

ASOR Executive Committee Conference Call
March 2, 2018
11:00AM EST

Present: Richard Coffman, Sharon Herbert, Ann Marie Knoblauch, Eric Meyers, Ed Wright, Susan Ackerman, Tim Harrison, Heather McKee, Andy Vaughn

Absent: Joe Seger and Lynn Swartz Dodd

Note: Because Lynn could not be on the call, Andy volunteered to take notes of the conference call. He was appointed by Richard without objection.

Chair Richard Coffman called to order at 11:03AM. He stated that the EC's goal by the end of the call is to cast a vote about whether ASOR should move to Washington, DC or to the Raleigh/Durham area. Thus, he proposed the following agenda:

1. Report from Andy, Eric, and Sharon on site visit to Alexandria, VA, and Washington, DC
2. Report from Andy about rental prospects in Alexandria, VA
3. Report from Susan and Andy about the NEH Challenge grant
4. Report from Ed and Andy about Development (time permitting)
5. Report from Susan about archives to Harvard (time permitting)

Agenda adopted by consent.

1. **Report on viewing Alexandria office properties.** Sharon reported that the site visit team found at least four properties that were in ASOR's price range. The team left with the sense that a move to Alexandria was more than feasible and would be a really good move for ASOR. Eric concurred with Sharon, and he stated that he found that the realtor (John Olson) to be excellent. He added that the metro stops in Alexandria, with easy access to downtown D.C., would be an asset, and he said that there were several acceptable properties in Alexandria. He had one favorite, but several of the properties would work. Andy concurred with Sharon and Eric that there were multiple properties in our price range that would be a good fit. Andy viewed their trip as a feasibility study; meaning, that if there are suitable buildings available in our price range now, there most likely will be suitable buildings in our price range in the future when ASOR is ready to purchase a building—especially since some of the viewed buildings have been on the market for upto 14 months. Further supporting the feasibility of the move to Alexandria was John Olson's comment (as reported by Sharon) that the Alexandria commercial office building market is somewhat overbuilt.
2. Andy updated everyone on the **rental prospects**. We can rent in the Washington area for a reasonable price as long as we don't need a lot of space and don't need a long-term lease. Andy also reported that Virginia Theological Seminary is probably willing to give ASOR reduced rent for one year, and it may be complimentary. Richard asked if we could afford to rent in the DC area long-term if we ultimately did not raise enough funds to purchase a building. Andy stated that rent in Alexandria would be less than Boston but more than ASOR would have to pay in a location like Raleigh/Durham. Andy stated that ASOR should view a move to the DC area as one with the intention to purchase. Andy's view is that if we could not purchase a building—or did not feel confident in our ability to raise the funds—then we should not move to Washington. It would be difficult, both in terms of the ASOR budget and in terms of constrained space, for ASOR to rent long-term in the D.C. market.
3. Susan reported that we are on draft 10 of the **NEH challenge grant** proposal. We have had positive feedback from Sarah Lepinski (NEH Program Officer) and Fred Winter (former NEH Program Officer and ASOR member consulting with us on the proposal). We are in the process of soliciting

letters of support from donors who have already pledged to contribute to the project. Andy shared that Susan has done the lion's share of writing the NEH proposal. Everyone on the call expressed appreciation to Susan and others for working on the grant proposal. ASOR is requesting \$500,000 from NEH if ASOR can raise \$1.5 million (ASOR must raise \$3 for each \$1 of NEH grant funding). The NEH grant proposal is due March 15th.

4. **Development update.** Andy and Ed reported that we have \$295,000 in pledges for the building fund to date. There was a discussion about how to contact other potential donors in advance of submitting the NEH proposal. There was also discussion about whether ASOR could reach our goal of raising \$1.5 million to purchase a building. The general consensus was that this is ambitious, but doable.

When it was about 5 minutes before noon (EST), Richard urged the Executive Committee to vote on a motion. The following motion was made by Sharon Herbert and seconded by Ann Marie Knoblauch:

Be it resolved that ASOR will relocate to the Washington DC area. ASOR will rent initially with the intent to purchase a building that ASOR can afford at an appropriate time in the future.

The motion was approved unanimously. Andy requested that everyone confirm that there were no abstentions since the vote was taken on a conference call. Everyone confirmed that it was a unanimous "yes" vote with nobody voting "no" or "abstaining."

5. After the vote was taken, Richard asked Susan if she wanted to update the EC on agenda item #5. Susan replied that she would give a full report in April, but her brief report was that the Archives will be moved to the Harvard Semitic Museum and the move will be a good resolution for ASOR.

Meeting adjourned at 12:07pm