



Special Summer EC Meeting  
Zoom Meeting

**Thursday, June 18, 2020 | 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm ET**

**Present:** Kendall King, President; Patsy Duff, 1<sup>nd</sup> VP; Lourdes Ortega, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP; Laura Collins, Past President; Glenn Martinez, Treasurer; Charlene Polio, Member-At-Large; Christina Higgins, Member-At-Large; Jennifer Leeman, Member-At-Large; Haoshan (Sally) Ren, GSC Representative; Terry Dougherty, Ex Officio; Jessica Atkinson, Ex Officio; Ellen, Shea; and Fabiola Ehlers-Zavala, Secretary.

President Kendall King called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m., indicating that this was a special meeting in light of COVID-19. She noted that the primary goals of the meeting were to:

- Review the financial report
- Discuss the 2021 Conference

Kendall briefly summarized parliamentary procedures and proceeded to call for a motion to approve the agenda.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

**Motion:** Laura moved to **approve the agenda**, which was seconded by Charlene. The discussion only addressed the need for expanding the item allocated to discuss the summer webinar as a few things had come up in days prior to this meeting. **All members were unanimously in favor of approving the agenda.**

Following the approval of the agenda, Kendall turned to Fabiola to go over the approval of minutes.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Fabiola proceeded to offer the following recapitulation to EC members:

- The minutes from the 2020 General Business Meeting (virtually conducted) have been completed and filed with Terry. Those will be subjected to approval by the membership at the 2021 Conference during the General Business Meeting.
- The March 9, 2020 set of minutes from the special session have already undergone editing, which has been completed. Those minutes are ready for a vote.

- The March 26-27 minutes require some clarification before a vote is taken, but nothing major that could not be resolved during the discussion, and then proceed with a vote.

**Motion:** Fabiola made the **motion to approve the March 9 minutes with editions addressed**. Patsy seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. **The motion passed with two abstentions from the new EC members not present at the meeting on March 9, Lourdes and Jenny.**

Then, Fabiola proceeded to highlight the areas that needed further clarification pertaining the March 26-27, 2020 minutes. Upon clarification obtained, she proceeded to call for a motion to approve those minutes.

**Motion:** Fabiola made the **motion to approve the March 26-27, 2020, minutes**, and Laura seconded the motion. During the discussion Fabiola addressed the areas that needed further clarification. With no further discussion or additional changes requested, **the minutes were approved by voting members who were present on the meetings held on March 26-27. There were two abstentions from the new EC members not present at that time, Lourdes and Jenny.**

Fabiola thanked everyone for their assistance in finalizing this work.

After the two sets of minutes were approved, Kendall proceeded to formally introduced Terry Dougherty to the EC. She noted that Terry had already been providing quite a bit of support to AAAL and had quickly become quite a valuable member of the group. Kendall apologized for the oversight of not having introduced her earlier in the meeting. Terry graciously accepted the message from Kendall indicating how excited she was to work with everyone.

Having introduced Terry, then Kendall turned to her and Glenn for the financial update.

### **Operations: Financial Report**

Glenn proceeded to ask the EC to open up the file titled: Balance Sheet (BAL SH). He also noted that the report was for the financial statements up until April 30, 2020. He noted that he had previewed the May financials, but that he was not ready to discuss them yet.

He pointed out that Line 13, which referred to cash balance, was down to \$119K, which created some concern in terms of cash flow for AAAL. This situation required dipping into the reserves, which he noted could be seen on Line 21, AAAL investment account. He indicated that, on that line, the EC could see a drop from previous year. He also informed the EC that a \$100,000 withdrawal happened in March (50K had no penalty; other required a minimum penalty of \$50). Line 90 represented the bottom line, so he noted that the total equity had dropped.

Glenn offered the opportunity for questions on the BAL SH. Kendall asked Glenn to explain the cash out for those new EC members who may not know. Glenn offered an explanation

regarding actions that needed to be undertaken due to commitments (i.e., pay outs that needed to be made), as moneys needed to be returned to members (conference registration fees at a time when AAAL had no income due to the conference cancellation). He also explained that the financial approach that AAAL had was that we accumulate reserves to help in difficult times, as was now the case to maintain the viability of the association.

The next spread was the Profit and Loss (P&L). Here he pointed out Line 24--the total membership dues collected. He noted that, as of April 30, 2020, we are accruing fewer membership dues than we had at the same time in 2019. He indicated we needed to keep a close eye on these trends to ensure cash flow for operations. He then turned to Jessica and asked if she had pulled the most recent membership renewal numbers. Jessica reported that we had 1,685 members this year (April 30, 2020) as compared to 1,845 at year end (Dec. 2019).

Questions from the EC included:

- Could those numbers still change? (Laura indicated these could still change given that those numbers were from Dec.—prior to the conference).
- Looking at registration--How about those who did not seek a refund? Is that noted there? (The answer was negative, but it was indicated that it would appear in the May report.)

Glenn noted that it would be important to communicate to the membership the positive impact in the decision to forgo the refund related to conference registration. He noted that a significant number of members did so.

Glenn also noted that the financial picture was not good, but it was better than what it could have been.

Laura asked Glenn when this message to the membership should be communicated. Charlene suggested it could be done on a separate email to everyone.

Patsy indicated that this could be combined with another announcement.

In passing, Laura suggested addressing the remarkable participation on the webinars if more communication goes out.

Kendall noted the need to send a message to the membership as an action item to jointly work with Glenn on how to communicate all this.

Glenn then discussed aspects of the negotiation with the Marriott. He indicated that the negotiations resulted in penalties that would be paid to the hotel later (in installments). These payments would show as pre-pay expenses for the next conference at the Marriott (Denver 2026). He also remarked that the work of Sarah and team did in this regard was also another area of gratitude that merited recognition.

Then, he noted that the net income was negative for this year, so expenditures needed to be carefully scrutinized until AAAL was in a better place financially.

He offered an opportunity for questions. None were raised.

The next spread he reviewed was the Cash Flow (CF) Projection (May-Dec were above the line; then the months after were below the line). In order to avoid spending money that we didn't have, he noted that the reserves were tackled (\$100K) to meet the projected expenditures between June and Dec. and, in all this, it was expected that there would be a cushion of \$50K if needed.

Glenn then directed the EC to examine Line 28, which related to the October travel expenses for the site visit. These, he remarked, had not been put in there. Glenn recommended that such meeting should not happen as we may not have the funding. If the EC went ahead with Houston, it was his recommendation that the site visit should be for essential staff. In response to this comment, EC members noted that, in any case, it was unlikely that their universities would allow travel. Kendall suggested tabling this item.

In relation to Glenn's overall report, Kendall noted that this was an optimistic picture, despite the negative.

With no further questions, Glenn proceeded to point out that the investment sheets were provided to the EC in the materials, but he did not have anything particular to note at this point given market fluctuations.

Glenn then turned to Terry, but she had nothing to add.

Kendall thanked Glenn for the report.

Then, Kendall turned to Patsy and Ellen.

### **Operations: Conference**

Patsy started by referring to her conference report, indicating that the line-up for 2021 was both impressive and exciting. She also noted that she had more individuals interested in volunteering than those needed. Patsy noted that her team was assembled, directing the EC to her piece in the AAALetter where she provided details. She informed the EC that together with Jessica, and others, they had spotted issues with submissions that had been addressed. At the time of this meeting, there were 163 submissions, including papers, colloquia, posters, and so on. She also talked about the adjudicating committee for awards, indicating that they were up and running.

Patsy then proceeded to indicate that the items for discussion concerning the conference related to the COVID-19 situation, as initial presenters were already submitting cancellations for their participation (including participation in panels).

Then, the main discussion for the rest of the hour was about the options that Ellen had laid out in her report—whether or not, and how to go forward with face-to-face or virtual conference. In this regard, Patsy said that she would like to consider a motion for a virtual conference. She also felt it was important to discuss Confex, given the pros (many bugs worked out) and cons (still clunky system). She felt that now would be the time though this decision was going to namely affect the conference Lourdes would organize. Jessica recommended to wait a little bit as she would like to propose something in October to have something to compare it too.

Patsy noted that there was another item that related to naming certain events, but she indicated that she may just confer with a few members, not the entire EC. Having said that, she noted that the matters on the table to discuss were:

- Virtual v. In-person conference in Houston
- Awards issues (no point in recruiting co. members if awards were discontinued)
- Joint Sessions for 2022 (which would take place over the summer)

Patsy then turned to Ellen to go over the penalties according to different milestones.

Fabiola noted that along these lines, we need to update AILA once a decision was made.

Ellen then turned to the scenario planning that she provided for the EC to read ahead of time.

She noted that, if we cancelled before July 17, the penalty would be \$143,679. She indicated she had had a lengthy conversation with the hotel folks in Houston, indicating that all contracts were staying as agreed upon—so she remarked that the outcome of the conversation had not been very positive.

EC members then asked the question regarding how AAAL could be held up to the contract. Ellen indicated that they had reported they were at 70% capacity. Ellen noted that this is a frustrating situation for all involved.

Ellen, following sub-committee conversations, sought clarification on what AAAL would want if pursuing a virtual platform was desired. She noted that a virtual conference was expensive, in addition to the penalty AAAL would have to pay. Terry referred the EC to the materials submitted that showed quotes. Ellen noted that these companies have all the capabilities for a great experience. She also indicated that what could save money was the potential recording of sessions.

Terry invited Ellen to note what reductions would need to be made to the number of presentations if the goal was to bring the cost down.

Ellen noted that her calculations were made on the selections made for Denver.

Kendall summarized the message from Ellen, indicating that all will vary on the number and types of representations wanted, plus number of attendees. The estimated range for the cost (according to Glenn) was \$90K to \$100K.

Kendall offered the opportunity for questions.

Patsy noted that the GSC was also consulted (very hypothetically) about how they would feel about a virtual conference. Sally provided the GSC perspective indicating that they preferred a virtual conference due to the cost (primary concern). She noted that, whether or not the abstract was accepted, was also a factor (also a primary concern). She said that individuals who were very concerned about COVID-19 would likely refrain from submitting proposals. If proposals were not accepted, they would only consider conference participation if it was virtual. Sally also indicated that graduate students value the in-person experience to network with other professionals. Finally, Sally indicated that graduate students had also noted that if this could be achieved via an online platform, that would work for them, and they would consider participation even if their proposals were not accepted.

Patsy reminded the EC about the submission deadline—July 15. She also pointed out that July 17 was the deadline to cancel with the hotel with the lesser penalty. Otherwise, penalties would double by December 31, 2020, and after.

Patsy (following advice from Laura) noted that the one thing we do have control over was in making a decision in a timely manner that could be communicated to all.

The Conference Planning group's perspective (namely in Canada and other countries) was that they saw the virtual option as a social good (inclusive and good for reducing carbon emissions), a way of allowing people to participate that would not otherwise be able to do so for various reasons (e.g., disallowed funding). Patsy offered her own example regulated by her university.

They also saw a virtual conference as innovative and as an opportunity to have watch groups to do things that are different. Of course, she noted that all of that would depend on the scope the EC decides to have.

It was noted that pre-recording was preferred for plenary/high-stake talks to ensure they are of high quality.

Patsy indicated favoring a decision being made now for proper planning. She'd like to have a decision by the end of this meeting and then to notify members to plan accordingly. Also, they were waiting to hear from Ellen regarding the hotel. She noted that, in discussion with Lourdes, they were not interested in having a hybrid option.

Patsy then proceed to make a motion.

**Motion: Patsy made a motion to not have the AAAL 2021 conference in Houston, but instead have a virtual conference.** The motion was seconded by Laura. Discussion was opened.

Glenn offered comments on what needed to be considered financially. He anticipated that more people would likely participate than ever before, based on what had been already seen in webinar participation. Glenn however cautioned that the registration fees for face-to-face may not be maintained, and potentially needed to be cut in half. Terry also cautioned as to potential losses. Glenn added that, for the health of the organization, the 2021 conference needed to be profitable.

Charlene asked some questions regarding the penalty for a cancellation by July 17 (i.e., "Is it at \$140K. How much do we lose?"). Ellen also offered additional details on losses (pertaining food and beverages and room blocks). Ellen noted that there would be losses if going in person.

Lourdes noted that going virtual would be a big way of being socially inclusive, and the impact on grad students and international participants would be negative if we were to proceed with an in-person event. She noted that they would not come. She was very worried about the membership. She said that one way to address this situation was by increasing membership with an event that could be more accessible, as a virtual conference.

Christina agreed with the points made. She sought clarification on the number of papers that could be accepted, and she noted it as an important point. She wanted to have more discussion on how numbers would be affected including cost for the virtual conference.

Ellen noted that the figures that were thrown out were \$35K to 40K before researching companies. Then, with research, she concluded that everything was an add-on. The costs were projected in comparison to the Denver conference. Ellen was looking at two companies right now, but she noted that there were hundreds of them out there. The two selected were very reputable. In order to do it top-notch, Ellen indicated that they would hire those that can deliver.

Charlene stated that she was hoping that bugs are worked out.

Jenny—agreed with all that had been said, but she wondered if there was some kind of innovative program that people could have available other than the traditional paper. She wondered also about pushing back the submission deadline. Patsy noted these points.

Sally also asked about pushing back the deadline which would be very beneficial for graduate students. She indicated that students were curious to know how the platform would work to understand what they could/could not do. She was wondering about those who are not

presenting--whether break-up rooms would be possible to meet with senior professors. She also noted the importance of removing uncertainty. She noted that the newsletter would be out soon, and she indicated that this would be good place to start posting information about the virtual conference. This year, she said, they were planning to reach out to a number of social media outlets to attract more people to be part of AAAL.

Fabiola seconded the concerns expressed. She also shared the example of her institution. She followed up on Christina's concern about the number of presentations that can be accepted, including the fee reduction. Fabiola asked about additional mitigation strategies beyond the conference. She seconded Patsy's note on controlling what we can. (Patsy noted it was a concept derived from her discussion with Laura.)

Kendall noted that the summer sessions were for members-only. At this point, she remarked that for her a virtual conference was the only way to move forward. She was of the opinion that members have low tolerance for risks and ambiguity. She felt it was too risky for the membership and the EC to have an in-person conference. Regarding the hotel, she wanted to consult with legal to go over the best way to mitigate losses given that our members cannot really attend.

Terry offered clarification regarding scenarios regarding reductions of slots. She also talked about the capabilities, noting that the pricing Ellen put together included some of that. She remarked that it was a great way to do poster sessions. In regard to the legal side, Terry indicated that they would ask Legal Counsel to explore whether negotiations are possible. Kendall expressed interest in being part of that conversation with Legal.

Charlene reminded the EC that one of the points to consider further related to what could be charged. She also commented on the need to consider pros and cons of making the conference longer-- not more papers, but perhaps adding days for the event.

Patsy thanked everyone for the input. She also informed the EC that the cost of registration for TESOL was \$99 for members, and people were still complaining. She emphasized the need to explain to the membership how AAAL would go about cost to avoid losing people. She noted that TESOL was using a platform that allowed archival system for people to go later.

Patsy also highlighted the savings in not flying presenters, and she then proceeded to offer some responses to points that had been raised previously during this discussion. (Points are noted below, followed by Patsy's comments.)

- Innovative formats—yes. Very interested in looking into that. Some people are interested in Spanish connections. There can be all kinds of meet up groups. Institutions can have institutional watch groups—where people gather in groups to participate in their own ways.

- Pushing deadline back—to allow people to write abstracts. It is going to take the conference team time as they will have to make sure that content up is done in ways never done before.
- Regarding the GSC letter—please do not have anything out until we have a public message out as EC.
- Number of days for the conference—keep in mind that TESOL is still happening in a hybrid conference. They have a very good conference planning team. They did not incur fees as they cancelled after the public declaration, so they are in a different place.
- Tips needed (as suggested by Sally)--that is key. And it will allow us to learn more about what we are all doing.

Finally, Patsy noted that we had tremendous content already to generate a lot of interest in participating. She hoped it will be very successful and Lourdes can proceed with Pittsburgh 2022.

**With no further discussion, Kendall then called for the vote:**

**All members unanimously voted to adopt the motion to not have an in-person conference in Houston, but instead have a virtual conference in 2021.**

Kendall thanked everyone for their thoughtful engagement and expressed particular thanks to Patsy and team as well as the staff supporting all this work.

Laura offered additional comments regarding the decision just made. She noted it was great to be unified in support of the decision—just like when we met in March to decide on Denver 2020. Laura indicated that what we have to do now is help organize a great conference that is not seen as plan B. We need to approach it as AAAL having something great to offer.

Terry recommended to keep this discussion/meeting within this group until the EC consults with Legal Counsel. She cautioned about the need to engage in careful messaging.

Patsy thanked Terry for her wise advice.

Kendall then offered additional wrapping remarks on this topic highlighting the benefits of the decision. Following this, she moved on to share other updates.

- “We will soon have the videos of the grad students award winners and reviewed webinars (just held and to happen).”

- “The Online and Ed Outreach Co. is planning additional webinars derived from some of the colloquia that had been accepted for Denver.”

Then, Kendall proceeded to solicit input from the EC on a webinar session AAAL would like to have in connection to the three papers from ARAL that connect to relevant issues we are dealing with. The issue she shared was that the panelists wanted to have EC representation on the panel. She wanted input, and offered her perspective, indicating that she was happy to do it, but not wanting to detract from it. Also, she noted that she was a bit nervous in terms of how we may come across. Laura then added the concern in that one of the authors wanted the EC to represent the membership of AAAL, which is a bit problematic in terms of the request and in terms of finding someone who could do so. Her idea was to showcase this important work and focus on that. The EC should not detract from the time the audience could participate. EC presence is important, but maybe we don't have to detract. Fabiola indicated favor for facilitating the session (i.e., as moderators and/or facilitators), and agreed with the challenge of being able to represent the entire AAAL membership. Charlene was puzzled by the nature of the request, and she was trying to understand the request further. Christina asked for the details regarding the panel. It was noted that details were on email shared among a few (i.e., those more directly connected to the exchange) at that point.

Patsy noted that the one-hour colloquia also focuses on issues of diversity.

Lourdes noted that she just wanted to put out the idea that declining to participate was reasonable, but she also reminded everyone that there was a bit of tension and push for us to be more forthcoming and explicit for us discussing issues of diversity and race. She indicated that it would be important to keep doing that. She sensed that people wanted more time and more conversation. Maybe, she suggested, the EC could offer a different kind of event that we fully organize.

Jenny added that, if everyone has to be doing this work, we needed to have a bigger conversation as well as work promoting all that is happening.

Fabiola seconded what Lourdes said about the membership's desire for more air space discussing these key topics.

Laura noted that the work prepared for March (General Bus. Mtg. in Denver 2020) could be used to tackle this point.

Kendall noted that there are ways to do that, and she will follow-up on that.

Kendall asked Terry to review the action items.

- Fabiola to circulate amended and approved minutes.
- Glenn and Kendall to work on a message to thank the members who donated their reg. fees.

- Ellen and Terry to work with the attorney to review contract and steps to cancel the hotel in Houston.
- Patsy to confer with Ellen and Terry on the platforms for a virtual conference.
- Fabiola added the discussion on Confex in October.
- Patsy added the award discussion.

Laura warned about using Confex for new features for the Virtual conference, given past history with glitches that happen every time we try to make an adjustment. She noted that innovations needed to consider potential disruptions.

Regarding the round tables that appear in the program, but do not include presenters, Jenny asked the EC to consider how to credit those presenters to ensure that people can appear in the program so that they can be reimbursed and receive recognition. The point was noted.

Kendall thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Prepared by F. Ehlers-Zavala, Secretary  
Submitted for EC review on July 10, 2020

Remarks:

- Approved as submitted:
- Approved with editions: X
- Date: October 22, 2020