

Minutes
WPSA Executive Council
Friday, March 13, 2020
9:00 a.m-10:30 a.m PST
Meeting conducted virtually using Zoom technology

Members present: Ainsley LeSure, Nadia Brown, Tony Carey, Elsa Favila, Jane Junn, Jamie Mayerfeld, Lan Chu, Jessica Lavariega Monforti, Mario Feit, Mario Guerrero, Mark Ramirez, Seth McKee, Melissa Michelson, Natalie Masuoka, Ricardo Ramirez, Richard Clucas, Sarah Shair-Rosenfeld, and Jason Casellas

Members absent: Michael Bowers, Farah Godrej, Shirin Deylami, Laura Evans, and Brent Steele.

Guests: Janni Aragon

Meeting Call to Order by President Jamie Mayerfeld at 9:05 am PST

I. New Business

A. A Proposal Granting the Power to Review and Cancel the Conference Contract

Introduction and welcome by Jamie Mayerfeld. Discussion of extremely serious situation regarding COVID-19, the novel coronavirus pandemic, which is impacting the United States.

Richard outlined agenda item #1 to the participants.

The proposal calls for giving the Executive Director, the President, the Program Chair, and the immediate Past President the combined authority to cancel the contract. Since the situation in Los Angeles is changing day by day, the proposal allows the Association to make a decision on how to move forward without having to call another council meeting. The proposal gives these four Association leaders the power to determine if and when it would make sense to cancel the contract with the conference hotel.

Jane Junn asked for clarification as to how ISA handled a similar situation canceling conference in Hawaii, including how they handled liability and insurance issues

Richard Clucas responded that despite what is being reported in the media, Los Angeles is not banning large gatherings, only advising against them. He discussed the financial impact that cancelling would have on the association, especially if it canceled while it was still legally possible to hold the meeting.

Ricardo Ramirez asked about Gov. Newsom possibly taking over hotels to quarantine patients. How will this affect negotiations? Richard said it had no effect at that juncture.

Jane Junn moved to approve the motion, Ricardo Ramirez seconded.

Vote: 16 in favor and 0 against.

B. A Proposal for Authorizing an Online Alternative

Jamie had originally proposed moving the conference online. Richard said that the problem with that proposal is that if we passed item #1 on the agenda, then we would not want to formally approve going online at today's meeting. Instead we would want a *formal* decision to hold a virtual meeting to come *after* a formal decision to cancel the conference. This proposal gives Jamie and Jessica the authority to move forward with the online conference *after* a formal decision for cancelling is made.

Richard also said that if we pass Item #2, then the Council should express its preference as to when to hold the online conference, whether at the same time as the regularly scheduled conference or at a later date.

Jamie Mayerfeld outlines pros and cons of having an online conference.

Lengthy discussion about the pros, which generally consisted of an obligation to scholars, especially young scholars, to have a forum to present their work. Section chairs have worked hard on creating panels, deadlines also help scholars finish their work. Some felt that it should be done but at a later date. The date is already in members' calendars. Scholars have to share their research. We should move on with our work despite the challenging circumstances.

Cons generally summarized as follows:

Universities will use this as an opportunity to cut travel budgets, more work for organization during a time of crisis, Zoom may not be reliable, privacy issues with possible recording of presentations, should we charge participants a registration fee for a virtual conference? If too many opt out, then how will the conference work logistically? Many scholars have children at home and are burdened with family care due to the crisis, universities might not cover registration fees for virtual conference

Mario Guerrero asked if we could postpone decision on these questions.

Elsa and Jessica thought that we owed it to our members to decide asap so that people could make plans now.

Jamie suggested we ask section chairs whether they would be willing to have a virtual conference.

Jane Junn called for an unofficial straw vote on whether the meeting should be moved online.

10 members voted in favor of an online conference and 6 opposed.

Jamie then suggested a committee (outlined below) should be formed to ascertain the above concerns and report back early next week on whether an online conference is feasible.

C. A Proposal Creating a Committee

If the Association decides to cancel the meeting in Los Angeles and to switch to a virtual conference instead, Richard said it would be valuable to have a committee work on developing that virtual conference. This proposal authorizes the creation of the committee, enabling it to get to work immediately rather than after the Association decides to cancel the contract.

The motion to approve Item #3 passed unanimously.

D. Refund to Participants

Agenda Item 4 listed in the agenda was not considered during the Zoom meeting. Jamie quickly asked the participants to vote on Item 5 instead.

E. Advisory Vote on Rescheduling with the Marriott later this year

Richard said he exchanged emails with our contact at the J.W. Marriott at L.A. Live today about the financial disaster that looms in front of us if we don't make our guestroom minimum or if we cancel the conference. We won't make the guestroom minimum. In the past two days, our hotel numbers plummeted and we are right at the borderline of the minimum. It will fall below the minimum later today. The hotel person asked whether we would consider rescheduling, which would be an alternative to holding an online meeting. Richard said he did not discuss details with the contact about rescheduling. Rescheduling the meeting for later in the year requires Council approval. The vote put before the Council was whether to ask the hotel to reschedule for a later date in 2020.

Jane called the question, Sarah seconded:

Vote: 16 voted in opposition to rescheduling with the Marriott later this year, 0 supported.

Jamie then proceeded to a consideration of Item 6.

F. Advisory Vote on the 2025 Meeting Location

Richard reported that when conferences cancel, one of the things hotels offer to reduce the penalty is to schedule another conference at the same hotel at a later date. If the Association decides to cancel the 2020 meeting and Richard seeks to negotiate a deal to reduce our liability, the hotel may include a clause asking us to come back at the soonest possible time, which for us

would be 2025. Our Bylaws require Council approval of conference sites, so Richard asks the council to pre-approve the selection of Los Angeles for the 2025 site in case this comes up in negotiations. We will have been in San Francisco in 2023 and Vancouver in 2024, so it will be time to be back in southern California in 2025. Richard said the approval of this motion would only apply if this issue comes up in negotiating; if the conference contract is cancelled without scheduling a new date in Los Angeles, then he would bring the issue of where to hold the 2025 conference before the council again at a later date. Though he reiterated that we should be back in Southern California that year.

Jane Junn called the question, Sarah seconded.

VOTE: 16 in favor of item 6, 0 opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m. PST

Respectfully submitted,

Jason P. Casellas, Secretary
Western Political Science Association