# Task force on Streamlining the Governance and Management of ASPRS

# Report to Executive Committee:

# Recommendation #4: Committees

# 19 April 2015

# (to be considered by Excom at its meeting on xx April 2015 and presented to the Board of Directors for consideration at its meeting on 8 May 2015)

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### **Introduction**

The Streamlining Task Force presented a report to the Board at its meeting in Denver on 17 November 2014. While the overall direction of the Task Force’s recommendations was accepted, it was felt that the recommendations were insufficiently specific to indicate clear actions. The Task Force, therefore, agreed to present to Excom a series of short, focused reports on individual recommendations. Of the seven recommendations in the original report, #7 is already being implemented and requires no further treatment. Thus six reports are required, of which this covers Recommendation #4 on committees, which was written as follows in the report to the Board:

“Reduce the number of Committees substantially, by eliminating some and amalgamating others, for example: roll Honorary Member Nominating and Memorial Address into Awards (the Fellows Committee is already a sub-committee of Awards); amalgamate CPPC and NTPC; roll Electronic Communications and Journal Policy into Publications; eliminate Membership, which is demonstrably not efficacious. The Strategic Planning Committee should not be eliminated. A comprehensive plan to state goals in the short and long term is essential to having a consistent message and a successful execution plan. [Note: one member of the Task Force felt that it should be eliminated, since it almost entirely overlaps with Executive Committee; if the latter were eliminated, however, the question would have to be reviewed.]”

This report to the Board in November 2014 sets out the rationale for the work of the Task Force and this is not reiterated here. Clearly, the Society has become smaller and the pool from which committee members can be drawn is consequently more limited. Furthermore, the cost of servicing the committees and, in some cases, paying the expenses of members to attend meetings, has to be reduced as the Society struggles to reduce its annual shortfalls.

Note that the subject matter of this report subsumes Recommendation #1:

“Leave the Councils as they are, but consider converting the Division Directors Committee into another council.”

It also subsumes Recommendation #5:

“Consider replacing the Board of Directors by a slightly expanded version of the current Executive Committee and thus eliminate the latter. An Advisory Board could be convened to provide counsel from a wider congregation.”

Thus this report covers three of the seven Recommendations of the Task Force: #4, #1 and #5. An earlier draft was submitted to Excom for its consideration at its teleconference on 19 February 2015: this draft reflects advice received by the Task Force from Excom at that meeting.

### **Analysis**

Certain aspects of streamlining are straightforward, but the critical issue revolves around the Board of Directors and Excom. It is acknowledged that the Board is too big, expensive and unwieldy. Excom, however, works reasonably well – it is small enough for intimate, extensive debate and for a satisfactory allocation of action items. After lengthy debate, the Task Force recommends the following approach:

* Preserve the *status quo* in terms of structure, with actions to address the major problem, i.e. the size of the Board. Excom could be left the way it is, but is better being thinned to some extent. The size of the Board must be reduced.
* It seems that Excom cannot discharge its duties in terms of the day-to-day business of the Society without including the officers, Executive Director and Treasurer. In view of the way the Committee has operated in recent years, furthermore, it is recommended that the Society Secretary also be a fully-fledged member. Thus the “four members of the Board chosen by the Board of Directors from its own number” (Bylaws, Article IX, Section 8(a)) are eliminated.
* This reduced Excom may be perceived by parts of the membership to be an inner cabal, manipulating the affairs of the Society for its own unsavory reasons. Therefore it is critical that the charges of Excom be very clearly laid out in the bylaws and the *Committee Handbook*, that its meetings and decision-making be thoroughly documented and that all decisions critical to the Society be made by the Board of Directors in its usual democratic fashion.
* One of the drivers behind the setting up of the Task Force was the unwieldiness of the Board and this must be addressed. The members of Excom, as described above, will also be members of the Board. The remainder of the membership, however, has been the subject of extensive thought and discussion. The Task Force considers that the Division Directors need not all be members, but could be represented by one or two of their number. If the Division Directors Council were created and constituted as suggested in the report on Recommendation #2, it could have a representative on the Board over and above the two officers who would serve as its Chair and Deputy Chair. Similarly, it is proposed in the report on Recommendation #3 that the National Directors are no longer required and, indeed, the Region Officers could form another council, with a representative on the Board over and above the two officers who would serve as its Chair and Deputy Chair. The Sustaining Members Council is currently represented on the Board: this should continue and the other two councils, the Young Professionals Council and the Student Advisory Council, should also be represented; we further recommend that the former be renamed “Early Career Professionals Council” to avoid reference to age and attract members who are motivated to be active in the group. Each of the five councils should be responsible for its own procedure to nominate a member to serve on the Board of Directors.
* If this proposal were accepted, the Strategic Planning Committee should be discontinued, since its membership and concerns are substantially similar to those of Excom.
* In view of the much reduced Excom and Board, there could be merit in creating a larger Advisory Board to advise on the business of the Board. This Advisory Board would presumably include broad representations of the Regions, Divisions, Councils and membership at large, and could be quite big, because it would meet by teleconference, so physical attendance would be less critical than with the current Board. The group would be able to provide more insight and diversity of thought on running ASPRS or addressing the over-arching membership issues. Not only would the Advisory Board generate a flow of high-quality ideas, its existence would further serve to assuage any anxieties of inner circles running the Society in a nefarious way.
* The composition of Excom and the Board are summarized in Table 1 below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Board of Directors (12) | Excom (7) |
| President, also serving as Deputy Chair of the Region Officers Council | President, also serving as Deputy Chair of the Region Officers Council |
| President-Elect, also serving as Chair of the Division Directors Council | President-Elect, also serving as Chair of the Division Directors Council |
| Vice President, also serving as Deputy Chair of the Division Directors Council | Vice President, also serving as Deputy Chair of the Division Directors Council |
| Immediate Past President, also serving as Chair of the Region Officers Council | Immediate Past President, also serving as Chair of the Region Officers Council |
| Executive Director | Executive Director |
| Treasurer | Treasurer |
| Secretary | Secretary |
| Representative of Sustaining Members Council |  |
| Representative of Young Professionals Council (or Early Career Professionals Council) |  |
| Representative of Student Advisory Council |  |
| Representative of Division Directors Council |  |
| Representative of Region Officers Council |  |

Table 1. Proposed compositions of Excom and the Board

The Task Force makes the following recommendations on the remaining committees, which are also important but less critical:

* The Nominating Committee is essential to the Society’s continuity, has not attracted criticism and should be maintained
* The Tellers Committee reflects the need to have tellers to count votes in elections for Vice President and Assistant Division Directors, but to have a formal committee is overkill. This Committee can be abolished.
* The Professional Conduct Committee is a mechanism to handle impropriety by members, or allegations thereof. It is convened only when there is a need. This parallels the approach of many other professional societies and the Committee should continue.
* The Audit Committee is another essential mechanism, this time to monitor a critical aspect of the Society’s financial affairs and legal compliance, so should continue.
* The Awards Committee manages a central and successful aspect of the Society’s activities that benefit members and the broader geospatial community and should continue. It is proposed, however, that, in accordance with our report on recommendation #6, the Honorary Member Nominating Committee and Fellows Committee be replaced by the Honorary Fellow Nominating Committee, which would be a sub-committees of Awards Committee with its business conducted in the way the Awards Committee determines to be most expeditious. The Memorial Address Committee would also become a sub-committee of the Awards Committee. The procedures for electing Honorary Fellows must be clearly written, from the nomination of candidates to the election process, as well as the roles, if any, of Excom and the Board. Adoption of these recommendations will necessitate changes not only to the bylaws but also the drafting and approval of a Deed.
* The bylaws are at the heart of what the Society does and how it is run. They must be managed with professionalism, promptness and meticulousness. The Bylaws Committee should continue.
* The Membership Committee has been one of the least effective committees in the recent history of the Society and should be abolished. Membership is the Society’s most serious problem and must be handled by in a more pervasive manner than is possible by a small committee that meets infrequently.
* There is considerable overlap between the Convention Policy and Planning Committee and the newer National Technical Program Committee, which has more participation from Sustaining Members. It is proposed that these be combined into an events committee. Its primary responsibility would be national conferences, symposia and workshops, but some oversight of regional events would be welcome too.
* The Data Preservation and Archiving Committee (DPAC) is active and has a unique responsibility. Thus it should continue.
* While certainly playing different roles, three committees undoubtedly overlap: Electronic Communications Committee; Journal Policy Committee; and Publications Committee. It is proposed that these be merged into a communications and publications committee, the brief of which can be streamlined as the duplications between the three components are eliminated.
* Though the names and briefs of the Education and Professional Development Committee and the Evaluation for Certification Committee indicate that the two bodies are working in closely related areas, there seems to be rather little overlap and the Task Force is unsure whether these two should be merged.
* The Task Force recommends that the Standards Committee be continued. There is no question of the importance of its brief. There is little or no overlap between the Standards Committee and any other committee. One point of discussion was whether the work of the divisions, much of which is related to the development of standards and guidelines, renders the Standards Committee superfluous. The conclusion is that the Standards Committee is responsible for oversight of the standards process and for coordination with outside organizations for review and input of internal and external standards. The Standards Committee does not evaluate the need for standards, maintain existing standards or develop new standards: these roles fall to the Divisions. The Society could benefit from a body meeting periodically to discuss the status of standards in the Society and provide input not on the process issues with which the Standards Committee is charged, but specifically the Society's goals as to what maintenance efforts or new standards the Divisions should pursue. The proposed Division Directors Council could do this.
* The Councils should be left in their current form, but the Task Force offers a significant proposal here. The Division Directors Committee, which plays a vital role in recording and coordinating the work of the divisions, should become a Council. Moreover, in order to underline the importance of this body and ensure smooth transition of officers, it is further proposed that the President-Elect of ASPRS fulfills the role of Chair of this new Council and the Vice President, Deputy Chair. Similarly, the Region Officers should become a Council and, in order to underline the importance of this body and ensure smooth transition of officers, it is further proposed that the Immediate Past President of ASPRS fulfills the role of Chair of this new Council and the President, Deputy Chair. Finally, the name “Young Professionals Council” should be changed to “Early Career Professionals Council” to avoid explicit mention of age and facilitate more flexibility on membership in order to be inclusive of those wishing to be active in the group.
* The Task Force has only one proposal to make on Special Committees, Working Groups and Joint Committees as defined in the bylaws. The term “Working Group” should be changed to “Task Force”: this reflects current usage in ASPRS and it frees the term “Working Group” for use as the body within a Division that addresses a particular issue.
* These proposals are summarized in Table 2 below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Present | proposed |
| COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS |
| [Executive Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Executive-Committee.html) | Executive Committee (see Table 1 above) |
| [Division Directors Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Division-Directors-Committee.html) | TWG/SIG Chairs Council |
| SAC | Student Advisory Council |
| YPC | Young Professionals Council |
| SMC | Sustaining Members Council |
| - | Region Officers Council |
|  |
| STANDING COMMITTEES |
| [Strategic Planning Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Strategic-Planning-Committee.html) | [-](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Strategic-Planning-Committee.html) |
| [Nominating Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Nominating-Committee.html) | [Nominating Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Nominating-Committee.html) |
| Tellers Committee (Special Committee) | - |
| [Professional Conduct Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Professional-Conduct-Committee.html) | [Professional Conduct Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Professional-Conduct-Committee.html) |
| [Audit Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Audit-Committee.html) | [Audit Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Audit-Committee.html) |
| [Awards Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Awards-Committee.html) | [Awards Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Awards-Committee.html) |
| [Memorial Address Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Memorial-Address-Committee.html) | (Memorial Address Committee, a Sub-Committee of Awards Committee) |
| (Fellows Committee, a Sub-Committee of Awards Committee) | (Honorary Fellow Nominating Committee, a Sub-Committee of Awards Committee) |
| Honorary Member Nominating Committee |
| [Bylaws Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Bylaws-Committee.html) | [Bylaws Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Bylaws-Committee.html) |
| [Membership Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Membership-Committee.html) | - |
| National Technical Program Committee | Events Committee |
| [Convention Planning and Policy Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Convention-Planning-and-Policy-Committee.html) |
| Data Preservation and Archiving Committee (DPAC) | Data Preservation and Archiving Committee (DPAC) |
| [Education and Professional Development Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Education-and-Professional-Development-Committee.html) | [Education and Professional Development Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Education-and-Professional-Development-Committee.html) |
| [Publications Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Publications-Committee.html) | Communications and [Publications Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Publications-Committee.html) |
| [Electronic Communications Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Electronic-Communications-Committee.html) |
| [Journal Policy Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Journal-Policy-Committee.html) |
| [Evaluation for Certification Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Evaluation-for-Certification-Committee.html) | [Evaluation for Certification Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Evaluation-for-Certification-Committee.html) |
| [Standards Committee](http://www.asprs.org/Committees/Standards-Committee.html) | Standards Committee |

Table 2. Summary of proposals for the committees of the Society

### **Recommendations**

The Task Force recommends that Excom and the Board be continued as at present, but reduced in size as described above and summarized in Table 1, and the Strategic Planning Committee be discontinued. The Task Force recommends that the continuation and discontinuation of committees be enacted as set out above and summarized in Table 2. Those committees that continue to exist should receive further consideration: the *Committee Handbook* should be reviewed and opportunities sought to reduce the size of each committee, simplify its charges and procedures, and at the same time optimize recruitment of members such that energetic, reliable participants are identified and attracted, with an emphasis on new blood.

The Task Force further recommends that the Division Directors Committee becomes a Council, with the President-Elect and Vice President playing the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair. The Region Officers should form a further Council, with the Immediate Past President and President playing the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair. Each of these Councils should provide a member to the Board of Directors, who cannot be an officer of the Society. Thus National Directors would no longer be required. The Young Professionals Council should be renamed to Early Career Professionals Council.

The term “Working Group”, as defined in Article IX, Section 4 of the bylaws, should be changed to “Task Force”.