



ASSA COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

DATE	28 October 2024	TME	17:00 – 17:50	VENUE	Via Jitsi Meet
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ATTENDANCE

Council

	Role
Derek Duckitt	President, Chair – Hermanus Centre, Cosmology Director
Dr Daniel Cunnam	Vice President (outgoing President)
Dr Matie Hoffman	Vice President (incoming President), Chair - Bloemfontein
Adv AJ Nel	Treasurer
Lerika Cross	Secretary
Andre Bruton	Membership Secretary
Case Rijsdijk	Council Member
Dr Ian Glass	Council Member
Dr Christian Hettlage	Web Master
Mike Hadlow	Chair – Durban Centre
John Lindsay-Smith	Chair - Johannesburg Centre
Peter Hers	Chair – Garden Route Centre
Johan Smit	Chair - Pretoria Centre
Willem Brazelle	Chair – Cape Centre

Appointees

Auke Slotegraaf	SGAS Editor
Chris de Coning	ASSA Archiving, Historical Director
Tim Cooper	Comet, Asteroid, Meteor (CAM) Director
Dave Blane	Double & Variable Star Director & Photometry & Spectroscopy Director (Acting)
Jacques van Delft	Solar Director
Dr Pierre de Villiers	Outreach Director

Apologies (a) and Absentees

Dr Claire Flanagan	Convenor of Scholarships
Martin Heigan	Imaging Director
Colin Steyn (a)	Observing Director
John Gill (a)	Web Manager

Documents supporting this meeting are available in the ASSA Cloud Folder:

Meeting Agenda, Meeting recording, Meeting audio transcript

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
1	Welcome, Present, Apologies, Proxies received Derek Duckitt opened the 1 st ASSA Council meeting for 2024/25 year, welcoming all members. Apologies received before & after meeting are noted under Attendance.
2	Previous Minutes of Meetings and Agenda The minutes of the Council meeting held <u>24 June 2024</u> were proposed to be approved by Chris Stewart and seconded by Case Rijsdijk. Note: Outcomes and actions arising from previous minutes/Council discussions are <i>in italics</i> . Actions are underlined. Progress since previous meetings included.
3	3. Communication 3.1 Communications document (<i>Permanent item</i>) Latest draft is available on the ASSA Cloud, <u>23 September 2024</u> . Newcomers to Council were asked to peruse the document and contact Lerika with queries/updates.

3.2 Website changes

3.2.1 Join Us top menu item on website

(11 Mar) Auke created top menu item, Join Us on website but was unable to edit /create a new Form and called on Christian /SAAO IT to make changes requested.

(22 April) To resolve Join Us and Captcha issues: a plug-in Updraft for migrating the website to a WordPress single-site set-up at the SAAO. Christian can arrange Google Analytics.

Christian apologized for SAAO IT delay (due to staff shortages which should improve next month). He informed SAAO IT is busy extracting from the current multisite into a site of its own. It looks like no plugin (and hence no funds) might be required but extract still in progress. More information should available early November. (Christian)

3.2.2 Search function

(22 April) Since the website review: reactivating the "Search" function (Christian)

(24 Jun) Christian informed Search button was added back to site. It was suggested to move it to the menu. As this requires changes to the site template, this shall be addressed once the site has been moved from the current WordPress multisite to a standalone site.

Awaiting outcome of 3.2.1

3.2.3 Captcha error

When completing/submitting either “Ask an Astronomer” or “Report a Sighting” forms on Contact Us the submission fails with error: “The reCAPTCHA was invalid. Go back and try it again.”

This issue awaits outcome of 3.2.1

3.3 Sending email to all Members

(22 April) Proposal for implementing an ASSA Member List

(24 Jun) Some Centres are in support, some not. Daniel proposed to work with Christian on an alternate option to allow members to opt in to mail list using Join Us tab on website and MailChimp. Daniel informed that he and Christian must still explore the option and will inform in due course, e.g. if there will be any cost involved. (Daniel, Christian)

3.4 ASSA Cloud repository

(22 April) Chris de C will check which Centres has accessed their space and will start contacting the Centres and work with them to get all onboard with placing their data in the cloud.

Chris de C reported on updates and actions outstanding:

Centres: Cloud archive was activated for Hermanus, Garden Route, Cape and Bloemfontein Centres.

A meeting with Pretoria Centre is scheduled. Johannesburg Centre must still be contacted.

Sections: Some Section Directors to still be contacted and their control activated.

ASSA Council: Case, Willie and Ian have full editorial control over the publication folder.

Mike Hadlow reminded Chris to also activate the Durban Centre and he undertook to contact Mike after the meeting (Chris de C)

3.5 Dark Sky

3.5.1 Astro Tourism

(4 Oct) DSI Astro Tourism Strategy Plan: final plan to be presented following which funding will be known. Funding is likely to be dependent on ASSA being registered as a PBO.

Daniel confirmed the Astro-Tourism strategy was launched at an event in Carnarvon, gazetted 30 Sep:

<https://www.tourismupdate.co.za/article/astro-tourism-strategy-gazetted>

and encouraged everyone to have a read. He noted that as it is a Government strategy, it does not come with funding but is an important tool for political funding support.

The meeting continued to have a good general discussion on Dark Sky and Astro-Tourism related items. Find the detail in the [meeting recording](#) from 07:29 to 22:44 min into the meeting.

Matie noted a number of implications that come with a designated dark sky area in terms of preserving dark skies, e.g. outdoor lightning, which will involve the professional body of the South African Council for Electrical Engineers.

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	<p>Willem reported that Touwsrivier Tourism is really interested in Astro-Tourism and has already progressed some initiatives. He will give a talk at their upcoming AGM and one of the main topics will be Dark Sky.</p> <p>Daniel noted that in terms of the current process, the government won't support a private game reserve running an Astro tourism programme.</p> <p>Lerika noted the ASSA Dark Sky Discussion Group delivered some valuable insights and perhaps that effort could also now come in useful. The <u>last draft</u> by the Group to peruse.</p> <p><u>Daniel</u> will be attending a meeting next week on the topic and will ask if he may invite ASSA member/s to join the meeting, e.g. Matie.</p>
4	<p>4. Outreach</p> <p>4.1 Astrophotography (“AP”) Competition 2024 The results of the 2024 Astrophotography Competition were announced via a virtual session on 21 Sep, and detail posted to https://assa.saa.ac.za/sections/astrophotography/astrophotography-challenges/. The Flyer on the <u>Outreach page</u> was updated with the winning image, the <u>Running Chicken Nebula and Pearl Cluster</u>.</p> <p><u>Centres and Directors</u> are asked to consider making the Flyer available at sessions attended by the public / non-ASSA members.</p> <p>In preparation of contacting G&L for their sponsorships of the 2025 AP competition, (which we hope to be available ~March 2025), <u>Lerika</u> will send a request to everyone asking for input about how to promote astrophotography and grow participants during the AP 2025 competition.</p> <p>4.2 ASSA GMN Outreach Project (https://globalmeteornetwork.org/outreach/) The project is listed on the <u>ASSA Outreach page</u> and the latest status available at: https://globalmeteornetwork.org/outreach/2024/04/10/south-african-cameras-installations/ Update from Tim: Both schools with the 4 cameras are now online and capturing data. Touwsrivier Primerseskool has contributed to the pipeline since 7 August and Laingsburg High School since 2 September. On 18 September Tim presented an overview of the first results from the two schools and what the cameras are seeing on a nightly basis. And on 9 October Radim Stano described how to work with the data, and how the schools can access and work with the tutorial materials online, including tasks, games and competitions. Currently being discussed are options to expand the coverage to other schools, and how to encourage greater participation from the learners. An article on the process followed and results to date will be submitted for publication in MNASSA. As it is near end of the school year, not a lot will happened before mid-January.</p> <p><u>Pierre</u> and <u>Tim</u> will start to unpack how to get learners more involved. If the application for another 4 camera is successful, they will discuss where to place those cameras.</p>
5	<p>5. 32nd IAU General Assembly: Cape Town 6 – 15 August 2024 https://astronomy2024.org/ Outcomes from the IAU GA are reported in August 2024 edition of <u>MNASSA</u> and includes excellent reports by Ian Glass and Kevin Govender, IAU Office of Astronomy for Development, who led the LOC. Kevin noted in his report: “More information will continue to be posted on www.astronomy2024.org which will live on with info about proceedings, legacy, pictures, recordings of the live streams, etc”.</p> <p>It was agreed to close this item.</p>
6	<p>6. ASSA Publications</p> <p>6.1 SGAS 2025 Auke reported that the SGAS 2025 final press release should be available by end November.</p>

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	<p>AJ alerted he needs all SGAS 2025 orders for <u>Centres</u> and <u>Country membership</u> by 15 November.</p> <p>Auke confirmed that no updates can be done to the SGAS 2025, and <u>Jacques</u> agreed to contact John to update the new ASSA Bloemfontein committee on the ASSA website.</p> <p>6.2 MNASSA (https://assa.saao.ac.za/publications/mnassa/) Willie Koorts, the interim MNASSA Editor, asked for input for the next MNASSA edition to be sent to him as soon as possible. If contributions have already been sent to him, to please resend it and include "MNASSA" in the title of the email. Deadline for submissions: mid Nov.</p> <p>The generic email MNASSA@sao.ac.za does not yet revert to Willie (<u>Christian</u>). For now, send contributions to his personal email "Willie Koorts" koorts.willie@gmail.com</p> <p>Derek, on behalf of all members, expressed his appreciation to Willie for taking on the Editor's role.</p> <p>6.3 Other ASSA publications (<i>Permanent item for noting</i>) <u>MNASSA</u>: Recent edition was published 7 Sep '24 <u>CAM Notes</u>: Recent edition was published 28 Sep '24 <u>Solar Bulletin</u>: Recent edition was published 23 October '24</p>
7	<p>7. Scholarships 7.1 2024 and 2025 Bursaries http://assa.saao.ac.za/about/scholarships/ has been updated with the 2024 Bursars: - ASSA Scholarships: Isabella Goodwin 2nd year BSc at UCT; - Cooke Scholarship: Liam Harris 3rd year BSc at Wits. They have both been onboarded as Bursary Country Members and joined the ASSAVIP group.</p> <p>2025 Bursaries: AJ confirmed that both ASSA and Cooke Scholarships will remain at R25k AJ asked that to avoid the delay difficulties of payout to new bursars experienced this year, that the 2025 Scholarships deadlines be changed as follows: 1 Feb Scholarship application dead line 30 Apr Scholarship allocation finalised Lerika will contact Claire to discuss as she was not at the meeting,</p> <p>After the meeting: Claire and AJ agreed to these dates: 7 Feb Scholarship application dead line 31 Mar` Scholarship allocation finalised</p> <p>7.2 Communication with Students and previous Bursars Noted, for the record: Daniel wrote to the 2023 bursars, Adnaan Nauthoo and Carys Gilbert, and both joined as full Country Members. The item is now closed.</p>
8	<p>8. Membership 8.1 ASSA POPIA Policy Clause on all ASSA Membership forms (24 Jun) ASSA POPIA Policy, posted https://assa.saao.ac.za/about/membership/ Wording to be placed on Centre & Country Membership Forms: "By applying for membership to the Society and / or a centre of the Society, the prospective member / member agrees to the Society's POPIA Policy as set out at https://assa.saao.ac.za/about/membership/ " In conclusion of this item it was noted that Country Membership form reflects the Society's POPIA Policy and <u>Centres</u> asked to include same.</p> <p>8.2 Country Membership (12 Honorary Membership (max 15) Andre reported the latest Country Membership: 124 active Country members including: 1 Associate, 12 Hon Members 7 Gratuity and 104 normal</p>

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
	<p>members of which 55 renewed, 49 have not.</p> <p>Willie said he had feedback from people who said the SGAS delivery problems a couple of years ago. The delay made them rethink if renewing membership is worth it seeing they can buy the SGAS earlier. He suggested maybe a follow-up mail to those who have not renewed, to encourage renewal. <u>Andre</u> said it was a good idea. He noted the PEP and the new PUDO option which is working very well. His system tracks when items are sent and received.</p> <p>AJ commented he has been looking at the SGAS stats relating to Country membership, and also at stats on bookshop sales, because to a large extent, the two should correlate. He noted Country membership is doing quite well compared to say bookshop sales which is decreasing on average about 8% per year while Country membership is on a variance of less than 1%.</p> <p>8.3 Hon Members Honorarium <i>(24 Jun) Council noted the FSC accepted the proposal by AJ to increase the Honorarium to R750.</i> Hon Members were asked to contact AJ for their honoraria payment – AJ reported 5 claimed thus far. The item is now closed.</p> <p>Hon Member Clifford Turk Not discussed at the meeting; noted for the record: On 15 Oct, Ian Glass shared information received from Hon Member Cliff Turk's daughter about his passing at the age of 92 on Friday 13 September 2024. Ian mentioned: "Cliff did a great deal for ASSA and was a former President, Business Manager, Treasurer, Hon Member, and recipient of the President's Award. He was a member of Cederberg Observatory for many years. He ran the Astronomy Base at the Senior Scout Adventure for many years. He was also a scout master, but I don't know much about this part of his life."</p>
9	<p>9. Governance 9.1 Register ASSA for tax under a VDP (Voluntary Disclosure Program) Application <i>(7 Jul) CTFS to be asked on process PBO registration and to provide a quotation</i> <i>(7 Feb) CTFS kindly offered to not charge ASSA unless cost involved becomes substantial.</i> <i>(8 May) The 3 willing unconnected persons (Daniel, Chris S, Pierre with Pierre the SARS rep.) have completed forms required by CTFS. CTFS will now start the application process.</i> <i>(24 Jun) CTFS informed of the allocated ASSA tax number 9229741260 and provided updated forms to be signed by Daniel, Pierre and Chris. The forms were signed/returned to CTFS 12 June.</i> CTFS informed ASSA application for tax exemption is near completion and SARS will most probably send Pierre the confirmation for Tax Exemption. AJ confirmed he has received correspondence from CTFS that tax for last year is zero, so it seems the Tax Exemption is in place.</p> <p>9.2 Actions arising from the AGM Derek reminder everyone that ASSA is still looking for volunteer to take on the role of Photometry and Spectroscopy Director and to contact Dave Blane who is acting in that role at present. (<u>AJ</u>)</p> <p>9.3 Checklist Next up: 7 Feb: Scholarship application dead line</p>
10	<p>10. Financial Matters 10.1 2023/24 Financials AJ confirmed the financials for the year-end 30 June 2024 was received from CTFS and signed. <u>AJ</u> to send Lerika copy of signed financials to place on record in the cloud. (<u>AJ</u>)</p>
11	<p>11. General items Jacques noted that the new Bloemfontein Centre committee is looking forward to some interesting issues and he undertook to share the information shortly.</p>

	Discussions / Decisions / Actions (in bold)
12	<p>Closure</p> <p>Derek thanked everyone for their attendance and all the contributions to the meeting.</p> <p>Next meeting to be scheduled mid to late January.</p> <p>Derek closed the meeting after 49 minutes.</p> <p>Centre monthly meetings:</p> <p>Hermanus Centre: 3rd Monday. Jhb Centre: 2nd Wednesday. Durban Centre: 2nd Wednesday, committee meetings 4th Wednesday. Cape Centre: 4th Wednesday</p>

Minutes Approved: _____ Date: _____

Checklist (covered under Governance item 9)

7 Feb Scholarship application dead line

31 Mar` Scholarship allocation finalised

31 Mar Closing date for nominations for: Honorary Members and Awards

15 April Deadline for Secretary to send to President and Vice President list of nominations

1 June Call for nominations for Council; Annual review of website

1 June New Country Membership fees to be agreed by 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 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

Annual refresh of the Communications document after the AGM

END