

MINUTES OF ASSA COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY 6th November, 2007

Held in the Boardroom, SAAO, at 20.00

- 1) Welcome: The president of ASSA, Magda Streicher welcomed all present members with special thanks for Lerika Cross from Johannesburg and Case Rijdsdijk from Wilderness.
- 2) Present:
Magda Streicher, Lerika Cross, Case Rijdsdijk, Pat Booth, Atze Herder, Chris de Coning, Dudley Field, Laurie Simone, Maciej Soltynski, Anthony Jones, Cliff Turk, Dave Laney.
- 3) Apologies:
L. Labuschagne, W. Koorts, A. Mc Connell. Apologies from all up country members are automatically accepted.
- 4) The previous meeting of the 4th September were ratified and signed by Magda Streicher.
- 5) Matters Arising:
There is no progress with enhancing the data base. Council decided to carry on as we have been.
- 6) Appointing Alternates:
Alternates for the Centre Representatives of both Durban Centre and Natal Midlands could not be finalised. Laurie Simone is to approach the Cape Centre to find candidates.
- 7) Astronomy Starter Pack:
Gerrit Penning the initiator of the above Starter Pack requested that Council approve three proposals and they are as follows;

1st Proposal: That Council approve the above Starter Pack for marketing and distribution under ASSA's name. Chris de Coning approved the proposal which was seconded by Case Rijdsdijk and Atze Herder and passed by Council

2nd Proposal: For Gerrit Penning to go ahead, produce and distribute an initial quantity of 500 Starter Packs during December month and prepare the marketing in January for 2008 . Case Rijdsdijk approved the proposal which was seconded by Dudley Field and Atze Herder and passed by Council

3rd Proposal: Maciej Soltynski proposed that an interest free loan of R6000 for six months be made to Gerrit Penning to assist with the production and marketing of the Astronomy Starter Pack." The proposal was seconded by Case Rijdsdijk. Dave Laney suggested that Council vote on this proposal. The vote result was 9 members for, 2 against and 1 abstention and duly passed by Council.

At this stage Maciej Soltynski proposed that we thank Gerrit Penning for the time and effort he has used to create the Starter Pack. Case Rijdsdijk and Laurie Simone seconded the proposal and Council concurred.
- 8) The 8th ASSA Symposium 2008:
A Progress Report was submitted by Mike Reid of Durban Centre and Frikkie de Bruyn of Natal Midlands Centre. It is now confirmed that the above Symposium will be at the Durban Country Club starting on Thursday 7th August to Saturday 9th August, 2008. The first announcement and invitation to submit papers was published in the August issue of MNASSA. Professor George Ellis of the University of Cape Town has accepted the invitation as keynote speaker. The theme for the Symposium is "Interaction between Astronomy and Cosmology"

9) Audio conferencing. Skype:
No Skype addresses were received for any interaction for this meeting.

10) Astronomy 2009:
In the minutes of Council meeting of the 15th May item 12, an attempt was made to resurface the Observers Workshop. It was suggested that the Workshop should be held in 2009 to coincide with Astronomy Year. Since then, Magda Streicher has been busy in the background with various members to determine the best way to make this happen. It is by no coincidence that Lerika Cross is with us for this meeting. We are all aware of Lerika's experience with Scopex and it is this experience that we need for hosting a successful Workshop.

Case Risjdijk pointed out to Council that Astronomy Year 2009 has yet to be officially declared by the United Nations. It was the general consensus of all present that we should go ahead with the Workshop with or without any declaration by the United Nations.

Lerika offered to compile a draft terms of reference (to be further enhanced by interested parties) on delivering an Observer Manual and Workshop; she will use already existing material (Tim Cooper's proposal), emails on the matter, recent discussions before and at the ASSA National committee meeting.

Members present at the Council meeting were unanimous in accepting Lerika's offer to compile a Terms of Reference for the above Workshop

11) MNASSA:
There were no points up for debate regarding MNASSA

12) Sky Guide:
National Parks: Magda Streicher indicated that the first orders are in and that details will follow. Case Risjdijk revealed to Council that Southern Cape Parks Board are also interested in placing Sky Guide in their bookshop

Progress Report: Anthony Jones reported that the printing of Sky Guide was two weeks behind. The problem was caused by a single advert. Cliff Turk suggested that the advert be dropped and that we go ahead and print. Council was in agreement and Anthony Jones said we could go to press in within a few days. Case Risjdijk said he needed 20 to 50 copies for a Workshop he is hosting on Saturday, 1st December. The Workshop is based on the Sky Guide.

13) New design letterheads for ASSA:
Magda Streicher submitted some wonderful designs for an ASSA letterhead. The designs were circulated to all present to pick the best one. This was done and the chosen design was left with Laurie Simone.

14) Merit Certificates:
Auke Slotegraaf presented a merit certificate to Carol Botha for 20 observations from the Top 100 Deep Sky Observations List.

15) Sky and Space Magazine – Australia / Skyways:
The request by Magda Streicher for Section Directors to submit a 20 line article to the above magazine has had only limited response. Jacques van Delft, Tim Cooper and Magda Streicher have submitted articles. Laurie Simone was asked to approach Auke Slotegraaf to submit an article and to re circulate the request to the remaining Directors.

16) Treasurers Report:

"The Treasurer reported that our "reserve" funds have grown with interest earned and at the end of October stood at R67 177.

"The Scholarship Fund has similarly grown by end October to R68 211, being capital of R60 000 plus a further R8 212 being available for distribution.

"Our main account from which we operate stood at R69 130 at the end of October, having already paid all Sky Guide production costs except the actual printing which will be R59 996. Other expenditure which is due or nearly due is as follows: December MNASSA printing approx R6 200, mailing it to members R1 550, and overseas mailing R1 680. We thus have expected expenses totalling R69 406 which is R276 more than the amount held - and we still owe R2 432 to the Treasurer for expenses to date.

"Once we start to receive payments for the 2008 Sky Guide, this situation should be corrected very quickly."

17) New Members:

Dudley Fields submitted a written report. The application of 4 new was approved by Council. Total membership for November now stands at 212 of which 83 are full members, 10 Honorary Members, 115 limited members and 4 new members. The updated database reflects 55 non-renewals (about 20%)

Dudley did approach two suppliers of which one said that they could not reproduce the Lapel Badges the same as they are now and the other supplier suggested a plastic pin. After a little debate and a consensus to retain the Lapel Badges as they are, it was suggested that Dudley try to Google the South African web pages for the badges. This is a nice exercise for any web junkies amongst our members to assist Dudley in his search.

18) Correspondence:

Laurie Simone read out to Council correspondence received from Mike Begbie. Council was pleased to learn that he is safe and sound in the UK after his harassing experience in Zimbabwe. Magda has already corresponded with Mike. Laurie has his UK address on record should any member like to contact Mike.

Magda also indicated to Council that she has been corresponding with Oleg Toumilovitch. Oleg has come up with some good ideas and they will be revealed to Council in due course.

19) Any other business:

Professor Nithaya Chetty, President of the SA Institute of Physics has bought Council's attention that one of our members, one Hilton Ratcliffe, has had published some highly controversial views on Science and Cosmology. Further investigation shows that he has commented extensively on the Internet on this and other matters as "H. Ratcliffe, Astronomical Society of South Africa". Council felt that Mr Ratcliffe's views did not reflect those of council or ASSA and that it was not acceptable that he did so. Council felt that a letter needed to be written to Mr Ratcliffe not to comment in ASSA's name, but that he is fully entitled to express these views in his personal capacity. The President, requested Case Rijdsijk to draft a letter, subject to confirming he is a member of ASSA advising Mr. Ratcliffe not to publish in ASSA's name. The draft is to be emailed to Magda who will correspond with Mr. Ratcliff in her capacity as President.

Lerika Cross advised Council that the Date for the next Scopex to be held in Johannesburg is the 24th May, 2008

- 20) Date of the next meeting:
Tuesday February 5th, 2008

The meeting was closed by Magda Streicher at 9.58 pm