

Teleconference Meeting Minutes

DATE AND TIME: September 15, 2016 (Thursday); Conference Call started at 8:00 pm

INVITEES: EC/EB National Meeting Attendees (Expected)

ATTENDEES:

Ziad Sabra, President

Mohamad Jamal, Vice President

Eissa Haj-Hamad, Chair, Membership Committee

Walid Halboni, Chair, Social Activities Committee

Nader Abuhassan, Chairman, Board of Trustees

Marwan AlKarajat, Member

Rabih Najib, Chair, IT & Communications (couldn't join the call)

Moe Fridy, National Chair, Publications (couldn't join the call)

AGENDA

- Travel Logistics to the National Meeting.
- Goals we want to accomplish at the convention to help our local chapter / national.
- Collaborating on presenting specific topics.
- Do we have suggestions to the National Committee that we want to present and discuss?
- Should we nominate any of our members to any of the elected positions? Discuss the process and the electable vacant positions.
- How do we measure the success of our trip?
- How do we improve the ongoing communication between the National AAAEA and the local chapters, specifically our chapter?
- Do we want to hold the next year's national convention here in our area (DC/VA/MD)

A summary of the discussion and Action Items is listed below:

1. Travel Logistics to the National Meeting

As of now, the following people are confirmed to attend the National Meeting in November:

Representing AAAEA-Capital Chapter are: Ziad, MJ, M. Shahine, Walid and Marwan.

AAAAEA Members Representing National AAAEA- Officers are: Rabih, Moe, Eissa and Nader.

In total, we will have 9 people attending.

Action Item: None.

2. Goals we want to accomplish at the convention to help our local chapter /National.

MJ asked what is the goal of our trip, what is the purpose of our attendance, and what do we want to accomplish? There was some discussion among all of us that it is not really clear why delegates attend, the meeting is not well promoted, and information to delegates about the meeting is not coming in a timely manner. Also, there was a discussion among us that it is not really clear what the national meeting really

accomplishes. Since **Ziad** never attended any of the previous National meetings, he asked if topics such as membership growth, challenges, success, process improvements, performance measurements, traceability and accomplishments are discussed. If not, then we should address these topics as a part of our expectation and goals for the meeting.

Nader informed us all that the Program is being finalized and will be mailed out in the next couple weeks. The material that will be sent to us will also include information on the election process and nominees.

Eissa asked us to bring our own copies of the Program and all other material that will be sent to us from National since it may be difficult to make additional copies at the meeting. Perhaps we should bring some extra copies with us for others.

When asked about the shortcomings of communications between National and Local Chapters, **Eissa** indicated that the current structure of the National operation is not conducive to communications with local Chapters. It operates like a Chapter by itself. There is no structured mechanism or a formal procedure in place that facilitates local chapters to communicate with National. **Eissa** indicated that there have been many comments in the past about this issue but no changes have been done. **Walid** also echoed Eissa that he has made several suggestions in the past, regarding having a National-Local Liaison Committee, but none were implemented. **Marwan** also echoed both Walid and Eissa that the goals and purpose of the National meeting were not defined in the past. **MJ** also indicated that it seems from his past experience that the perception of the focus on the National meeting is on election; he also indicated that the election was not promoted in the past and delegates only found out about the nominees after they got to the meeting, and knew very little, if any, about them, accomplishments, their agenda, etc.

Walid questioned the value of service that the local chapters receive from National for the annual dues that National collects, i.e. \$10/member.

Ziad added that we should develop our own expectations and goals about the meeting and share with the National Committee via Nader. Nader will be our voice with National and will try to discuss with the Committee and see if they can be vetted in a roundtable discussion.

Ziad added that he thinks there are many shortcomings with the way the National has been operating; pretty much on their own and not supporting the local chapters. If this operation is not changed in the very near future the local chapters may, by defacto, start to run on their own and hence loose the affiliation with National. Ziad added that National AAAEA will have serious implications in sustaining its vision and goals as the mother Chapter and the nucleus of AAAEA if communications and services are not addressed.

Action Item: **Ziad** will outline a process/a suggestion matrix to be presented to the National Committee to improve the following: (He has already developed an ad hoc itemized list of the following items that will share in a suggested matrix)

- ❖ Updated mission and goals
- ❖ Include BOT Members/Advisory Board that are Non-Arab American Industry Leaders
- ❖ Updated Website
- ❖ Membership Outreach Programs and Collaboration with Other Outreach Outlets

- ❖ Sponsorship Outreach programs with major employers' hubs: Amazon, Microsoft, Google, AT&T, Verizon, AECOM, HNTB, JACOBS, ARCADIS, KHA, CH2MHILL, etc. **(use for-hire services with commission)**
- ❖ Promotional Material: Graphics, Slide Shows, Poster Boards, Social Media, Speakers
- ❖ Event Promotions: Galas
- ❖ Updated Strategic Plan
- ❖ Multi-Chapter Collaboration: Technical Meetings
- ❖ AAAEA Road Map based on current ByLaws: Goals, Phased Accomplishments, Milestones, Long-term Timeline, Performance Measures, and Accountability.
- ❖ Centralized Membership Database
- ❖ Social Media Communications
- ❖ Student Chapters: Young members involvement
- ❖ Scholarships. How do we get them involved in AAAEA?
- ❖ Collaboration with other professional organizations: ASCE, ASHE, ACEC, TRB, etc.
- ❖ Annual or Bi-Annual Technical Conference
- ❖ Centralized Scholarships
- ❖ Communications between National and Local Chapter
- ❖ Designated Liaison between Local Chapters and National
- ❖ Membership packet/Leaflets for New Members
- ❖ Membership Renewal
- ❖ Membership Campaign
- ❖ Funding Means for National's services
- ❖ Centralized Legal and Tax Services
- ❖ Business Directory
- ❖ Business Sponsorships: Legal, Taxation, Commodities, Financials, Insurance, A/E,
- ❖ Membership Directory
- ❖ Annual Performance Evaluation Survey by National to gauge the interest and feedback form its members. It is a good means for accountability by the elected members and of course for process improvements.

3. Collaborating on presenting specific topics.

MJ indicated that in the past technical presentations were included in the program. Are there any this year, and will anyone from our Chapter want to present any topic? **Nader** informed us that this year the Program will not include Technical Presentations. Presidents from each Chapter will present a brief overview of their chapter's activity.

Ziad suggested that two roundtables discussions should be included in the program to focus on the topics discussed above, i.e. Improvement Matrix. In day 1, the discussion can be focused on the various topics and should conclude with developing a list of Action Items. In Day 2, the roundtable discussion should focus on developing strategies, process improvements, timeline, and performance measures to accomplish the action items. This effort could culminate in developing a short-and long-term Strategic Plan.

Action Item: **Nader** will follow up with the National President and Advisory Board to see if the Program can include the two roundtable discussions to facilitate the topics discussed above. Each Round table discussion should be 2 hours.

4. Do we have suggestions to the National Committee that we want to present and discuss?

See Item 2 above

Action Item: None.

5. Should we nominate any of our members to any of the elected positions? Discuss the process and the electable vacant positions.

We all agreed that it is too early to nominate anyone. **MJ** asked if anyone knows who is running and/or who is being nominated. **Nader** said that this information is not available yet. **Nader** cautioned us that whoever is nominated needs to understand the level of effort that is needed to serve his/her role. We want to avoid nominating people just because we think they are successful and can do it. Commitment to serve, travel to local chapters, and communicate with all chapters are paramount. **Ziad** agreed with Nader and also emphasized that we should be very careful when nominating candidates, and not setting them up for failure. The person needs to understand the level of effort and also should present what he/she plan to accomplish in the next year, and how his/her accomplishments match AAAEA goals and strategic plan, and how his/her success will be measured.

Action Item: None.

6. How do we measure the success of our trip?

Ziad indicated that currently we think that there are many challenges and concerns with how things are running at both the National and local levels including but are not limited to: too much reliance on very selective people to the point that these people will eventually walk out on us (it has already happened), non-practical ByLaws, Board of Trustees (Board of Directors) lack representations from non-Arab American industry leaders, recycling same people over and over for same board positions, lack of membership sustainability, lack of a centralized membership database, lack of proactivity for legal and tax services, lack of communications between National and local chapters, lack of funding means for National AAAEA services, non-challenging start-ups for student chapters, a very challenging scholarship program, lack of promoting local chapters, etc.

Will any of these concerns be addressed in the near future? Does the National Board acknowledges these issues and is open to addressing them? Is there a process in place to remedy these challenges? Are we functioning in line with the initial strategic plan? How do we monitor and measure our performance?

We all agreed that success will be measured by how quickly these issues get addressed--developing new improvement processes, streamlining processes, improving communications, better service from National to Local Chapters, better inter-relationships among National and local Chapters , better technical collaboration, etc.

Action Item: Collectively, we should convene after we come back from the meeting and revisit our thoughts and suggestions and see if we were able to get any commitment on addressing these issues, if we think we are on the right track, etc.

The **National Board** should consider doing a Performance Evaluation Survey each year to gauge the interest feedback from its members. It is a good means for accountability and process improvement.

7. How do we improve the ongoing communication between the National AAAEA and the local chapters, specifically our chapter?

We agreed that this area of concern is very challenging. Several venues can be explored and considered such as:

- Assigning a specific Board Member from the National to be the Liaison Person with our Chapter
- Monthly one-page E-Newsletter from National Via Constant Contact
- Quarterly Webex Meeting/Teleconference Call with EC and EB
- Social Media: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram

Action Item: To be discussed at the Annual Meeting. **Ziad** could lead this discussion in the Roundtable Discussion.

8. Do we want to hold the next year's national convention here in our area (DC/VA/MD)

We agreed that we should put our hat in the mix to host the next Annual Meeting, but we also need to have feedback from the next elected Executive Board rather than committing them to it. So for now, all we have to say that we will be very interested to host the next meeting.

We agreed that there is value to our Chapter to hold the Annual Meeting in our area. We can combine it with the Gala function and gain higher visibility, great opportunity for our members to socialize and meet their counterparts from chapters all over the country, perhaps an opportunity to have some international delegates, and also maybe an opportunity to attract other local professional organizations.

We also agreed that we should not over extend ourselves to lead any of the Annual Meeting logistics with hotels, airports, transportation, etc. The National Committee should handle all of these logistics.

Action Item: **Ziad** will make the request of consideration on behalf of our Chapter.

NEXT TELECONFERENCE CALL: Next call will be scheduled after more information is shared among us regarding these minutes as well as the suggestion Matrix.

Teleconference was adjourned at 9:00 pm

Prepared by: Ziad Sabra on 09/17/2016