

SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE BUSINESS MEETING 2020 COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE ANNUAL REPORTS

2021 Annual Meeting Organizing Committee Submitted by Heather Lapham and Margaret Scarry

Current Members: Margaret Scarry, Heather Lapham, and Steve Davis

Activities through the past year, since 2019 annual meeting: We began this year, 2020, moving forward with plans to hold the SEAC annual meeting in October. We opened a Bank of America account that is linked to SEAC so it can be passed on to future conference organizers; We met with archaeologists in the Chapel Hill – Durham – Raleigh area to talk about the meeting and establish collaborations with other organizations (Fort Bragg, North Carolina Department of Transportation, North Carolina State University, Office of State Archaeology, etc.); We form a Program Committee (Dale Hutchinson [chair], Rosie Blewitt-Golsch, Steve Davis, and Joe Herbert), a Book Room Committee (Meredith Babb and Maureen Myers), a Thursday Night Reception Committee (Heather Lapham, Madelaine Azar, David Cranford, and Gabby Purcell), and a Friday Night Dance Committee (Mary Beth Fitts, Joe Herbert, and Shane Petersen); We identified Saturday afternoon tours to pottery studios in Seagrove (Linda Carnes-McNaughton) and historic cemeteries in Raleigh (Dru McGill); And, we talked about fundraising, themed symposia, and other special events that would create an exciting and enjoyable experience for all attendees. Then came the pandemic...

In May, the SEAC Executive Committee, in consultation with the conference organizing committee, decided to postpone this year's annual meeting due to safety concerns and general uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The next annual meeting will take place on October 24–27, 2021, in Durham, North Carolina. To re-secure the Durham Convention Center and four hotels (Aloft, Durham Hotel, Marriott, and Residence Inn) we had to negotiate a Sunday—Thursday block of dates to avoid Duke University football games, which would have doubled the cost of hotel rooms (from \$169 to \$389 in some instances). All four hotels agreed to keep the room rates the same between the old (2020) and new (2021) contracts. The Durham Convention Center held our initial deposit of \$8,443.75 as a cancellation fee, which is the one financial loss SEAC incurred by postponing the 2020 annual meeting.

Plans for coming year: We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic closely, and reassess the situation in the new year. We certainly hope to be able to hold a safe, healthy, and in-person meeting come October 2021, and will gear up appropriately in its planning early next year.

Budget requests if any: In February 2019, we paid a 25% down payment of \$8,443.75 to the Durham Convention Center followed by a \$16,887.50 payment (50% of contract minimum) on January 18, 2020. As mentioned, the initial down payment (\$8,443.75) was held by the convention center as a cancellation fee. As per the Payment Terms in our Addendum to Existing Contract with the convention center, we will have the following amounts due on the specified dates:

January 18, 2021: \$8,913.13

October 14, 2021: \$8,913.13 (25% of contract minimum) + final balance as reflected on Event Invoice

Please note: Any credit card transaction of \$7,500 or greater will incur a 1.5% administrative fee added to the final invoice.

Concerns, recommendations, debates, etc: As we discussed at the Board meeting at SEAC 2018 in Augusta, Georgia, the cost to host SEAC 2021 in Durham will be higher than many previous conferences, more in line with SEAC 2016 in Athens, which had expenses totaling more than \$100,000. Athens also had a large turnout (over 980 attendees). We will need to promote SEAC 2021 starting sometime next year when we have a handle on the pandemic to ensure good attendance, and look for donations/grants to offset costs associated with holding the conference in downtown Durham.

Also, we may not be able to hold the traditional Thursday night reception. We priced out our two best options and both are over budget without a) significant fundraising, which isn't appropriate in the current coronavirus climate and perhaps not even feasible; and b) high numbers of attendees to help cover the costs. Bay 7 on the American Tobacco Campus's (.4 miles; 9 min walk) least expensive option for a four-hour reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres for an estimated 400 people will cost \$37,000. The Museum in Jackson clocked just over 600 attendees and they had almost no food remaining at the end of the night, so 400 might have been a low estimate pre-coronavirus, however that is the maximum number of people permitted in Bay 7. The Cottonroom's (1 mile; 20 min walk) least expensive option for a two-hour reception with light hors d'oeuvres for an estimated 400 people will cost \$28,000. At one mile away, we would also need to hire busses, which we did not price out, but that would raise our costs even higher. These are pre-pandemic figures, so it is possible that the situation will look different next October or that holding a reception on a different day of the week (in this case Monday) will lower costs.

To put these estimates in perspective, previous SEAC receptions have cost the following: 2019 in Jackson = \$14,300; 2016 in Athens = \$22,500 (which had just under 1,000 attendees); 2014 in Greenville = \$16,600; 2013 in Tampa \$12,000; 2012 in Baton Rouge \$12,400; 2011 in Jacksonville = \$12,500.

Is there anything else you want to say to the board? We are looking forward to hosting the next SEAC for what we sincerely hope will be an in-person meeting in Durham in October 2021.