

ASSA COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

DATE	29 Sep 2014	TIME	19:30 to 20:40	VENUE	Via Skype
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ATTENDANCE

Council	Role
Matie Hoffman	President (Chair)
Pierre de Villiers	Vice-President, Chair - Hermanus Centre
Ian Glass	Outgoing Vice-President
AJ Nel	Hon Treasurer
Chris Stewart	Council Member
Maciej Soltynski	Council Member
Lerika Cross	Hon Secretary
Peter Dormehl	Chair - Durban Centre
Frank Jacobs	Chair - ASSA Cape Centre
Jerome Jooste	Chair – ASSA Johannesburg Centre
Bosman Olivier	Chair –Pretoria Centre
Case Rijdsdijk	Chair - Garden Route Centre, MNASSA Editor

Appointees

Christian Hettlage	Web Master
Auke Slotegraaf	SGAS Editor, Deep Sky Section Director
Johan Smit	Outreach and Dark Sky Section Director

Apologies (a) /Not Present

Frikkie du Bruyn (a)	Cosmology Section Director
Allen Versveld (a)	Imaging Section Director
Kos Coronaios (a)	Observing Director
Chris de Coning (a)	ASSA Archiving, Astronomical History

ASSET

Tim Cooper (a)	For ASSET Trustees
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	Agenda	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
1	Welcome	M Hoffman welcomed everyone to the 1 st 2014/15 Council meeting and extended a special welcome to the newcomers, Jerome Jooste and Frank Jacobs.
	Apologies	Apologies received are noted in the minutes.
2	Special note	At the start of the meeting, M Hoffman drew attendees' attention to Mike Gaylard's obituary posted in the recent MNASSA and said Mike's passing is noted with sadness and with a lot of respect for his contribution to astronomy in South Africa.
	Previous Minutes	M Hoffman asked and received acceptance of the Council minutes of meeting held 14 July 2014. (Proposed: C Stewart, Seconded: P de Villiers)
	Agenda	The agenda items as proposed were accepted.
	Matters arising	Note: Actions arising from previous minutes are <i>in italics</i> . Actions are underlined
3	ASSA's Comms channels	Communication 3.1 ASSA Observing and Outreach L Cross noted that nothing specific was received for the agenda but asked that the item be

	Agenda	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
		<p>kept on the agenda as and when new updates or ideas are to be tabled. (also refer to items noted under 7.5).</p> <p>3.2 Sections: Dark Sky <i>(26 May 14) Group Membership of the IESSA was filed for on 20 May 2014. (14 Jul 14) The communications to date was tabled The annual subs R5000 is high. Council agreed that benefits of joining (still to be assessed) should be compared to this cost. <u>L Cross</u> was tasked to ask the IESSA when ASSA Council representatives (J Smit, C Stewart, L Cross and if available M Hoffman) can meet with IESSA to discuss mutual benefits.</i></p> <p>L Cross reported that although emails have been exchanged, no suggested date yet from IESSA for a meeting and she will keep on following up.</p> <p>3.3 New ASSA Appointee: Director Spectroscopy and photometry Council noted that at end August 2014, Jerome Jooste offered to take over the vacant position of Spectroscopy and Photometry Director and this was accepted by Council since no objections were received via email when asked for comment.</p> <p>J Jooste said he has started - but it will take him some time - to get both the Photometry and Spectroscopy contributions going on the website.</p> <p>M Hoffman noted the spectroscopy workshop held before last year's ScopeX event and suggested that perhaps a Photometry workshop could be planned in future.</p> <p>3.4 ASSA Publications - SGAS SGAS 2015 price: Struik advised: "need to discuss the fee for the 300 copies with our business manager. Any copies you order over and above the 300 can be purchased at a 50% discount." Struik needs to come back on the price they will charge for the 300 copies at the preferential rate. <u>A Slotegraaf</u> to follow up with Struik.</p> <p><u>Centre Chairs</u> should please supply number of SGAS 2015 they would like to order. Estimated price given by AJ for Centres to purchase: R45.</p> <p>It was discussed that because the Constitution says SGAS must be sold at cost, ASSA cannot sell SGAS at a profit to, for example - sponsor scholarships.</p> <p>A Slotegraaf said last year 560 SGAS were sold to Centres.</p> <p>Leftover SGAS 2014 in shops still being sold at full price: A Slotegraaf offered to ask Struik if there is any principle agreed with book shops to sell SGAS at discount after say mid-year.</p> <p>3.5 ASSA Publications – MNASSA and/or Editorial Board M Hoffman thanks C Rijdsdijk for the August edition of MNASSA. C Rijdsdijk noted (under another item on the agenda) that he is still waiting for AGM related reports to include in the next edition of MNASSA. (Also refer to item 8).</p>
4	Scholarships	<p>Scholarships</p> <p>4.1 SAAO-ASSA Scholarships <i>(14 July 14) M Soltynski advised Council that SAAO has advised him "no money available for the 3 SAAO-ASSA scholarships for 2015 (The amount for 2014 was 3 x</i></p>

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		<p><i>R12K=R36000). This is due to DST budget cuts.</i></p> <p>Council noted further information from M Soltynski sent on 10 Sep 2014 which confirmed he met with Ted Williams (Director SAAO) to revisit the situation, but with no positive result. He corresponded with Prof Nithaya Chetty (Deputy CEO Astronomy at the NRF) asking for financial support with no positive result. He tried with the SKA and corresponded with Kim de Boer of the SKA who advised that her directors decided not to allocate funds for ASSA managed scholarships. He noted that the ASSA website was updated to reflect the situation.</p> <p>M Soltynski then provided attendees with his latest information: Upon C Rijdsdijk's suggestion, M Soltynski contacted Prof Chetty who manages the Astronomy Advisory Council - the Council has the brief to overlook astronomy in South Africa - who suggested a request is sent to the Chair of the Council. M Soltynski confirmed that he has sent a request on 29 Sep to Renée Kraan Korteweg (the current Chair and Head of Astronomy UCT) and this request would be considered at their next meeting on 9 Oct. He added that although this entity may not be able to provide sponsorship they may be able to give advice and thus he suggested Council awaits the outcome of the meeting on 9 Oct.</p> <p>He also indicated that there is still time before scholarship applications are due (Dec/Jan) and thus recommended that other options await the outcome from the Astronomy Advisory Council. It was agreed by attendees that an ASSA Council meeting is not necessarily required to progress any outcomes from the meeting; a sub-committee can be created to progress further options and proposals.</p> <p>4.2 Scholarship request to ASSET: <i>(14 Jul 14) From T Cooper: "Request can be sent to the ASSET Secretary C Turk; An amount be proposed to ASSET to consider against the constraints of ASSET's annual income stream." M Soltynski may propose a sum to Council and M Hoffman will assist in this regard.</i></p> <p>M Soltynski proposed that rather than suggesting a sum to ASSET, <u>M Hoffman</u> is asked to do a follow-up note to ASSET, indicating the current situation, including what the current ASSA scholarships covers and ask if ASSET would like to offer any funding of ASSA scholarships.</p>
5	Membership	<p>Membership</p> <p>5.1 Membership Secretary:</p> <p>Council took note that no contact has been possible with P Booth since ~ June 2014. L Cross managed to contact her on 18 Sep and she advised that she is not in a position at the moment to continue as ASSA membership secretary.</p> <p>AJ offered to fulfil the role for now as he said that "to combine Treasurer and Membership Secretary and will solve one of the issues raised by auditors, i.e. that we do not invoice on membership fees". Many thanks, AJ.</p> <p>L Cross noted that there is still a search on for a recent Member List (with the members containing the members' detail) which although asked from P Booth has not been forthcoming. L Govender has been contacted - and it will be followed up - for the list as a copy was sent to Durban Centre to use for purposes of the symposium.</p> <p>L Cross also noted that there is still a need to collect post from the ASSA PO Box 9 post</p>

	Agenda	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
		<p>box and I Glass kindly offered to clean out the post box and forward membership information to AJ.</p> <p>M Hoffman asked for offers to assist with the collection of post to assist I Glass would be welcomed.</p> <p>5.2 Membership badges: <i>(14 Jul 14) I Glass reported that he found couple hundred ASSA buttonhole badges (photo attached) issued by ASSA by Membership Secretaries years ago. It was agreed that the badges should be used going forward for merit awards as and when appropriate to deploy.</i></p> <p>I Glass advised on 18 July that he has “323 badges and am sending 20 to Bosman”. Item closed.</p>
6	Governance	<p>Governance</p> <p>6.1 Certificates and Awards: Hon Members</p> <p>Council to note acceptance of the proposal sent on 17 July :</p> <p>” It is proposed that Hon Members be given the choice to annually either subscribe to S&T or submit intent to Council to subscribe to/or acquire astronomical related source of information to the value of S&T annual subscription. And, if Council agrees to request, to proceed to acquire such source and then provide proof of payment to Treasurer for refund. The amount to be determined in July/August each year. At present the S&T is 38USD per annum which relates to roughly R400. Thus the estimated cost to ASSA: 14 x R400 = R5600 per annum”.</p> <p>Following some queries raised around how the annual benefit should be managed, principles were agreed (these do not apply to S&T subscriptions which are processed as subscriptions become due):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The annual benefit cannot be carried over to following year (book keeping issues will arise); - The annual benefit will be determined at the AGM and will be calculated based on the S&T annual subscription rate (for 2014/15 it will be R400); - The benefit will lapse if not taken up within a 6 month period from receiving a note from Council; - Hon Members may claim the benefit from the Treasurer upon receipt of notification from Council in the form of a credit to the member’s account. <p>Council agreed that <u>L Cross</u> should formalise the outcome by sending formal notes to the Hon Members which should be used to in support of the process to claim from Treasurer.</p>
7	Financial Matters	<p>Financial Matters</p> <p>7.1 ASSA Bookkeeping Services</p> <p>Council considered the proposal to retain the services of CTF Services for ASSA bookkeeping - refer to the attachment to these minutes for the request to - and response from - CTF Services.</p> <p>No objections were received and Council accepted the proposal from CTF Services. Financial implications: R300 per month. Plus the acquisition or monthly rental (~ R165pm) of an online accounting package.</p> <p>The key actions arising are:</p>

	Agenda	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - L Cross to inform the Auditor of Council's decision (this was done on 30 Sep); - <u>AJ</u> to submit the 2013/14 financials to CTF Services; - For <u>AJ and CTF Services</u> to agree on which online accounting package to use for ASSA books; - For <u>CTF Services</u> to get the financials for 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 to R Glass, the Auditor. (R Glass advised on 10 Oct that he has blocked out 10 Nov for the ASSA audit) <p>Note: All ASSA documents including financial documents are stored by AJ here: http://1drv.ms/1ALTWww</p> <p>7.2 Change of address for market link account (discussed under 5.1) I Glass noted that he keeps finding financial statements for an ASSA account in the post box from Standard Bank which should ideally be routed to the Treasurer. AJ said he believes it must be the market link account from Standard Bank and he does not have access to that account - he only has access to the business accounts. Access would have to be arranged when all the old and new signatories are at the same location (to sign documents at the bank). This has been an issue as the 3 previous signatories are in Cape Town - he will look at who these signatories are. <u>AJ</u> offered to try and make contact when next in the Cape Town area.</p> <p>7.3 ASSA registering as non-profit organisation (26 May) <i>AJ Nel advised that he has submitted request for an NPO.</i> AJ said that it is a rather complex department to deal with but if he has to guess it could take another 4 weeks to get a reply.</p> <p>C Rijdsdijk noted that when trying to create a bank savings account for their Centre the bank asked for ASSA registration documentation as NPO entity.</p> <p>7.4 Request for funding for Deep Sky Section: (14 Jul 14)<i>Deep-Sky talk by Dr Wolfgang Steinicke at SAAO in September 2014 – funding of catering: Council agreed to fund R1000 max for catering.</i></p> <p>A Slotegraaf gave very positive feedback on the talk. Item closed.</p> <p>7.5 Big 5 observing initiative (14 Jul) <i>Graphic artist: logo and branding material for Big Five observing project: Council agreed to fund R1500 max.</i> <i>Council will consider request for further funding once the logo and branding material is done.</i></p> <p>M Hoffman congratulated A Slotegraaf on his Big Five effort and referred to the 13 page Big 5 manual referenced on the ASSA site: http://assa.saa.ac.za/sections/deep-sky/big5/ P de Villiers also offered congratulations saying that their Centre sent the document to all their amateur observers with a recommendation that they enrol in the Big 5 initiative to get involved and get accreditation from ASSA.</p> <p>Other people involved with this initiative as noted by A Slotegraaf are Hannes Pieterse and Carol Botha.</p>
8	ASSA Endowment	<p>ASSET C Rijdsdijk noted that he awaits a note from ASSET trustees (T Cooper) who may request</p>

	Agenda	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	Trust	content to be published in MNASSA related to ASSET.
9	ASSA 2014 Symposium	<p>ASSA Symposium: 25 – 27 Sep 2014 (Hosts: Durban Centre) The Symposium was cancelled. Several communications happened since the first notification from P Dormehl to M Hoffman on 18 August, and for the record the final reply from P Dormehl on 30 August to Council is attached to these minutes.</p> <p>In light of the cancellation, the meeting reviewed the causes leading to the cancellation and outlook for future symposia. Some comments and suggestions posed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ASSA must really think if it wants to go on with these symposia. To organise a symposium is a daunting and very nerve-wracking venture. Cost control for a Centre is key, eg Durban Centre required 50 attendees to break even and could not manage that number; - An option which eliminates costs is perhaps an internet based symposium at different Centres at the same time, perhaps over a number of days; - An internet based symposium could be supplemented by a number of workshops, eg on spectroscopy or photometry, which will allow personal contact; - There is a view that it an important aspect of a symposium is for people to meet and interact. The physical interaction between/after talks is also important; - Before proceeding with a future symposium, perhaps find out if there is a critical mass of people who will be interested in attending such an event; - The date for a symposium is important, eg the Durban event coincided with a long weekend which may not have been a good idea in practise; - Speakers at the symposium are important and need to be planned and need to appeal/attract the audience; - Topics to be discussed at a symposium should be realistic; - Symposium could perhaps be a side focus of another event (such as ScopeX) that is already being organised; - Council should consider appointing a member of Council - experienced with ASSA Symposia - to assist local organisers to ensure success. <p>M Hoffman asked P Dormehl if there is intent by Durban Centre to perhaps restart effort for a symposium in 2015. P Dormehl said he is not sure that there is enough enthusiasm but will enquire.</p> <p>No specific next step agreed at this time.</p>
10	General	<p>General 10.1 AGM It was noted that the minutes were sent. C Rijdsdijk asked for a copy of the President's Report.</p> <p>10.2 General outreach and fairs were noted such as the Astronomy Fairs at the Bloemfontein campus, ScopeX, efforts in support of National Science Week.</p> <p>10.3 Digital Planetarium in Durban: P Dormehl noted that the process (mainly driven by L Govender) was to get land from the city council - this has been driven for the past 2 years.</p>
11	Next meeting	<p>Next Meetings: 17 November, 16 February, 19 May, 20 July at 19:30 via Skype. AGM 5 August – venue?</p>

Minutes Approved: _____ Date: _____

Attachments to the minutes:

Refer to Item 7.1: ASSA Bookkeeping Service

From: Strydom, Rudolf [mailto:rudolf.strydom@ctfsa.co.za]

Sent: 26 September 2014 10:03 PM

To: Lerika Cross

Subject: Re: ASSA Bookkeeping

Dear Lerika,

Thank you for considering my company for providing further assistance to ASSA. It would be an honor for us to assist ASSA in any way we can.

Replying to your points below:

2. We would be happy to look after the record keeping and bookkeeping for ASSA. I would estimate that one to two hours per month should be enough, if the systems are set up properly and functioning smoothly. I therefor propose a cost of R300,00 per month for this service.

Also along the lines of using the cloud to make record keeping transparent and accessible, I would propose that we move the bookkeeping system into an online accounting system, as opposed to the Excel spreadsheets currently in use. There are free online systems available (Wave accounting is probably the best), or we could use a low budget alternative like Sage One at R165,00 per month. These systems have decent audit trails for all transactions processed, and enough flexibility to deal with the accounts of ASSA. It would also be possible for the interested parties within ASSA to get access to these systems to get reports and transparency of work completed.

I would leave this decision up to ASSA, stating that we would be willing to continue with the current Excel sheets if required. But this would always leave room for error and omission.

3. If approved by the Council, please ask Adv Nel to send on the information as soon as it is convenient for him, so that we can do the preparatory work for the 2013/14 financial statements.

4. We would be glad to assist the process of getting these years finalised by the Auditor. As explained during our meeting, from an audit perspective there are a few shortcomings inherent in the nature of ASSA's income streams, and as such I cannot guarantee an unqualified audit opinion. The same will obviously apply to the 2013/14 year, and probably into the future, unless a method could be agreed with the auditors to eliminate this qualification.

We hope the Council will approve of our recommendations and proposals, and look forward to a mutually beneficial relationship into the future.

Kind Regards,
Rudolf Strydom
B.Com (UNISA)
CTF Services
082 822-1622

On Fri, Aug 15, 2014 at 10:29 AM, Lerika Cross <lerika@icon.co.za> wrote:

Dear Rudolf,

This is further to discussions at the ASSA AGM with AJ and Matie Hoffman (ASSA President) when we discussed the best option forward in terms of ASSA financials.

1. ASSA Auditor

Ronnie Glass confirmed that he is happy to continue as Auditor. He also supported your recommendation of having a qualified bookkeeper/accountant.

2. Bookkeeping Services

ASSA would like to ask if your company would be prepared to handle the ASSA bookkeeping services (for an annual fee).

This would enable ASSA's books to be maintained irrespective of the changeover in the post of Treasurer on Council and a nice web based approach to support the process and having records visible to all parties. Would this be acceptable to your company? If so, could you please let us have an annual budgeted amount that we can propose to Council to formalise this approach?

3. ASSA 2013 / 14 Financials

If 2. is agreed by your company, AJ will forward the 2013 / 14 journals to you to do the necessary as soon as we get a nod from Council on the principle.

4. ASSA 2011 to 2013 Financials

Further to the work your company has done on these: the amount of R5000 has already been approved by Council and we would really appreciate an invoice to process in lieu of the work done.

Would it be possible for you to handle the process of getting these to the Auditor and dealing with the queries until there is an outcome from the Auditor on these financials? If so, please advise us of an estimate to complete this step.

Many thanks for giving the request consideration.

Lerika Cross
ASSA Hon Sec
082 605 8002

Item 9.1: Symposium

29 August 2014

ASSA President , and Fellow Council Members,

Dear Matie and Council,

That we as a body are upset, if that is the word, is evident from much of the correspondence that has gone around. It was for this Center an extremely hard call to make. That more time could have been given to Council on reflection is true. That the outcome would have been different is a matter of conjecture. The fact of the matter is that there was very little support in terms of registrations as attendees from even this body. That there were so few papers submitted raises even more issues I could think.

I had waited for our monthly committee meeting on Wednesday before I sent in this letter, as I felt I needed to canvas the entire committee on all correspondence from Council and Council members.

It was noted that it had been our fault, that Frikkie de Bruyn had not been notified after the meeting of July 23 of the intention to set the date of August 15 as the deadline for cancellation of the symposium if no more papers were received and if there was also no dramatic increase in attendees. This was not done with any mischievous reason, merely that he did not attend meetings, due to his not living in Durban, and in the period from May/ June we had also got other symposium members to write off and request papers from possible speakers, in an attempt to aid Frikkie. So his name did not go on the emailing list, all I can do is apologise.

As to the situation where we now stand of apologies, this is certainly distressful to us as the Durban Center. This much is certain, Logan Govender will do what is right. He is a valued member, tirelessly dedicated to the advancement of amateur astronomy. During his term as centre chairman we saw an increase in membership as well as the decrease in the average age of members. It was during his watch that the center had two major trips to Sutherland, and then the trip to view the Northern Lights. He is currently in negotiations with the Durban City Council to build a planetarium in the City. In spite of the difficult viewing conditions in Durban nevertheless we are now at the point where some weekends we need to host at differing venues two or more star party/ talk events. Much of this is directly as a result of

the commitment of this man to the advancement of the aims of this august body of which the Durban Branch is a part.

With this now said can we move forward and attempt to put astronomy first.

Regards

Peter Dormehl

ASSA special focus areas

Section	Director	Area	ASSA
Shallow Sky	D Blane	ASSA Website	C Hettlage
Deep Sky	A Slotegraaf	Scholarships	M Soltynski
Cosmology and Astrophysics	F de Bruyn	ASSA Observing	K Coronaios
Southern African Astronomy History	C de Coning	ASSA Communications	C Rijdsdijk
Dark Sky	J Smit	ASSA Outreach	J Smit
Imaging	A Versfeld	ASSA Archives	C de Coning
Instrumentation	C Stewart		

Checklist:

- 1 Feb Scholarship application dead line
- 31 Mar Closing date for nominations for: Honorary Members and Awards
- 15 April Deadline for Secretary to send to Council list of nominations.
- 30 April Deadline for agreement with Struik of the printing schedule for the following SGAS
- 1 Jun Call for nominations for Council;
- 30 Jun Closing date for nominations for Council, receipt of Section reports, receipt of report from Scholarships Convenor, submission of items for placing on the Agenda of the AGM, Financial year end; Council to review appointment and roles of all Council Appointees including the Section Directors;
- 1 Jul Submission of annual updated ASSA membership form, Country Members: Subs renewal
- 31 Jul Closing date for ballot for Council nominations: Centre AGMs to be concluded before the AGM;
- AGM 1st Wed Aug. 21 business days before 1st Wed in Aug: Deadline for members to receive notice
- 1 Oct Appointment/Negotiations with SGAS Editor for next edition. Open negotiations with Struik

END