

Minutes of the Astronomical League Council Meeting
ALCon 2006
Arlington, Texas
August 3, 2006

Part I. Call to Order

The annual Astronomical League Council meeting was called to order at 8:45 a.m. by President Robert L. Gent.

Part II. Roll Call: Council Members and Proxies Present

Robert Gent, President; proxy for Maryann Arrien, NERAL Chair
Terry Mann, Vice President; proxy for Ron Whitehead, GLRAL Chair
John Goss, Secretary; MERAL Chair; proxy for Jim King, MERAL Rep.
Jackie Beucher, Executive Secretary; proxy for Michael Flick, GLRAL Rep.
Joanne Hailey, Treasurer
Mike Benson, SERAL Chair
John Wagoner, SWRAL Rep.; proxy for Steve Goldberg SWRAL Chair
Wayne Johnson, WRAL Chair; proxy for Tim Hunter, WRAL Rep.
Joe Rottmann, NWRAL Rep.; proxy for Gene Dietzen, NWRAL Chair
Patrick Carr, MSRAL Rep.
Wayne Green, proxy for Jerry Sherlin, MARS Rep.
Carroll Iorg, proxy for Al Dorn, MSRAL Chair
Aaron Clevenson
Sue Wheatley

Quorum: Council members or proxies present, according to Bylaws Article III, Section 4, must be two-fifths (2/5ths) of the members of National Council to constitute a quorum. A quorum was present.

Part III. Reading and Approval of 2005 Council Minutes

A motion to approve the 2005 minutes and dispense with their reading was made by Terry Mann and seconded by Joanne Hailey. The motion passed unanimously.

Part IV. Officer and Committee Reports

A. President: President Bob Gent reviewed accomplishments and activities of the League over the past year.

Elections: Bob announced that Executive Secretary Jackie Beucher tallied the ballots for this year's election. Jackie reported that Terry Mann, Carroll Iorg and Mary Sutter won election to the respective offices of President, Vice President and Treasurer by unanimous votes. Bob extends his and the League's congratulations to them.

National Office: Due to the efforts of Mitch Glaze, the National Office continues to function smoothly and responds well to the needs of the League. The Executive Committee approved the transfer of League Sales to the National Office. This was done in June with the invaluable help of Marion Bachtell, Carroll and Betty Iorg and others. Marion deserves our gratitude for her efforts at making the move as easy as possible for everyone involved. Randy Thompson now serves as Sales Consultant and has made great strides bringing League Sales back into service.

Reflector: The Reflector staff has done a great job at publishing a first rate national magazine that is the voice of the Astronomical League.

Endowment Fund and Donations: The League's new Endowment Fund continues to grow. The Open Clusters observing program was funded through the AL Trust Fund. The League appreciated the generous donation from a League member who gave \$6700 to John Wagoner's C.L.A.S.S. project. This donation will be used to purchase a portable planetarium.

Expenses of the President's Office: An approximate breakdown of expenses for the President's office is given below. These were considered as donations to the League by President Gent.

Phone Calls:	\$ 165
Office supplies:	\$ 225
ALCon and Regional Conventions:	\$1186
	Total \$1576

International Dark-Sky Association: Bob Gent is stepping down as IDA's

European liaison, but will continue to serve as the Vice-President of the IDA Board of Directors. The IDA continues to see an increasing membership and recently received a large bequest.

ByLaws Changes: A quick explanation of the proposed ByLaw changes was provided. It will be extensively reviewed and discussed later in the day.

League Sales: As was mentioned above, League Sales moved its operating location from Burlington, Iowa to the National Office in Kansas City. The Executive Committee felt that this step would allow League Sales to grow while still functioning smoothly.

League Sponsors: The League's newest sponsor is OpticsPlanet, a web based retailer of astronomical equipment. They generously donated a Meade ETX-90 with accompanying tripod and AutoStar computerized controller to the League. OpticsPlanet can be found through a link on the League web site and a complimentary advertisement appears in an upcoming issue of the Reflector.

B. Vice President: Vice President Terry Mann reviewed the activities of the Vice-President's office which included the following:

ISS-AT: After an extended search, Terry announced that A.G. Kasselberg has enthusiastically agreed to manage the ISS-AT project. A.G. is the principle telescope operator at Nashville's Dyer Observatory and also a retired pediatrician.

League Sales: Terry commended Marion Bachtell on all her efforts over the years at the helm of League Sales and on her invaluable assistance during its recent move. Carroll and Betty Iorg also deserve huge thanks for their time and energy with moving over 100 containers of merchandise.

American Astronomical Society's 2009 International Astronomy Year (IAY): Terry will work closely with the AAS to insure active League participation in the IAY. This will be an exciting opportunity for the League.

League Webteam: Significant progress has been made regarding the League's website and its accessibility. Since more needs to be done, this is a work in progress.

C. Secretary: Secretary John Goss reported that much of his activities involved persuading League clubs to remain in the League and attracting non-League clubs to join the League. Much of this was done by promoting League benefits.

D. Treasurer: Treasurer Joanne Hailey gave an overview of the financial condition of the Astronomical League. Balances in various League accounts as of June 30, 2006 were as follows:

Checking:	\$38,421.64
Money Market Account:	\$58,962.15
Endowment Fund:	\$1400.00
Certificate of Deposit:	\$25,000.00

Total Monetary Assets as of June 30, 2006: \$123,783.79

The projected 2006-2007 budget will be discussed later in the meeting.

Joanne expressed concern that less people are belonging to League clubs. Council members felt that there was nothing notable in the sky to entice new people. Wayne Green commented that attrition due to the aging of the hobby and the bad economy were much to blame.

E. Executive Secretary: Executive Secretary Jackie Beucher reported that National Office Manager Mitch Glaze devotes much of his time to maintaining the League data base.

In June, Randy Thompson began managing the operations of League Sales at the National Office. He is a consultant and paid a flat fee. Randy is a past president of the Astronomical Society of Kansas City, recently retired, and a long time amateur astronomer.

Jackie informed the Council that the physical space of the National Office is currently filled with League Sales merchandise. Randy and Mitch are organizing these materials to make Sales an efficient operation.

F. National Officer Report: Through Jackie Beucher and Bob Gent, Mitch Glaze presented both a membership and National Office report. Mitch thanked Marion Bachtell for her assistance moving League Sales to Kansas City.

Again as relayed by Jackie Beucher and Bob Gent, Randy Thompson gave an encouraging report about the progress of League Sales. Much work remains especially regarding the Sales website.

Bob Gent emphasized that many societies still need to update their rosters quarterly. He encouraged the Regional Chairs to remind their Societies to use the preferred Excel format.

Bob Gent reviewed the League's privacy policy. He reminded everyone that mass emailings should be sent using the blind copy (bcc) address location. Also, the language of the policy needs to be examined to make sure that ALCors can receive email and postal addresses of their own members.

The issue was raised how to get League mailings to the right club person. Should all mailings continue to go to the ALCor? Unfortunately, the League database contains bad addresses for a few ALCors and, therefore, they don't receive important League mailings such as dues statements and elections ballots. No conclusion was reached.

G. Webmaster Report: Terry Mann discussed the current revamping of the League's website. She found a company that designs websites for a \$599 initial fee, then \$59 per month thereafter. They provide 24/7 support.

Both the League and Sales need to be served under one site. Also, the computers and software at the National Office need to be upgraded significantly.

Bob Gent made a motion authorizing Terry Mann to select a web design company, and budget \$200/month for website maintenance and an additional \$1000 for the purchase of needed computer hardware and software to get the site operational. Wayne Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Thanks to the League webteam, all regions now have the ability to update their own webpages.

H. League Sales:

Gross Sales: \$25,811.10

Membership Sales: \$4979.10

ALPO Sales: \$3264.00

At the moment, members can not purchase items with a credit card since the website is down.

I. Reflector: The Reflector continues to be the voice of the Astronomical League. All its advertisers are current on their payments.

J. ISS-AT: Terry Mann reported that A.G. Kasselberg received a certificate of appreciation from the NASA mission team for the Deep Impact imaging by the ISS-AT team.

Work continues updating software and internet service for the telescope. AAVSO has expressed interest using the telescope.

K. Publications and L. Press Officer: Sue Wheatley reported that during the past year, she responded to 15 inquiries by email, emailed 70 press releases, and received 3 requests for information from local clubs. One prime example was the famous "Spectacular Mars" email that she received from the AP. Sue sent them an email correcting it along with a notice about viewing Jupiter in the night sky.

As press officer, Sue Wheatley sends a press release to the newspaper in the city that's nearest to the student who wins the National Young Astronomer Award.

Carroll Iorg suggested issuing a monthly one page "What's New in the League," piece to be sent to the ALCors. This would enhance League - club communications.

M. Observe Programs: Much discussion ensued from the issue of standardizing formats and procedures for the many observing clubs. Mike Benson noted that the clubs are at different expertise levels and that it might be impossible to standardize them. Jackie Beucher suggested appointing a national administrator who would oversee all clubs and provide guidance for new ones. Aaron Clevenson and Mike Benson both offered their help on this.

Bob Gent moved to create the positions of National Observing Programs Coordinator. This post would provide assistance both to new programs and to

those in the proposal stage. Mike Benson and Aaron Clevenson would be the two Coordinators. Wayne Johnson seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Regarding the annual reports from the various Observing Program administrators, Wayne Johnson finds value in having the total number of recipients divided regionally.

N. Astronomy Day: Kelly Beatty from Sky and Telescope and the Night Sky Magazine joined the Council to explore ways of improving National Astronomy Day. Kelly began the discussion by noting that only 80 club events were listed on the Astronomy Day website in 2006. There must have been many more that were not listed. What can be done to increase club participation?

Joe Rottmann suggested that National Public Radio be notified so they could publicize/cover the events.

Bob Gent suggested involving “StarDate” from McDonald Observatory.

Wayne Green said that Astronomy Day conflicts with Space Day in Colorado. Therefore, they conduct Astronomy Day in October when the weather is generally more conducive to astronomical functions. Should each state have a State Astronomy Day held on a date that suites it best?

Bob Gent felt that it would be difficult for the League to notify people if each state had its own date.

Kelly Beatty looked at having it in September or October when the weather is generally better and kids are in school.

The Council agreed that these general actions be taken:

- a. Astronomy Day will be held on September 15, 2007
- b. The Astronomy Day award will be de-coupled from the ALCon banquet and be awarded soon after the winners have been decided.
- c. Work with NPR and StarDate for publicity.
- d. Encourage award applicants to submit their information electronically.

O. Awards and Recognition: Bob Gent announced the recipients of the many annual awards that the League presents.

- a. Astronomical League Award: Kelly Beatty
- b. President's Award: None awarded this year
- c. Peltier Award: Elizabeth Waagen of the AAVSO
- d. Wright Award: Revealed at the banquet - John Goss, AL Secretary
- e. NYAA: Mary Masterson of Oklahoma City
- f. Jack Horkheimer Service Award: Daniel Handlin of the S*T*A*R

Astronomy Society

g. Mabel Sterns: Jim Anderson of the Chester County Astronomical Society

h. Webmaster Award: Drew Carhart

As was announced earlier by Terry Mann, the American Astronomical Society (AAS) wishes to work closely with the League on the International Astronomy Year in 2009. They have created a new \$1000 cash award, the Chambliss Amateur Achievement Award for outstanding amateur astronomers. Janet Stevens of the Astronomical League sits on the award committee.

P. Nominating Committee Report: Since all candidates were running unopposed, Jackie Beucher counted the ballots. She announced that Terry Mann, Carroll Iorg, and Mary Sutter were unanimously elected to the respective offices of Astronomical League President, Vice President, and Treasurer.

Q. Region Reports: NERAL has become all but inactive.

Joe Rottmann reported that the popular Table Mountain Star Party will be looking for a new site away from Table Mountain. The NWRAL may be able to use the Table Mountain location for its regional star party and meeting.

R. Book Service: The report submitted by Marilyn Unruh indicated that the Book Service is in good shape. It would be good to have more people use it, as only 23 members availed themselves last year to this valuable League benefit.

S. Education Committee: The Education Committee needs to be publicized to the clubs so they can take advantage of what it offers.

T. IDA: As Bob Gent reported earlier, the IDA is in good health. He encouraged each club to have a light pollution officer who would be active in

protecting club observing sites. It would be a long-term position.

U. Future Conventions: The Council is looking forward to next year's ALCon hosted by the Rose City Astronomers in Portland Oregon.

The location for the 2008 ALCon was discussed. Joanne Hailey, Treasurer of the Des Moines Astronomical Society, presented her club's offer to host that ALCon. Joanne brought a booklet outlining their proposal.

Patrick Carr moved that the League accept the Des Moines Astronomical Society's offer to host ALCon 2008. It was seconded by Mike Benson. The Council unanimously approved the motion.

The Northeast Astronomy Forum (NEAF) would like to discuss the possibility of a joint NEAF/League event.

V. Other Committee Reports: John Wagoner, the President of City Lights Astronomical Society for Students (C.L.A.S.S.), explained what his group does. They hold events for inner city youth in various cities across the nation. In one popular program, they send planispheres to school groups and home school kids. Because of their efforts, this year they received a \$6700 donation to be used to purchase a portable planetarium.

Part V. Treasurer's Report

Joanne Hailey informed the Council that the 2006-2007 dues statements were sent in early June. Therefore, many clubs paid their dues in July. To realistically ensure a July 1 deadline, it would be better to send the dues statements in early May.

The June Reflector was about two weeks late. Therefore, all advertising invoice payments were received after June 30. We need to make sure that the Reflector is on schedule so advertisers have time to submit their payments.

The League has a certificate of deposit that matures in March 2007. Its return of investment is over 4%.

Joanne Hailey reported that, in general, the 2005-2006 budget was good. The

League lost some income, but had less expense resulting in a slight gain. For the detailed budget, please refer to the Treasurer's Budget Report. Joanne's original budget deficit for 2006 - 2007 was \$4832 but that amount was increased to \$13532 after the Council decided to spend \$5000 for an audit, \$500 for Master Observer plaques, and to increase the web-site budget from \$300 to \$2000.

The annual IRS form 990 requires certain forms to be generated. The League needs to make sure that League Sales and the National Office know what is required and how to properly complete these forms. Some training will be required.

Part VI. Trust Fund Report

Bob Gent informed the Council that the ALTF funded the League's new Open Cluster Program. Balance in the League's Trust Fund as of June 30, 2006 was \$80,226.84. Jackie Beucher stated that Frank Roldan's term as Trustee expires this year.

Patrick Carr moved that Bob Gent becomes ALTF Trustee when Frank Roldan's term ends. Jackie Beucher seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved the motion.

New Business: Master Observer Network proposal by John Sparks

The Council welcomed John Sparks who presented his Master Observer Network (MON) concept.

Much discussion ensued. Council members were concerned that the League might become involved in policing an electronic discussion group. Aaron Clevenson suggested that a link be established on the League website that takes the interested person to a form called "Ask the Astronomer." The person fills in the desired question which is then automatically sent to a Master Observer list. A MO responds. Terry Mann will contact the webteam to see if it can be done.

Aaron Clevenson motioned to table the "Ask the Astronomer" question and defer discussion to the webteam who would determine its feasibility. John

Wagoner seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Part VII. Old Business

A. ByLaw Revision: The Council reviewed the ByLaw changes presented by Bob Gent. These were modified somewhat from the proposed changes that were submitted last year by Jim Fox and the ByLaw's Committee.

The Council recommended the following changes to Bob Gent's edition:

1. Article II, Section 4, c)

Change "publication" to "edition."

2. Article VIII, Section 6

Change "Council members must be notified at least one week in advance of any proposed electronic meeting." to "...must be notified at least two weeks..."

3. Article X, Section 4

Change to "There will be no commercial use of the League's mailing list except for League business."

4. Propose SR 17: National Office Operations

"The AL will operate a national office and hire and dismiss employees or consultants as approved by Council or Executive Committee. Duties of National Office employees shall include, but not be limited to, maintenance of the League database, management of League Sales, and other duties as defined by the Executive Committee. Consulting fees and employee wages will be negotiated by the Executive Committee."

The National Council unanimously approved the recommended changes.

B. EPO Report. No activity this past year.

C. Pro-Am Collaboration. As mentioned earlier, the League will participate with the American Astronomical Society in their Chambliss Amateur Achievement Award for outstanding amateur astronomers.

Part VIII. New Business (not covered in other Reports)

A. New Dues Structure: The dues structure which took effect July 1, 2006 appears to be working.

B. League Support of NASA: In the September Reflector, there will be a letter to the editor from a League member calling for League support of NASA's astronomy research missions. The Executive Committee included a note expressing League support.

C. New "Observe" Award Proposals. None received this year.

D. Audits: It's been at least eight years since the financial records of the League were audited. The Council discussed having an audit for 2005 - 2006.

Jackie Beucher moved that the Executive Committee should proceed with an external audit, and authorize \$5000 for this purpose. Mike Benson seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved the motion.

F. Master Observer's Network. Discussed earlier today.

G. Master Observer Plaques: Bob Gent reminded the Council that last year and this year, all Master Observers who attend the ALCon banquet receive a plaque recognizing their achievement. Should this program continue? If so, who should handle it every year? Genevieve Goss has done this for the past two years and we thank her for her efforts. Jackie Beucher asked if this program should fall under the current Master Observer award administrator. Mike Benson, the MO administrator, offered to continue the plaque program.

Patrick Carr made the motion that all Master Observers will receive an award plaque, that the program will be managed by the MO coordinator, and that \$500 be initially budgeted to pay for plaque startup costs. Mike Benson seconded the motion. It passed Council unanimously.

H. AAS Chambliss Award. Discussed earlier in the day.

I. Observing Programs: News programs are approved at the discretion of the Council. There is no current freeze of new observing programs although no new ones were introduced this year. One role of the new National Observing Programs Administrators will include pre-screening of proposed observing programs.

J. Honorary Members: John Dobson was unanimously voted to be the 2006

Astronomical League Honorary member.

Part IX. Approval of Budget

The proposed budget that Joanne Hailey submitted earlier in the day was modified to reflect new anticipated expenses including the upcoming \$5000 audit, \$2000 for updating the web site and \$500 for the MO plaque program. This will place the estimated budget deficit at \$13,532.

A motion was made by Jackie Beucher to accept the amended budget. Mike Benson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Part X. Meeting Adjournment

Terry Mann moved that the 2006 Astronomical League National Council Meeting adjourn. Wayne Green seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously by Council.

Time of adjournment was 4:45 p.m.

---End of 2006 Astronomical League National Council Meeting---

Respectfully submitted by
John Jardine Goss, Astronomical League Secretary