

MINUTES OF ASSA COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY 5th FEBRUARY, 2008

Held in the SALT Boardroom, SAAO, at 20.00

- 1) Welcome: The president of ASSA, Magda Streicher welcomed all Council Members present with special thanks for Kevin Govender SAAO.
- 2) Present:
Magda Streicher, Atze Herder, Chris de Coning, Dudley Field, Laurie Simone, Maciej Soltynski, Anthony Jones, Cliff Turk, Matie Hoffman, Lia Labuschagne and Kevin Govender.
- 3) Apologies:
A. Mc Connell, W. Koorts, D. Laney, P. Martinez, C. Rijdsdijk and P. Booth apologies from all up country members are automatically accepted.
- 4) IYA – Kevin Govender:
Council thanks Peter Martinez for initiating the invitation for Kevin Govender to give a presentation on IYA. Kevin was allocated 30 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for questions. He was spot on. An insight into IYA for Council was long overdue and though one cannot table the full presentation, some important points are tabled as follows;

Funding in excess of 1 Million Rand has been approved in principal and will be distributed by offering grants to the successful applicants.

A strong media campaign is planned.

A workshop is planned for both Cape Town and Johannesburg.

There is also a plan to associate schools to all the ASSA Centres. Chris de Coning suggested introducing The Astronomy Starter Pack for the schools. Laurie Simone advised that Kevin and Gerrit Penning should communicate with each other to advance these ideas. Chris also advised Council that the Centenary of the SAAO is the 29th October, 2008. Kevin stayed on for the remainder of the meeting and we were pleased to have his attendance.

- 5) Scholarship:
Renée Holzek, holder of the ASSA Scholarship in 2005, who is presently studying for her MSc in cosmology at UCT, has been awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and will start her DPhil studies at Oxford from October.

Wendy Williams, holder of the 2006 and 2007 ASSA Scholarship, received her B Sc degree with distinction from UCT. In 2007 she achieved distinctions in two third year astronomy modules and two third year physics modules, and the class medal in three of these modules. In 2008 she is studying for her B Sc (Hons) in astronomy at UCT in the National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP).

Mpati Ramatsoku, holder of 2007 SAAO-ASSA Scholarship, will continue with her undergraduate B Sc studies at UCT, and is a candidate for the same scholarship in 2008.

In 2008 a second SAAO-ASSA Scholarship is available thanks to additional funding from SAAO. Each is worth R4000. Funding available for the ASSA Scholarship in 2008 is slightly over R9000.

Applications have been received for both the ASSA and the SAAO-ASSA scholarships from 4 candidates in total. Incomplete submissions have delayed the selection process for 2008, which will hopefully be completed before the end of February.

- 6) The minutes of the meeting of the 6th November, 2007 were ratified and signed by Magda Streicher subject to corrections as indicated by Cliff Turk.
- 7) Matters Arising:
There were no matters arising.
- 8) Astronomy Starter Pack (ASP):
Correspondence was received from Gerrit Penning with a progress report on the ASP.

Production of 250 ASP, s and CD's were completed over the holidays. The loan provided by ASSA for the project was utilized for costs.

Official marketing has yet to begin, yet a test run was done locally in Bloemfontein and the product was well received. We have received orders from Cape Town, some individual orders and orders from unknown origins.

As at the middle of January, 64 full Asp's and 12 CD's on its own were ordered. The sales price is R60.00 for the full pack (bulk cost is R40.00) and R50.00 for the CD alone (bulk price is R30.00). Bulk orders constitute 10 or more units. Gross sales as at the middle of January amounted to R 3,665.00

AS at the above date the inventory is as follows; Full Asp's 128 and CD's 34

Marketing will be done sporadically to avoid running out of stock and the ASP is presently advertised on the ASSA web site together with Sky Guide. Gerrit would like to thank Council for their generous support for producing the ASP.

- 9) The 8th ASSA Symposium 2008 from Thursday 7th August to Saturday 9th August:
Magda advised Council that the Symposium is very much on track and that the Natal Centres are excited about it. She would also be in Natal on Thursday 7th February to visit the Centres.
- 10) Naked eye star count:
The Secretary apologised to Council for leaving out the word "eye" from the Agenda. Apparently this caused some confusion. Cliff Turk pointed out the difficulty with this project and that it has been done in the UK. It was suggested the Laurie Simone email the Observing Directors for volunteers.
- 11) Terms of Reference – Observer Manuals – IYA 2009:
The 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations has proclaimed 2009 the International Year of Astronomy. Email was received from both Kevin Govender and Maciej Soltynski as confirmation.

Observing Guide Update from Lerika Cross:

The ASSA Observing Guide Terms of Reference was produced and approved by Council in December 2007 who gave the mandate to proceed with the development of the Guide.

Lerika, as Co-coordinator contacted all Observing Section Directors (aka Contributors) and obtained their buy-in in principle to contribute sections to the Guide. Contributors are to give time estimates for producing their input; Tim Cooper advised he has already completed the section on Meteors; a copy is to be sent to Auke, the General Editor of the Guide.

Lerika to now work on draft list of actions

The mandate for Lerika Cross to proceed with the Terms of Reference was obtained by mail. The result, as tabled herewith is as follows; of the eleven Members of Council 9 emails were received approving the mandate for Lerika Cross to go ahead with the Terms of Reference. Two members did not reply at all and are assumed as abstentions. The final result is nine for, nil against and two abstentions.

12) RSG – Stars and Planets:

Magda Streicher has been in contact with Freek Robertson of RSG radio for an interview on Astronomy. Matie Hoffman suggested promoting IYA during the interview. Radio promotion was discussed in general and Chris de Coning suggested a regular spot to gain a national footprint.

13) University of Milan – Mars Parallax Campaign:

Lerika Cross indicated to the Secretary that though there were participants for the above project, the weather was not suitable on the two allocated days. Davide Cenadelli from Milan thanked all involved for their participation and suggested corroboration in the future.

It was further suggested that Laurie Simone gather a list of names from ASSA members who would like to participate with the next project and pass it on to the team at Milan University.

14) Treasurers Report:

The cash shortfall which I anticipated in my last quarterly report never materialized as we received a surge of MNASSA subscriptions and some early Sky Guide receipts.

At the end of last December our “current” account stood at R48 821 after all current bills had been paid except for R5700 due for new lapel badges.

The Society is in a healthy financial position and I hope to be able to propose a further transfer of funds to the Scholarship Fund before the end of the financial year.

The latest position on Sky Guide 2008 is that up to today we have received orders totalling R112 086, so our production costs are well covered.

15) New Members:

Dudley Field submitted a written report. The application of 19 new was approved by Council. The total membership for November now stands at 239 of which 84 are full members, 10 Honorary Members, 126 limited members and 19 new members.

The total of 500 membership lapel badges have been made and delivered.

16) Correspondence:

Case Rijdsijk advised that the Hilton Ratcliffe affair has been resolved and that he has contacted Magda Streicher advising her has as such. Case will also be running another Sky Guide workshop in Knysna to further promote the annual. The SAN Parks have also expressed an interest.

17) Any other business:

Magda Streicher was happy to announce to Council that Chris Middleton tops the list of Variable Stars observations and that South Africa tops the list world wide.

18) Date of the next meeting:

Tuesday 8th April, 2008

Tuesday 3rd June, 2008 for the AGM

Closing date for nominations 15th June, 2008

