning and evaluation tool to create new and stronger learning opportunities.

10. Revised the draft AASLH strategic framework document for organization-wide strategic planning. Council will make the statement of vision more externally-facing and finalize the document at its June meeting in Nashville.
11. Discussed the importance of the American Alliance of Museum's Museums Advocacy Day, and endorsed role of individual Council members and of AASLH in participating and supporting it.
12. Created a Task Force on Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Alexander Rasic, Richard Josey, Ashley Bouknight) that will work with the National Council on Public History's board-led subcommittee of the same name to create a survey on this topic for the public history field.
13. Agreed that AASLH staff should seek corporate funding as one possible avenue of potential support for the Community Historians project.