

Minutes of the ASSA Council Meeting held at the
SAAO Lecture Hall at 17h30 on 13 February 2003

1. Present

Dr AE Mahomed, and Messrs C de Villiers, CD Gray, MA Gray, RF Hurly, A
McConnell, L Simone, MG Soltynski, A Slotegraaf, CR Turk and P van Blommestein.

2. Apologies

Messrs TP Cooper, AB Jones, CL Rijdsdijk and all up country members.

3. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that, as expected, our finances took a beating in the
December quarter with little income being due and heavy expenditure incurred on
Mnassa production costs and payments for Sky & Telescope. Additional heavy
postage was incurred on all back copies of Mnassa being sent to NASA and there
was a write off of R4000 for Symposium costs, although it seems there will now
be a surplus to offset the latter. We still possess net assets in excess of
R90000 including some R40000 in the Scholarship Fund.

The report was accepted on a proposal by Mr C Turk, seconded by Mr P van
Blommestein.

4. Honorary Membership

It was proposed by letter from the President, Mr T Cooper and seconded by
several members present, that Honorary Membership be conferred on Dr Janet
Mattei of AAVSO for her contribution to the ASSA Symposium and for her support
of ASSA over many years.

This was carried unanimously.

Dr Mattei will receive all Society publications. (i.e. Mnassa and Handbook)

5. Solar Telescope

It was reported to Council that a number of telescopes designed for observing
the Sun at the Transit of Venus had been imported into South Africa and these
could be purchased for approx R780. It was proposed that one of these be
purchased by the Society and sent to The Director of the Solar Section for the
use of his section, subject to prior inspection of the instrument by the
Society's Curator of Instruments. Carried.

6. Minutes of last meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting as circulated were accepted on a proposal by Mr
MA Gray and seconded by Dr AE Mahomed.

7. Matters arising from the minutes

7.1 Mr Turk agreed to distribute the proposed revised Constitution to all members of Council before next meeting.

7.2 It appeared that letters to Mr Tony Hilton had not been received by him and the acting secretary advised Council of Mr Hilton's new email address which he had discovered only the previous day. It was decided to send another letter to Mr Hilton incorporating Dr Martinez's suggestion as shown in the last minutes.

7.3 Scope-X and Astronomy Day 2003. This was fully discussed by Council and it was decided to urge all centres to arrange a promotion on 10 May 2003. Details of last year's event in Johannesburg have appeared in MNASSA and these will act as a guide for Centres who need it. Council is hopeful that the professional sector of the astronomical community will make a special effort to support these Scope-X events as they missed the publicity opportunity of the symposium.

It was suggested that Canal Walk may be a good venue to use in Cape Town and this would be conveyed to the Centre committee by their Council representative.

7.4 It was noted that the Dark Sky Section had again arranged StarWalks at Kirstenbosch on the following dates: Feb 25 & 27, Mar 4, 6, 11 & 25 or 27. These outings are designed to draw the attention of the public to the problems of light pollution and it is hoped that other Centres will arrange something similar in their areas. Any Centre wanting further information should contact the Director of the Dark Sky Section.

8. New Members.

The Membership Secretary, Dr AE Mahomed, presented a list of 25 new members who were accepted unanimously on a proposal by Mr MA Gray, seconded by Mr CR Turk. The names of the new members will appear in MNASSA shortly. Many of these were from the Bloemfontein area where there has obviously been a recruiting campaign led by Mr JA Van Zyl. This brings the Full Membership of the Society to 210.

9. Correspondence.

This was bypassed as all items were covered elsewhere in the agenda.

10. Other Business.

10.1 Mr MA Gray raised a query from Durban regarding their committee being not listed in the 2003 Handbook and it was decided that an amendment should be published in MNASSA as soon as possible.

10.2 Mr MG Soltynski proposed that the Handbook be upgraded to be of at least the same style/format as MNASSA. This was seconded by several members and carried. Council has instructed the Editorial Board to implement this

resolution

forthwith and to hold its first meeting on the subject within 6 weeks. (i.e. by 1 April at the latest.) The chairman of the Editorial Board will call the meeting.

10.3 Mr MG Soltynski made a proposal to make all positions of ASSA electable on an annual basis. At present only Council Members are elected. It would be more democratic and transparent if all positions were dealt with in the same way. This would mean that Section Directors, the various Editors, the MNASSA Board and other positions would be subject to election. In seconding the proposal, Mr C Turk observed that this will entail amending the Constitution of the Society so it will not be possible to implement until the AGM in 2004 at the earliest. Carried.

10.4 Proposed by Mr MG Soltynski and seconded by Mr MA Gray that Mr A Slotegraaf be appointed the new Webmaster for the Society. Carried.

10.5 Scholarship 2003. The committee reported that Melissa van Gend achieved marks of 80%, 86% and 87% in astronomy subjects last year, 61%, 66% and 94% in Physics and only failed her 3rd year Maths by 2 marks - she was writing a supplementary paper. It was recommended that she be awarded a scholarship again this year in the sum of R2500.00. Fees would be paid direct to the tertiary institution and the balance for books would be paid direct to the applicant. This was agreed by Council and payment will be made soonest.

10.6 Proposed Mr C Turk, seconded Mr P van Blommestein that the Chairman of the Scholarship Committee shall be a member of Council. Carried.

10.7 Mr RF Hurly reported on progress with his work on the north point of McClear's survey and would report further in future.

10.8 Mr A Slotegraaf tabled a letter from Wolbach Library of Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics asking for permission to include MNASSA in their project to preserve scientific publications and make them available to the scientific community. This was agreed and Mr Slotegraaf will reply accordingly.

10.9 Mr C Turk advised Council that Harare Centre had elected a new Council Rep following the departure of Simon Walsh to Europe. The new Rep is Mr A Alegria, but there is a small problem as he is not a Full Member of ASSA as required by the Constitution for Council Reps. However, in view of the almost impossible foreign exchange problem in Zimbabwe, and the consequent difficulties of maintaining any subscription in SA, Mr Turk recommended that Council waive the requirement in this instance. Agreed unanimously.

11. Next Meeting

After some discussion it was agreed that the next meeting of Council be held in the Lecture Hall at SAAO on Tuesday 15th April 2003 at 19h30.

The meeting closed at 19h35.