

LOUISIANA BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOSCIENTISTS

9643 Brookline Ave., Ste. 101, Baton Rouge, LA 70809



REGULAR MEETING OF LBOPG

Tuesday, September 14, 2021, 1:00 P.M.

Physical meeting at

Louisiana Engineering Center

9643 Brookline Avenue

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

and

Virtual Public Meeting Hosted on Zoom

MINUTES

Chair William Finley called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m., Tuesday, September 14, 2021, and commenced roll call.

Present: William Finley, William Schramm, Melanie Stiegler (virtual), Lloyd Hoover (virtual), Elizabeth McDade (virtual), and David Williamson, Board Members; Machel Hall, Legal Counsel; Brenda Macon, Executive Secretary; Mallory Pilié, Project Coordinator.

Absent: Todd Perry, Board Member; Chantel McCreary, Assistant Executive Secretary.

Guests: Chrissie Gubancsik, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ); Luzma Leder, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR); Shanna Mason, LDEQ; Robert (Bobby) Raines, Raines & Associates, Shreveport.

Quorum was established. Roll Call and Visitor Sign-in are documented on paper and as part of the meeting registration record on Zoom.

Public Comment Period

No comments were forthcoming.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the July 13, 2021, meeting were reviewed. Williamson moved to accept the minutes; Schramm seconded the motion. Finley called for a vote, and the motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Schramm presented the treasurer's report for July and August 2021, adding that the board's finances are stable, with revenue exceeding expenses and expenses within the budgeted range. Williamson moved to accept the report; Stiegler seconded. The motion passed.

Standing Committees

Application Review Committee: Stiegler reported that six applications for license had been reviewed. Numbers 1, 5, and 6 were recommended for approval. McDade and Williamson pointed out that applications 2, 3, and 4 indicated a lack of geoscience coursework that led them to recommend denying those applications. McDade indicated that application 5 was confusing, and she needed additional information; the applicant was attending the meeting by Zoom and offered to explain the education question that McDade had. After her explanation, McDade recommended the application for approval. Williamson then asked to open discussion regarding acceptable geoscience coursework. Stiegler and Schramm both explained that, while some earth science-related courses can be accepted, the majority of the courses should be core geology courses, such as physical geology, historical geology, mineralogy, petrology, sedimentology, and structural geology. Williamson agreed and suggested that this explanation should be documented for future reviewers to use. Stiegler moved to approve the three recommended applications, numbers 1, 5, and 6 and to deny the three applications, numbers 2, 3, 4, that had a deficiency in geoscience coursework; both Schramm and Williamson seconded the motion. Finley called for a vote; the motion passed.

Finley then asked about item 2 on the agenda under the committee's report, "update on work toward determining if undergraduate research can be work experience for the purpose of the license application." Macon pointed out that, during the July board meeting, board members had decided to create a work group to make recommendations to the board regarding this issue. She said she didn't think that group had yet had time to work on it. Finley recalled that the board had left the topic open for additional discussion but that the board would not allow most undergraduate research to count toward work experience. Hall added that her recollection was that, if the work was performed for course credit, it would not also count toward work experience; if the work was basic, non-research work, such as running basic tests for someone else, that also would not count as geoscience work experience; however, if the work was performed independently of a course and represented true geoscience work, then the board would consider such work on a case-by-case basis. The board agreed.

Finley then turned the discussion to item 3 on the agenda under the committee's report, "Is an individual exempt from licensure subsequently required to be licensed to practice Geoscience once the exemption expires? Any grace period during the transition? Any waiver for examination?" Stiegler said such an individual should be licensed, and she used her own experience as a university professor as an example: While she is exempt from the license requirement in her current position, she would expect that she would need a license if she decided to leave the university and practice geoscience. McDade agreed, adding that she regularly counsels those in exempt areas of geoscience to become licensed in case they decide to practice in other areas that require licensure. Board members concurred. Finley then asked, if an individual elected to change from an exempt area of geoscience to one that requires licensure, would the board then allow a grace period similar to grandfathering to apply for a license without being required to take the ASBOG exams. McDade pointed out that the person would be aware of the need for a license prior to leaving the area of exempt status and should plan accordingly. Hall asked if the board grants temporary licenses; Macon explained that the temporary license, as established by the board in the past, carries the same requirements as a full license. The temporary license, she explained, was designed for those individuals who would only be working in Louisiana for a short time and who did not want to continue renewing the license after that work was completed. She also reminded the board that temporary licenses expire after 90 days. Hall suggested that some form of temporary license perhaps could be created to accommodate the grace period that Finley mentioned. She explained that those members of the military who apply can be granted a temporary license until the permanent license is approved; she said the same could apply for those who leave an exempt area and plan to practice in an area that requires a license. Discussion ensued. Hall offered to review the rules to see if a temporary license could be used as a transition to full licensure and to

investigate ways to clarify how a temporary license can be obtained and how it can be used. Finley cautioned that communicating the need for a license after leaving an exempt category is essential.

License Examination Committee: Williamson reported on the joint committee (Application Review and Examination) review of an examination waiver request from a federal employee. He explained that the board had discussed the situation at the July meeting, and the position of the board concurred with the committees' opinion that the waiver from examination for state employees does not extend to federal employees. He then asked Hall to elaborate. She said that the applicant did not provide adequate evidence to support a waiver. Brief discussion ensued. The committees presented a draft letter for board approval. Williamson moved to accept the letter as written; McDade seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Williamson reminded board members that the next ASBOG exam will be administered on October 1, 2021, and that six candidates will be sitting for the Fundamentals of Geology exam only, two will be taking the Practice of Geology exam only, and seven will be taking both exams.

Compliance Committee: In Perry's absence, Schramm reported that the committee had not met. Finley asked to introduce, for the board's consideration, a question: "Does expert witness testimony about a Geoscience interpretation that affects the public well-being require a PG license?" Williamson began the discussion by bringing to the board's attention to his notes from a meeting in 2010 in which a geologist commented that he had assumed he would need a license to continue to serve as an expert witness in legal cases, but he found that no one ever asked if he was licensed. Hall pointed out that the statute exempts expert witnesses from the licensure requirement. Discussion ensued, with Finley asking, if the testimony directly impacts public health and safety, whether that impact has any bearing on the license requirement for an expert witness. Hall explained that the witness is exempt as long as they are simply testifying before a tribunal, but being licensed would provide more credibility for their competence to testify.

Macon reported that, as discussed at the July meeting, two forms, one for event organizers that provides a way for the organizers to submit a list of all participants; and one for the licensees to use, had been developed. The form for licensees to use includes the name, date, host, and location of the event, the name of the licensee, the number of hours, the topics covered, and would be signed by the host and the licensee. She asked the board to review the forms to be added to the new website under the continuing education tab. Board members offered suggestions, and Macon agreed to make the requested changes.

Outreach Committee: No report

Office Committee: Macon announced that the new website had been launched on August 27, 2021. She then introduced Shannon Lynd, partner at Dovetail Digital Marketing and developer of the new website, to answer questions about the site. Williamson pointed out that people who are blue colorblind may find the site hard to read. Macon reported that several small issues had already been resolved with the site, particularly with the online payment system. Schramm reported that he had issues logging in as a board member; Lynd offered to help him with the login after the meeting. Macon mentioned that board members can also have personal licensee; Lynd said board members who are licensees can also use only one email address because the security level is set with the email address. Hall asked about the location of the public records request forms; Lynd explained they are under the "Resources" tab, which is divided into multiple categories. Hall noted that the public records request forms were under the "Licensing" category; Lynd asked where she would rather see them, and Hall indicated they should be separate.

While they were talking, Lynd created a new category, "Public Records," and moved the forms to that category. Hall was satisfied. Finley asked if the home page is the same for all viewers. Lynd then took the screen to show board members how the site works. She explained that the level of the user's login (applicant, licensee, board member, or reference) determines the next screen available. She logged in as an applicant to show members how the application works.

She then logged in as a licensee to show the new functionality of the site for licensees, explaining that this level is where most of the changes have been implemented. Licensees are prompted to renew their licenses if they log in within 60 days of the expiration date. They can also print copies of their license cards and wall certificates. They are encouraged to update their contact information by having their currently saved contact information prominently displayed on the landing page with a prompt to update the information. Finley expressed concern that, even with the prominent display, some licensees still forget to update their contact information. Lynd offered to add a second reminder on the page and to add a check box in the shopping cart that will require the license to verify the contact information before being allowed to complete the renewal transaction. Board members and Macon all responded positively to this offer.

She also logged in as a board member to show the review screens and as an administrator to show the differences between those two levels of authorization. Board members offered suggestions for minor changes. Finally, she logged in as a reviewer to show the reviewer's screen. She then called for questions. Pilié asked about the birthdates, reporting that some licensees entered an obviously wrong date when they applied for license. Lynd explained that licensees will be prompted to enter their birthdate on the contact information page. Macon thanked Lynd for her work and for providing board members with an overview of the new site.

Macon then asked Pilié to introduce her latest project, which has been to create a comprehensive spreadsheet containing demographic information on active licensees. So far, she has completed gathering information from the files of active licensees through last names beginning with ~~the letters A, B, and C~~ and will be adding new information in the coming months. The new spreadsheet includes institutions attended, degrees obtained, level of degrees obtained (BA/BS, MA/MS, PhD, or other), ages, and states of residence. She provided graphs and charts developed from this information to board members.

Finley asked about the percentage of states of residence of the licensees; Pilié verified that, based on all active license information, more than 60% of licensees are in Louisiana (29%) and Texas (32%); she added that LBOPG has active licensees in 43 states, Puerto Rico, and Canada. She said, based only on the files she has reviewed in depth (A, B, and C), the median age is between 54 and 55 years old; so far, the youngest licensee is 30 years old, and the oldest is 83. Degrees so far represented include Bachelor's (51%), MS (39%), and PhD (6%). She pointed out that this is still a small sample size but will grow as the project continues.

Discussion ensued, with Finley reminding board members that this is the type of information needed to help document the value of the board and licensure to the state. He said this information was missing when the last report was required, and he wants to be proactive in being prepared for the next such report. Macon reminded the board that the last report was submitted to the state in January 2019 and that the state requires each board to submit a five-year strategic plan that is updated every three years. She said 2022 will mark year three since the last report, so a new report will be due soon, and the information in Pilié's project will be essential information to include in that report. She asked the board to set direction for writing the strategic goals for the board. She reminded board members that she sent an email with the critical parts of a good strategic report outlined and asked them to go back to that email

and be thinking about how the next report should look. Finley asked her to re-send that email to board members; Macon agreed.

Macon then reported that the board's records retention schedule has been successfully updated with the Office of State Archives, and she has requested to transfer files older than three years to their storage facility. She said she has also requested permission to destroy non-essential files as defined in the retention schedule so that additional space can be freed for new files.

She further reported that the board's property has been successfully added to the State's database, and appropriate equipment has been tagged as required by the state, and the board's first property asset inventory and report to Louisiana Property Asset Assistance Agency have been submitted. She said a request has also been submitted for surplus equipment to be transferred to the State.

Macon then reminded board members once again that the ASBOG Annual Meeting would be in Little Rock, Arkansas, from October 26 through October 30, 2021. The Administrator's Workshop will be held on October 26. The annual meeting will be held on October 27. The field trip will be on October 28, and the COE Workshop will be October 29 and 30. She reported that the COE Workshop will not be set up for virtual attendance and that all attendees must show proof of COVID vaccination. She said that Schramm has offered to serve as the board's representative at the annual meeting and asked for the board's approval of his representation and completion of the proxy form.

Legal Comments

Hall reported that she and Schramm were asked to serve on the FARB meeting design committee. She reported that FARB is working on several tracks including license portability issues, how to convey the value of the board, technology and public access, emerging disasters and evacuees, board planning and development, and dealing with difficult people and agencies.

Other Business

Macon announced that the executive committee election has two candidates for the position of chairman, and an election is due. Finley said he wanted to withdraw his name from the ballot, which gave Schramm the position. Williamson asked if Finley would be willing to take over as treasurer; Finley accepted. McDade offered to help if needed. Finley called for a vote on the nominated roster of candidates (Schramm for chair; Perry, vice-chair; Finley, treasurer; and Stiegler, secretary). Williamson moved to accept this roster; McDade seconded. Board members were in unanimous approval.

New Business

Williamson then asked Bobby Raines to introduce himself to the board. Raines outlined his education and experience in the field of geoscience and answered the board members' questions. Raine has submitted his application for an at-large member position and has the endorsement of the Shreveport Geological Society.

Adjourn

The date of the next regular meeting of the board is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 1:00 pm. Schramm moved to adjourn; Williamson seconded; the motion passed. Finley adjourned the meeting at 3:35 pm.