

ASSA COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

DATE	24 Nov 2015	TIME	19:30 to 20:30	VENUE	Via Skype
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ATTENDANCE

Council	Role
Dr Pierre de Villiers	President (Chair)
Case Rijdsdijk	Vice President, Garden Route Centre Chair, MNASSA Editor
Dr Ian Glass	Council Member
Chris Stewart	Council Member
Bosman Olivier	Membership Secretary
Lerika Cross	Secretary
Peter Dormehl	Chair - Durban Centre
Johan Smit	Chair –Pretoria Centre, Outreach and Dark Sky Section Director
Eddy Nijeboer	Chair - Cape Centre

Appointees

Auke Slotegraaf	SGAS Editor, Deep Sky Section Director
Dave Blane	Shallow Sky Section Director

Connection issues

James Smith	Web Manager
Dr Christian Hettlage	Web Master

Apologies (a) /Absent

Prof Matie Hoffman (a)	Vice President, Chair - Bloemfontein Centre
Adv AJ Nel (a)	Treasurer
Chris de Coning	ASSA Archiving, Astronomical History
Allen Versfeld (a)	Imaging Section Director
Kos Coronaios (a)	Observing Director
Claire Flanagan (a)	Convenor of Scholarships
Frikkie du Bruyn (a)	Chair - Midlands Centre, Cosmology Section Director
Jerome Jooste	Chair – Johannesburg Centre

ASSET

Tim Cooper (a)	For ASSET Trustees
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	Agenda	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
1	Welcome	P de Villiers welcomed everyone to the 2 nd ASSA Council meeting for 2015/16 year.
	Apologies	Apologies received are noted in the minutes.
2	Previous Minutes	Council accepted the minutes of the meeting held 22 September 2015 (Proposed by C Stewart, seconded by C Rijdsdijk).
	Agenda	Clarification made during the meeting of 4.3.2 in previous minutes: Hon Members do not pay for SGAS.
	Matters arising	The agenda items as proposed were accepted. Note: Actions arising from previous minutes are <i>in italics</i> . Actions are underlined
3	ASSA's Comms channels	3 ASSA Communication 3.1 General <i>(22 Sep) Centre Chairs to provide dates of Centre monthly meetings. Centre Chairs and Section Directors to provide an update of their activities.</i>

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	<p>Only Hermanus Centre and the Deep Sky Director provided a general update on their activities before the meeting (attached to the agenda).</p> <p>P de Villiers repeated his request for a short report, two weeks before a Council meeting, from <u>Centre Chairs</u> and <u>Section Directors</u>.</p> <p>3.2 ASSA Communication - external C Rijdsdijk's proposal submitted before the meeting for an update to the "Contact Us" Page on the website was discussed, as well as the comment received from C Flanagan, and accepted. (After the meeting: J Smith, the Web Manager, updated the page http://assa.sao.ac.za/contact-us/)</p> <p>3.3 SKA Outreach initiative <i>(22 Sep) A Slotegraaf reported that no feedback has been received from SKA (Lorenzo Raynard) since submitting the names for the workshop.</i> <u>P de Villiers</u> offered to send email to L Raynard on an initiative for educational outreach (workshop to enrich the DOE curriculum) and also request a meeting with him. A Slotegraaf noted he had no response from L Raynard.</p> <p>3.4 ASSA Publications - SGAS 3.4.1 General It was raised that perhaps 4.3.2 in previous minutes implies that Hon Members pay R45 for the SGAS. However, Hon Members do not pay, ASSA pays for their SGAS. B Olivier commented that he plans to send out the SGAS 2016 to the Country Members within the coming week.</p> <p>3.4.2 SGAS 2017 - appoint editor <i>(22 Sep) due 1 Oct: SGAS 2017: "Appointment/Negotiations with SGAS Editor for next edition. Open negotiations with Struik"</i> This item was not discussed.</p> <p>3.5 ASSA Publications – MNASSA and/or Editorial Board C Rijdsdijk confirmed that it was not necessary for B Olivier to send him the new members for publication in MNASSA.</p> <p>3.6 Website 3.6.1 <i>(22 Sep) Highlight renewal of subscriptions: <u>B Olivier</u> and <u>J Smith</u> to look at the Membership page to check that the process to renew /subscribe are clear. It would be good to note that part of membership includes the Sky Guide 2016.</i> J Smith reported before the meeting that he was in the process of reviewing and updating the website. Item closed.</p> <p>3.6.2 <u>C Stewart</u> raised the matter of the public wanting to advertise 2nd hand equipment . He suggested that such adverts be best suited for the FaceBook page as it is more dynamic than an entry on the ASSA Instrumentation Section page. There were no objections to this proposal and <u>L Cross</u> will also inform J Smith of the recommendation.</p> <p>3.7 Dark Sky benchmark initiative <i>(13 July) M Hoffman reported that he and Auke is preparing a plan - for possible submission to the NRF - on process for establishing benchmark for measuring light.</i> No update was submitted.</p>

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4	Scholarships	<p>4 Scholarships 2015 4.1 HartRAO-ASSA Scholarships x 3 (R42 000) and ASSA Scholarship x1 Reported by L Cross of points raised before the meeting:</p> <p>C Flanagan requested the amount that could be made available for 2016 and AJ Nel replied: “ we try to keep the scholarship a tad above that of HartRAO. Will be looking at R 17500.00 for this year but to be confirmed at next Council meeting.” Council had no objection to the amount of R17 500.</p> <p>C Flanagan also reported before the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that she “ sent a note to the astronomy community (the SAAstronomers’ mailing list) and the Funding Office at UCT offered to pass it on to anyone registering for the BSc (Astronomy) - M Soltynski offered to stay on in the group in an advisory capacity at least, which is seriously appreciated.
5	Membership	<p>Membership 5.1 Membership report and number of members per Centre: B Olivier reported these members joined since the previous meeting:</p> <p>Mr Paul Schoeman, 23 TobiasCrescent, Broadwood, Port Elizabeth; Mr Louis Strumpher, P O Box 44819, Linden, Johannesburg; Mr Chris de Villiers PO Box 205, Van Rhynsdorp; Mr Jan Meulmeester, PO Box 515, St Francis Bay.</p> <p>ASSA Hermanus submitted current membership number: 69 (71 this time last year). <u>B Olivier</u> to contact <u>Centre Chairs</u> to get their current membership numbers before the next meeting.</p> <p>5.2 SGAS to ASSA Members It was again noted that the SGAS can either be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - given free to paid-up ASSA Members - such as is done for Country Members and by some ASSA Centres as it is included in the membership subscription - sold for no more that the price paid to it eg R45 for 2015. <p>5.3 ASSA Member list on the website: P de Villiers confirmed that the item may be closed as it has been discussed with C Rijdsdijk and confirmed there was no benefit in having the Country Member list on the website.</p>
6	Governance	<p>Governance 6.1 Midlands Centre F de Bruyn advised that Steve de Vos is now the Chair for the Midlands Centre. His details are: sdevos@webbis.co.za 033 3946 724 <u>P de Villiers</u> undertook to send a letter of acceptance to the Centre.</p> <p>6.2 All Centre Constitutions: <i>(13 July) All Centre Chairs to provide Council with a copy of their Centre Constitution. Upon receipt of all Constitutions, they are to be sent to Council.</i> It was noted that Constitutions/Rules have been received from: Garden Route, Hermanus, Midlands Centre. The following still required:</p>

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		<p><u>Cape Centre, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Durban</u> Once all have been received - all will be sent to Council for information.</p> <p>6.3 Request from Namibia A request was received from Michael Backes (attached below the minutes) who enquired whether it might be possible to join efforts seeing the name of ASSA implies Southern Africa.</p> <p>Council agreed that it would be excellent to have contact with entities outside our borders as was done in the past with the Centre in Zimbabwe. <u>L Cross</u> to inform that the Council would be delighted to join efforts with the group in Namibia and will await further suggestions from them. (After the meeting: I Glass confirmed that Sonja Itting-Encke is involved with the Namibia Scientific Society and owns a private observatory)</p> <p>6.4 Request of possibly making Great Brak a Centre Further to the request from Andrew Gray for a possible ASSA Great Brak Centre, Council agreed that 7 members would be the minimum number required to constitute a Centre and to leave it up to M Gray to come back to ASSA. (<u>L Cross</u> replied to M Gray)</p>
7	Financial Matters	<p>7. Financial Matters</p> <p>7.1 VDP Application <i>(16 Feb) The letter also requests that ASSA immediately register for tax by means of a VDP-voluntary disclosure programme application. This must cover the past 3 years at a minimum. R Glass' fee excl vat , for attending to the VDP application and rendition of tax returns for June 2012 to June 2014 will be R 4500. This proposal was accepted by Council.</i> No progress yet from R Glass. May be awaiting items to be completed.</p> <p>7.2 Actions from the Management Letter <i>(26 May) Outstanding:</i> Marketlink Accounts (AJ Nel):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>AJ Nel is waiting for statements for 5 years for the 2nd market link account and send these to CTF Services to record in the books of account.</i> - <i>Monthly statements to be obtained.</i> - <i>Purpose of Market Link accounts to be confirmed by Council in due course once access obtained.</i> <p>AJ Nel was not at the meeting to provide an update.</p> <p>Need to capitalise ASSA income (Council in due course) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Current account: is over R 300 000 in account.</i> <p>In abeyance for now</p> <p>Transferring the 3 accounts to the new signatories (AJ Nel, I Glass, B Olivier) <i>(13 July) I Glass and AJ Nel have signed and B Olivier undertook to go and sign at his SBSA branch on 14 July.</i> <i>(22 Sep) B Olivier advised that SBSA has lost all the signed forms and the process must be repeated and undertook to manage this process to completion with the other signatories, AJ Nel and I Glass.</i> No progress reported.</p> <p>Confirmation was requested by R Glass that the current account is now recorded in the name of the Society. (AJ Nel)</p>

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	<p><u>AJ Nel</u> to still provide written confirmation of this to be passed to R Glass.</p> <p><i>Quarterly financial statements (commencing from 30 September 2014) to be sent to RG</i> <u>AJ Nel</u> to still confirm that this process is being followed.</p> <p>7.3 Financials - to Auditor 7.3.1 2014/15 <i>(22 Sep) L Cross said that AJ Nel has received the annual financials from CTF Services, returned comments and the documents finalised. These were forwarded to Council and R Glass on 23 September.</i></p> <p>7.3.2 Audited financials 2011 - 2014 (After the meeting: 2 paper copies of the audited financials have been received from the Auditor Ronnie Glass - it was sent to the ASSA address and I Glass forwarded to L Cross who will deliver a copy to CTF Services and send a copy to AJ Nel)</p> <p>7.4 Comments on Monthly accounts: No comments discussed at the meeting.</p> <p>7.5 “Big 5 of the African Sky” <i>(22 Sep) A Slotegraaf said the “Launch of the Big 5 of the African Sky” observing project. Launch awaits its presence in mid-evening sky around Feb -Jul.</i></p> <p>7.6 Scale model of Proxima and the Sun (using the distance between Johannesburg and Cape Town as a baseline) Congratulations were extended to C Rijsdijk on the completion of the project at the SAAO. The only outstanding item is the mounting of plaques at Johannesburg Observatory. The claim to recover costs incurred was processed Information was sent to J Smith for the ASSA website which included suitable hand out that can be downloaded. Article will be included in MNASSA. Item closed.</p> <p>7.7 Honorarium to Hon Members AJ Nel suggested before the meeting that Council rethink the strategy of annual benefits to Hon Members for next year, as it represent a substantial amount.</p> <p>The current benefits to Hon Members are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Free SGAS - Free subscription to the Sky and Telescope or the equivalent value in cash payment equivalent of the Rand value of the subscription as at the time of the AGM, this year the payment was R800. Thus R 800 at 15 Hon Members (if each member takes up the offer) = R 12 000. <p>AJ Nel proposed that the benefit should rather be a fixed annual financial contribution It was suggested by C Rijsdijk and the meeting agreed to ask for written proposals from <u>Council Members</u> and that the issue be finalised at the next meeting. The proposals should include how to cater for any Hon Members not resident in South Africa.</p>
8	<p>ASSA Endowment Trust</p> <p>ASSET T Cooper provided a report on behalf of ASSET to table at the meeting which is attached below the minutes.</p>

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9	General	9 General items 9.1 Checklist review Nothing urgent
10	Closure Next meeting	Next meeting: The next meetings for the 2015/16 year were accepted as follows: All at 19:30 via Skype 23 Feb, 26 April, 28 June, 3 August (AGM)

Minutes Approved: _____ Date: _____

ASSA special focus areas

Section	Director	Area	ASSA
Shallow Sky	D Blane	ASSA Website	C Hettlage James Smith
Deep Sky	A Slotegraaf	Scholarships	C Flanagan
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

Attachments to the minutes:

Refer item 6.3

Request from Namibia

From: Backes, Michael [<mailto:mbackes@unam.na>]

Sent: 20 August 2015 01:58 PM

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To: secretary@assa.saa.ac.za

Cc: NWG (nwg@iway.na)

Subject: ASSA Centre at NSS in Namibia?

Dear Lerika,

At the Namibia Scientific Society (NSS, or in German: NWG), the eldest scientific institution in the country (currently celebrating 90th anniversary), we run a small amateur astronomy section (<https://www.facebook.com/astro.nwg>).

I just stumbled upon ASSA and the fact that it reads “Astronomical Society of SouthERN Africa”, and in that regard, I wanted to enquire whether it might be possible to join efforts.

Maybe you could supply us with some information about the concept of the autonomous Centres of ASSA so that we could somehow start brainstorming in that direction.

Many thanks in advance.

Kind regards,

Michael

Member of the board

Namibia Scientific Society

Dr. Michael Backes FRAS

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END

Refer to item: 8 ASSET

From: Tim Cooper [<mailto:tpcoope@mweb.co.za>]

Sent: 22 November 2015 01:32 PM

Subject: RE: ASSA Meeting 24 Nov 19:30 via skype

Dear Lerika

<snip> please allow me to bring you up to date with the status of ASSET, which hopefully you can report back on my behalf, or if Ian is attending maybe he can also do so.

The meeting of the Trustees held on 25 June 2015 allowed us to conclude the process started many months ago of repositioning ASSET versus the changed ASSA Constitution and to bring all matters of ASSET up to date. This includes:

- **The financial accounts**, which have been audited and signed off up to 2014, and which were reported to the AGM on 5 August 2015. Just as a reminder the nett disposable income after tax for the year was R3409. During the year a grant of R5739.90 was made to Johannesburg Centre in regards to shelving to store and preserve the photographic plate collection from the Union/Republic Observatory. The nett result was a loss for the year of R2331.
- **The modus-operandi**, the Trustees agreed unanimously that ASSET should continue in its current form, and discussion was held around what types of assistance the Trust can provide. The following is a summary of the matters agreed:
 1. There is currently insufficient annual income for the Trustees to commit to regular annual payments to any beneficiary, such for example as requested previously by the Scholarship fund.

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2. Contributions should be provided to MNASSA and Centre Newsletters to make members more aware of the Trust and hopefully generate more donations.
3. All present were firmly of the opinion that ASSET should continue and for the present should concentrate on assisting with one-off or abnormal projects until income increases.
4. Possible changes to the Trust Deed should be considered as regards: (i) clarity of objectives, (ii) taxation concessions, (iii) fund raising activities.
5. Grants should be set at a percentage of net income each year and this should be reviewed at the first Trustees meeting of the following year. This could be revised annually if the target was substantially missed or exceeded in any one year.
6. A guide should be provided to assist applicants for grants, including the process involved and criteria for fund allocation.

Accordingly, the Trustees will now focus discussion on points 4 and 6 above, in order to advertise ASSET, ensure clarity in its purpose, secure future funding for grants, and to clarify procedures for applications and granting of funding to applicants.

Our immediate priority will be how to secure future funding, and maximise income from the capital reserves in ASSET.

We finally agreed that the Trustees will meet in Cape Town annually, immediately preceding the AGM, so that we can review all aspects of ASSET's operations of the past year, the output from which meeting will be used to generate the ASSET report for submission to the AGM.

We trust Council will understand the process we are following and appreciate the efforts we have made so far in this regard. The Trustees are committed to ensure the financial viability, growth and usefulness of ASSET in the future, and our actions are taken with these objectives in mind.

I welcome any comments from my fellow Trustees.

I will also welcome your comments to the above from the Council meeting, which the Trustees will discuss further.

Regards
Tim

END