

Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
October 1, 2020

1. Call to order

Steve Arms called the meeting to order at 12:00 Noon CDT, October 1, 2020. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1. In Carol's absence, Lynn offered to provide minutes for the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from September 3 were reviewed. Sharon moved approval, and Josh seconded. All present voted in favor.

3. Update from NEFAP Marketing Task Force

Halley Hastings, Chair of the NEFAP Marketing Task Force, joined the meeting to provide an update on NEFAP's marketing plans and to get feedback from the committee. The Task Force is working to find the best way to market NEFAP as a non-regulatory program.

One of the issues is to understand and identify keywords with which to tag the NEFAP page so that it appears in web searches for environmental testing, measurement and sampling activities more frequently, and how to know the website statistics for NEFAP pages. Jerry explained that TNI's website tracks usage data, so that if Halley were to provide him with a list of the pages of interest, the webmaster could run a report about the statistics for those pages.

Other issues underway are how better to use social media and how to market training for field sampling and measurement activities. Jerry offered that Halley could provide those keywords to the webmaster for the NEFAP pages, and that he will bring up the issue for all of TNI with the Information Technology Committee. He also noted that TNI does not market training that's offered by other organizations, so that NEFAP/FSMO training offered at FSEA, for instance, would not be mentioned on the TNI website.

As for social media, TNI does not have much activity there despite having accounts on Facebook and Twitter, but Robin Cook, the Small Laboratory Advocate, uses LinkedIn for networking with small labs. There are no protocols for use of social media, and it seems that preparing such documentation might be counterproductive, given the speed with which that realm evolves. However, TNI's Code of Ethics (<https://nelac-institute.org/docs/comm/tnibod/TNI%20CODE%20OF%20ETHICS071410FINAL.pdf>) as well as POL 1-102, Ethical Conduct of Members, would govern any social media activities on behalf of the organization, and that TNI management (i.e., Jerry) should be made aware of social media activities undertaken so that they can be linked to the main website. At least one participant expressed a desire for "ground rules" for the use of social media on behalf of TNI, but not as explicit as an SOP but Jerry recommended that Halley proceed as she sees fit.

Jerry also mentioned that he has been contacted by a group called Feathr (and a quick search shows other similar groups) that handles marketing for non-profits, and that perhaps NEFAP could explore that avenue. Also, TNI is a member of techsoup.org, which provides digital marketing services as well as software at a special price.

With that, Halley thanked the group for all of their advice. Steve invited her to remain for the rest of the meeting if she wished to do so.

4. Newsletter

The new deadline for articles is October 15, but realistically, the newsletter cannot go out until final decisions are made about conference in January, whether it will be hybrid or virtual. Authors for planned articles have been contacted with the new deadline. Lynn noted that she planned to organize the four topics of "Board Initiatives" into one article, and has contacted the other parties identified in the September minutes.

5. Mentoring Subcommittee

Steve requested an update on this meeting, since he was unable to attend it. Jerry reported good discussions, with progress on the statement of expectations, and that actual mentoring may begin in early 2021.

6. Conference Planning

Jerry reviewed the current status of possible participation for a hybrid meeting. Only five exhibitors would be present, with others not travelling at all but some willing to exhibit virtually. Fewer than 10% of committee members say they could travel to attend in person, with some of the reasons in addition to personal risk factors being a 2-week quarantine for travelers returning from Texas, home schooling of children and especially for municipal labs, no travel budget available (budget cuts are everywhere).

Based on this forecast, he provided a tentative agenda for a virtual meeting that would cover all five days of a week, and proposed moving the dates to later in January or even early February. Using WebEx, there would be two virtual sessions for both morning and afternoon, except for the Monday morning Annual Meeting and Plenary session about Board Initiatives. These would start at 9 am CST and ending at 4 pm CST, with vendor sessions from 4-5 pm. Each session would have one committee meeting, with committee members as panelists (able to speak), and one general interest meeting with only presenters being audible. Both types of sessions would allow for Q&A using the keyboard entry and chat functions, and all sessions would be recorded and available for viewing for a period of time after the conference.

Vendors would have a reduced rate from the in-person meeting, and there will be only one registration fee, again less than full registration for an in-person conference, with all registered attendees having the ability to sign into every session. Jerry estimates perhaps 250 virtual attendees, with sufficient profit to continue funding committee staffing, which is roughly the same or slightly more as an in-person conference would have.

Participants favored the single registration fee and access to all sessions. There was general agreement that a better use of the final hour (4-5 pm CST) would be some sort of networking sessions, perhaps called a "happy hour". Jerry noted that with TNI's now-expanded WebEx capability, there can be up to 10 "breakout" sessions, so that option could be used for the networking hour also.

Another suggestion was to have vendor presentations during the lunch hour (or part of it, since lunch at one's desk need not require a full hour). Jerry proposed that, without the late afternoon vendor sessions, perhaps the vendors could have Friday afternoon for technical presentations or whatever they chose, and then Advocacy Committee could just meet the following week instead of at the end of conference.

Participants discussed the content of some "alternate" sessions in more detail, and who would handle putting those sessions together. At the end, Suzanne noted that the group had arrived at a robust and good plan for the conference.

Jerry did ask that all committee members review the Environmental Monitoring Council's white paper, which was on the agenda but not addressed due to time constraints. That document will be re-distributed with these minutes.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be November 5, 2020, at 12 Noon Central time.

Attachment 1

	Name	Stakeholder Group	Present/Absent
1.	Lara Phelps	EPA (Other)	Absent
2.	Steve Arms	Other	Present
3.	Lynn Bradley	Other	Present
4.	Martina McGarvey	AB	Present
5.	Stacie Crandall	Lab	Present
6.	Zonetta English	Lab	Absent
7.	Marlene Moore	Other and NEFAP	Absent
8.	Janice Willey	Federal	Present
9.	Trinity O'Neal	Lab	Present
10.	Robin Cook	Lab	Present
11.	Sharon Mertens	Lab	Present
12.	Teresa Coins	Lab	Present
13.	Josh Wyeth	PT provider	Present
	Associate Members		
	Kirstin Daigle	Lab	Absent
	Judy Morgan	Lab	Absent
	JoAnn Boyd	Lab and FAC	Absent
	Celeste Crowley	AB	Absent
	Keith Chapman	Other	Absent
	Andrea Teal	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Devon Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Bob Pullano	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lee Wolf	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Paul Junio	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lily Sanchez	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Silky Labie	Other	Absent
	Elizabeth Turner	Lab	Absent
	Stephanie Drier	AB	Absent
	Erin Consuegra	Lab	Absent
	Nan Thomey	Lab (other)	Present
	Aurora Shields	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Staff		
	Jerry Parr	TNI ED	Present
	Carol Batterton	TNI PA	Absent
	Suzanne Rachmaninoff	TNI Admin. Support	Present
	Guest		
	Halley Hastings	NEFAP Marketing Task Force Chair	Present