

Meeting of the SEAC Executive Committee and the SEAC 2020 Annual Meeting Organizing Team
5/11/2020, 10:00 – 11:30AM CST, <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88918749333>

Janet Levy, President
Maureen Meyers, President-Elect
Chris Rodning, Secretary
Patrick Livingood, Treasurer
Meghan Buchanan, Executive Officer I
Jayur Mehta, Executive Officer II (not in attendance)
Mary Beth Trubitt, Editor
Rob Beck, Editor-Elect
Megan Kassabaum, Social Media Editor

Neill Wallis, Associate Editor for Book Reviews
Emily Beahm, SEAC Newsletter Editor, SEAC 2021 Coorganizer
Steve Davis, SEAC 2020 Conference Local Support
Heather Lapham, SEAC 2020 Coorganizer
Margaret Scarry, SEAC 2020 Coorganizer

Because of the public health crisis and related challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak, members of the SEAC Executive Committee have been considering what decisions and contingency plans should be made regarding the 77th Annual Meeting of SEAC, scheduled for Durham, NC, October 28–31, 2020 (<https://www.southeasternarchaeology.org/annual-meeting/details/>). The Executive Committee has decided that it is in the best interests of SEAC and its members—and in the best interests of broader public health considerations—not to hold the 2020 annual meeting on those dates, and instead to consider options for postponement. The Executive Committee thanks the SEAC 2020 organizing team for their considerable efforts and hard work in planning the annual meeting and then in considering alternatives, communicating with and meeting with representatives from the Durham Convention Center and the four hotels contracted by SEAC for the 2020 annual meeting, and making recommendations to the SEAC “board” members.

Prior to this special Executive Committee meeting on Zoom on May 11, the SEAC 2020 organizing team (Lapham, Scarry, Davis) had outlined an Option A, Option B, and Option C for altering the schedule for SEAC in Durham. Option A: SEAC in Durham in January/February of 2021. Option B: SEAC in Durham in October/November (probably October) 2021. Option C: SEAC in Durham in October/November (probably October) 2022. The SEAC 2020 organizing team recommends Option B, which does entail the likely “loss” of our deposit of approximately \$8400.00, but SEAC has already paid approximately \$24,000.00, and the difference (circa \$16,000.00) would be advanced towards conference costs in either October 2021 or October 2022. Option A would not involve the “loss” of this \$8400.00, but conference organizers and executive committee members are concerned about the possibility of lower-than-normal attendance, potential public health issues that are either still present or that are reemergent in late 2020 and early 2021, the challenges posed by altered budgets and lack of support for travel and conference participation, the difficulties in “local fundraising” (from CRM firms, local universities and agencies, and other sources) to subsidize annual meeting costs, and other considerations. The SEAC 2020 organizing team can commit time, effort, resources, and logistical support (including participation by student volunteers) from home institutions for a conference that is postponed until 2021, but a

postponement until 2022 may make it hard to “keep the team together,” which the executive committee recognizes as a reasonable and a significant consideration.

Meeting attendees discussed the merits and problems of these different options, the financial implications for SEAC, .

It is acknowledged that the SEAC 2020 organizing team cannot be asked nor expected to organize nor to conduct an online conference comparable in scope and scale to the “normal” annual meeting.

Some of the costs for events at Durham venues are quite high. The average cost for Thursday evening receptions at SEAC in recent years has been \$12,000.00, the costs to SEAC for the event in 2019 were minimal because the museums in Jackson wanted to host events, but the estimated cost for such an event in Durham is \$37,000.00. Alternative ideas for Thursday evening events for SEAC in Durham include: no event, smaller event, an event with poster presentations in the conference space (thereby no need for rental), and other possibilities.

Emily Beahm noted that the team for the planned conference in Little Rock can plan for the meetings in 2021 (as has already been planned) or in 2022 (if SEAC is held in Durham in 2021).

(Scott Jones was not present at this meeting but had noted by email message to this group that the team who has proposed SEAC in Chattanooga can maintain its plans for 2022 or postpone until 2023.)

There was vocal discussion and some messages shared through the “Chat” function on Zoom to craft wording for a motion for the executive committee members to vote upon, leading to the following motion: **“The SEAC Executive Committee charges the SEAC 2020 Organizing Team to explore options for rescheduling the SEAC 2020 annual meeting for 2021 in Durham, NC, and to consider dates that are in the best interests of the conference.”**

(The language specifically and intentionally refers to rescheduling rather than cancellation.)

All in favor: 8. Opposed: 0. Abstain: 0. Motion approved.

President Levy announced the receipt of a report about programming supported by a grant from the NAALC to Jan Simek and colleagues and collaborators and consultants with the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, and plans to send \$1200.00 for reimbursements for travel and event costs.

President Levy asked for advice on what to communicate with the SEAC membership about plans for SEAC annual meetings in 2020 and 2021, and when and how to communicate. She will wait until May 15 in case the SEAC 2020 team can determine any dates and details with Durham Convention Center and hotels more definitively, with plans for sending out communications to the membership on or soon after May 18.

President Levy asked for discussion about plans for SEAC 2020 awards. The annual SEAC Public Outreach Grant is already awarded for 2020. One possibility is for awards committees (such as the Lifetime Achievement Award) to postpone consideration of nominations until 2021. There was general consensus that it would be good to give at least some SEAC awards in 2020, including C.B. Moore, P.J. Watson, Hudson Award, and perhaps the Lifetime Achievement Award as well, pending feedback from relevant awards committees, and with the possibility of acknowledging recipients of 2020 awards at the

annual conference in 2021. For SEAC 2020, the general consensus is that no Student Paper Prize will be awarded, but that students with student status in 2020 would be eligible to submit papers for award consideration and presentation at the annual conference in 2021.

There was then some discussion about whether SEAC should or would need to host an annual business meeting in 2020, with recognition that an online business meeting may not be easy to conduct nor to broadcast with an interactive mode (Zoom, YouTube, other platform?)—although reports could be requested and circulated in advance to streamline business meeting proceedings—but that an annual business meeting is important for communications with the membership, the opportunity for members to comment on initiatives and actions by the executive committee and to present new business. The SEAC bylaws stipulate that an annual business meeting must be conducted each year. There was general consensus that the SEAC Executive Committee should conduct some form of an online SEAC Business Meeting for 2020. Heather Lapham participated in preparing an online recorded broadcast of the SAA 2020 Awards Ceremony. Megan Kassabaum agreed to help in her capacity as SEAC Social Media Editor; Megan noted that the Penn Museum has conducted meetings online with some participants in “attendance” and others with different levels of access to speaking roles within those online meetings; Megan thought such a platform may be available for something like a business meeting for SEAC.

Meeting adjourned.

Monday, May 4, 2020

TO: SEAC Board
Cc: Emily Beahm, lead organizer for Little Rock meeting
Scott Jones, lead organizer for Chattanooga meeting
Heather Lapham and Margie Scarry, lead organizers for Durham meeting

FROM: Janet Levy, President

RE: PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS FOR SEAC ANNUAL MEETING IN LIGHT OF COVID19 PANDEMIC

All of the details of these proposals are not yet worked out, but we have enough information, I believe, to begin discussion and make basic decisions.

A great deal of hard and creative work has been accomplished by Heather Lapham and Margie Scarry of the Research Labs of Archaeology at UNC-Chapel Hill to reach this point.

Our main conversation has been with the Durham Convention Center (DCC), with additional conversations with the Durham hotels we planned to use. We continue to gather info from the hotels.

Option A:

We move the meeting from Oct 28-31, 2020, to late January or early February, 2021. There are a couple of possible time slots. These may not be the traditional Wed.-Sat. period. If we chose this option, we would propose *not* meeting in Little Rock in November 2021, but pushing that meeting to 2022. The reason to also move Little Rock is that members probably will not invest time and money for two meetings in one year, and it seems that Durham would be the one to skip. We already know that the Little Rock venues will work with us on pushing out one year (Chattanooga to 2023).

The advantage of this option would be that the DCC would not charge us a change fee/penalty (because they very much want to book the venue for the 20-21 fiscal year).

The disadvantage of this option, besides being a non-traditional date, is that it may well not be enough time for our world to regain some basic stability and people to feel comfortable traveling, and for organizations to feel comfortable having their staff travel. It is the organizers' opinion that attendance would be relatively low (not as low as if we stuck with the original dates, but still a depressed number), and that fund-raising would not have recovered. Thus, given that this is a relatively expensive meeting, the organizers feel that the meeting would lose significant money. Plus, if there is a "second wave" of pandemic, we might be facing the very same decision about cancelling again in, say, November.

Option B:

We cancel 2020, and hold the next SEAC annual meeting in Durham in 2021. We push Little Rock to 2022 and Chattanooga to 2023. There are several possible dates in October 2021 that the convention center is offering, but there are no available dates in November. October 6-9, 2021, gives us the traditional Wed-Sat. format. There are also some possible later dates in October for a different part of the week.

The disadvantage of this option is that the DCC will charge us the first deposit, c. \$8400, as a change/cancellation fee. Also, these dates are the same as the Midwest Archaeological Conference, rescheduled for 2021.

The advantage of this option is that there will be more time for something approaching normality to be established, more confidence in traveling, and more time for fund-raising to occur. It seems likely there will be pent-up demand for a SEAC meeting and attendance would hopefully be high. The organizers feel that the meeting could be financially stable. (Yes, I acknowledge that even at this date, things may not be normal enough for travel, but that's something we have no way of assessing.)

Option C:

We cancel 2020, hold 2021 in Little Rock as scheduled, and hold Durham in 2022. There are three possible dates on offer for October 2022, but none of them is a traditional Wed.-Sun. slot. We are inquiring about November 2022. (Chattanooga is pushed to 2023.)

One disadvantage of this is the same charge for change/cancellation as for Option B will be assessed. Another disadvantage is that hotel rooms and convention center charge will increase by standard inflation. Another disadvantage is that we lose the pattern of having annual meetings alternately in easterly and westerly sub-areas of the Southeast. There's a real possibility that the organizing team will lose energy and impetus.

The advantage of this is that we don't have to shift Little Rock.

Hotels

We have responses from 3 of the 4 hotels that indicate they will work with us on changed dates, without charging penalties. Prices for hotels may go up.

The organizers recommend Option B.