

NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Executive Council

Middlesex Community College Meeting House, Billerica, MA

26 October 2019

Present:

David Kalivas, President,

David Northrup, Vice President

David Burzillo, Treasurer

A. J. Andrea, Secretary

Michele Louro

Violetta Ravagnoli

Heather Streets-Salter

Kerry Vieira

A lively discussion regarding the relative merits of small-batch Greek olive oil (championed by David Kalivas) and artisanal Italian olive oil (championed by Violetta Ravagnoli) preceded the opening of the meeting. Kerry Vieira chose not to promote the excellence of the olive oil of the Iberian Peninsula, and Your Secretary, who has a genetic foot in both Italy and Greece, wisely stayed out of the conversation, although his work in Kalamata has given him a taste for that oil of the gods.

With no resolution of this critical issue in sight, President Kalivas called the meeting to order at 9:43 AM.

After welcoming the assembled members of the Council, Kalivas noted that the preceding discussion points to the fact that NERWHA must hold a future symposium centered on food in world history. On a more somber note, he stated that it is time for someone else to hold the office of president (more on that below), but he will always be happy to host NERWHA events at Middlesex Community College. Relative to that issue of hosting NERWHA, Violetta Ravagnoli noted that, although Emmanuel College could not host a NERWHA symposium this Fall, as we had hoped, it could, perhaps, do so in the future.

Leaving aside the matter of future symposia for the moment, the Council proceeded to the Treasurer's report, which David Burzillo had earlier emailed all EC members. In summary, NERWHA currently has total assets of \$7,247.14, down from a 2018 high of \$7896.33 due to a slight deficit incurred at the Spring 2019 symposium at B.C. High and NERWHA's not having a Fall symposium. With no major expenditures anticipated, NERWHA can comfortably meet its

annual, self-imposed stewardship obligations, namely a \$500 donation to the WHA and two travel grants of \$500 each. Once these and several small operating expenses are met, the Association should enter 2020 having a projected \$5,747.14 left in assets. In other words, NERWHA is financially healthy.

On an associated issue, currently membership stands at 22. This is slightly higher than last year at this time, but not as high as the two previous years (18 in 2018, 27 in 2017, and 33 in 2016.). The new dues structure means that although there are fewer members today, the amount of money raised through registrations has not changed significantly. The fact that there is no Fall symposium this year, and many people pay dues when they register for symposia, might explain the drop in numbers. Consequently, we should send out a reminder to pay dues. There was general assent on that matter, and the Secretary promised to do so in the near future.

The President then entertained a motion that rather than The EC's voting annually to fund its donation to the WHA and the two travel awards, they become, a regular part of the budget, as long as the assets of the Association allow it to do so prudently. Andrea offered the motion and Streets-Salter seconded it. The motion passed unanimously without further discussion.

The EC then moved on to a discussion of symposia in general and the Spring 2020 symposium in particular, which will be held at Salem State University. As the members soon became aware, Spring is a difficult time of the year in which to hold a symposium due to a number of events, such as school vacations, conflicting conferences, and religious holy days, that render numerous Saturdays less than optimal for such a meeting. The EC tentatively settled on Saturday 7 March or Saturday 4 April, all other dates having some significant conflict. Members agreed to await the arrival of Michele Louro, who was delayed, before settling on a date for the symposium. It was, however, decided that the theme would be "Holy War in World History." Lacking a better choice, it further decided that the Association's Secretary would serve as keynote speaker so that he can hawk his book-in-progress, *Sacred Violence: Holy War in World History*. The following Fall symposium would focus on "Imperialism and Anti-imperialism in World History."

The members further agreed that holy war would be broadly construed so as to offer participants wide latitude in the papers and panels that they offered. Moreover, not only would the Call for Participants underscore this broad definition of holy war, it would also clearly indicate that papers and panels on other world history topics would be warmly welcome. Violetta Ravagnoli asked if undergraduate participation would be welcome, and she was assured that NERWHA would, as in the past, be pleased to receive proposals for papers and panels from them.

The Secretary and Treasurer promised to publish a CFP ASAP and PDQ but not EOD.

The Council then turned to a perennial conundrum: How many symposia should NERWHA sponsor annually? Until 2019, the current incarnation of NERWHA has held two annually—Fall and Spring (or Spring and Fall, however one thinks seasonally). But is this optimum?

David Northrup addressed the recent email-conversation that revolved around speculation that declining attendance at symposia might be due to too many symposia and asked, are there any data to support or refute such a theory? Might not the opposite be equally likely: fewer symposia

will decrease attendance as people get out of the habit? Kerry noted that a major issue is dates—finding the proper day for such a meeting. Heather opined that Spring is tough due to numerous competing events. On another issue, even if NERWHA fails to find other hosts, between them Northeastern and Salem State can keep the symposia going, but everything would be far more manageable were NERWHA to have only one symposium annually. David Burzillo noted that regardless of whether one or two per year, there will always be conflicts. Moreover, a core group always comes, which means that each symposium will attract around 40 participants each time. In that same vein, Heather noted that NERWHA can always count on Northeastern's graduate students, as long as there is no conflict with another event.

The outcome of the discussion was a unanimous decision to have a Spring and a Fall symposium in 2020 but for 2021 hold only a Fall symposium on a trial basis. Unless the Council discovers a compelling reason to change back to a twice-yearly schedule, this single-symposium-per-year system will be the way in which NERWHA will progress into the third decade of the 21st century.

Regarding future symposia, David Burzillo volunteered to talk with Tom Johnson regarding NERWHA's holding the Fall 2021 symposium at UMass, Boston.

In regard to the future, David Kalivas noted that annual Council meetings will continue indefinitely each Fall at Middlesex Community College.

With these matters settled, the Council turned to the issue of a Program Committee inasmuch as the current unelected, more-or-less self-appointed tsar of symposia, the Secretary, notes that his current research and writing preclude his continuing in that role. Given that grim reality, David Kalivas asked, what is to be done?

Despite his earlier protestations, Andrea agreed to serve on a multi-person Program Committee in order to share his experience, but does not wish to serve as chair. The result was creation of two ad-hoc committees: a Spring Program Committee of Michele Louro (local arrangements), David Burzillo, Tom Johnson (who needs to be contacted regarding his appointment), and Al Andrea; a Fall Program Committee consisting of Heather Streets-Salter, David Burzillo, Violetta Ravagnoli, and Andrea. Al will chair the Spring committee (surprise!) and Heather the Fall committee; David Burzillo will continue to function as the person who oversees registrations. Regarding that effort, David B. noted that NERWHA might need to purchase a new version of QuickBooks.

The Secretary took this opportunity to publicly thank and praise David B. for all of his support over the past years. Given the Secretary's total incompetence with all technical matters, especially gmail, the spore of the Devil, he would not have been able to function in his role of helping to guide the symposia without David's generous aid.

It being the Fall, the discussion now turned to the election of officers.

The terms for all four current executive officers, namely the president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary, end on 31 December, as well as seats on the EC for Thanasis Kinias, Angela Lee, and Tom Johnson. Despite publicly and repeatedly proclaiming that they would not stand for an

additional two-year term, both the President and the Secretary were prevailed upon to offer their names in nomination. The Vice-President and Treasurer also indicated their willingness to serve again. The Secretary will contact Lee and Johnson to ascertain whether or not they wish to stand for re-election. Thanasis Kinias has left the area, and Heather Streets-Salter promised to submit the name of at least one graduate student to run for the seat that has now, by tradition, been reserved for a graduate student. Further, the Secretary promised to send out a general letter to all 200+ persons on the NERWHA listserv inviting self-nominations. The on-line election will end on 1 December.

[[TWO NOTES: No date for ending self-nominations was proposed, but the Secretary suggests 20 November as a cut-off date, given the tardiness of the process. Normally Angela Lee and Rob Pelletier oversee the electronic election, but if Angela stands for re-election, Rob will need to either oversee it on his own or find another NERWHA member to assist.]]

The EC then turned to other business. Kerry Vieira asked if the WHA Scholarship Committee could oversee the awarding of the two NERWHA travel scholarships. There was general assent, but the EC members also unanimously underscored the fact that recipients must be NERWHA members.

Given the projected theme of the Fall 2020 symposium, Andrea volunteered to put Thanasis Kinias and Mohamed Adhikari in touch with one another. Their interests regarding colonialism intersect.

Kerry Vieira then offered an overview of WHA activities and plans. Its 2020 conference will be on the campus of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Already it is planning tours and events, as well as pre-conference sessions. The facilities at the university, including its on-campus hotel, are first-rate, and the setting is lovely. Hiking trails pass by the campus, and downtown is a short walk away. Three Western affiliates—Hawai'i, the Northwest, and California—will participate in the conference, much as NERWHA participated when the WHA was held in Boston at Northeastern University.

The 2019 conference in San Juan Puerto Rico was a major success with nary a complaint—well only one, but you cannot please everyone.

The WHA is currently looking at three possible sites for its 2021 conference.

David Kalivas asked if NERWHA should consider assembling a data base for teaching. In response, Andrea reminded the EC that the attempt a few years ago to create a mentoring system went no where for lack of members' interest.

While awaiting the arrival Michele Louro, the EC members engaged in back-and-forth social banter for a few minutes. Upon Michele's arrival, the EC renewed its discussion of dates for the Spring symposium. When Michele reminded the EC that Saturday, 4 April, is the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, the choice of 7 March seemed logical and final. (But wait. See the postscript.) That apparently settled, Michele warned the EC that NERWHA could expect little or nothing in the way of a direct financial subvention from a financially strapped university. The upside is that SSU's new caterer will not prevent NERWHA from bringing in food or a food

service from outside. When asked if the cafeteria will be open, Michele answered in the affirmative.

That apparently settled, the Secretary promised to draft a CFP in the near future. He also noted that given the theme of Holy War, perhaps we might want to contact regional military units, such as ROTC departments. Kerry Vieira promised to send out announcements to local high schools.

Returning to matters previously discussed, David Burzillo noted that although there are 242 persons on its listserv, NERWHA has but 22 dues-paying members. We must do better. Kerry asked if our website sends out membership-renewal reminders, Dave B. replied, "No." Heather noted that she is only reminded when it is time to register for a symposium. The Secretary noted that every general email he sends out contains a membership plea, and surely the one that he will send out shortly will contain a similar reminder.

Finally, regarding future Fall symposia, there was universal consensus (can consensus be less than universal?) that September is far better than October or November for holding one.

There being no more business, all members offered with one voice a motion to end the meeting. There being no objection, the meeting ended at 11:20 AM. This was a record for efficiency that might never be broken or even equaled.

Several members then traveled to the nearby Szechuan Gourmet for the traditional post-EC meeting repast.

POSTSCRIPTS

While enjoying the delights of Szechuan food, Andrea suddenly realized that he had a potential conflict. He had accepted an invitation to speak at a Silk Road conference in Budapest *in early March* (date yet unknown). He promised to contact the conference organizers immediately to find out the date/s.

Several days later he discovered that the Silk Road conference will be 2-5 March. After much going back and forth (can I do both keynotes or not?), he decided that he could not attend two conferences within days of one another and separated by over 4,000 miles, and asked that the Holy War theme be moved to the Fall 2020 symposium. His colleagues, however, overlooked his momentary lapse of memory, and decided to move the Spring symposium to Sunday, 5 April. This is, to our knowledge and memory, the first NERWHA symposium or conference to be held on a Sunday. We hope for the best.

Heather Streets-Salter contacted the Secretary by email and gave him the name of Luke Scalone. The Secretary contacted him on Tuesday, 5 November, and Luke immediately signaled his willingness to be nominated.

The Secretary also contacted Tom Johnson, who expressed his desire to be nominated. He also noted that it is highly unlikely that UMass, Boston would host a symposium without charging NERWHA an exorbitant fee for the facilities.

A general note went out on the listserv on 5 November to all 200+ thanks to the assistance of Dave Burzillo.

Also on 5 November, Trader Joe's was out of the earthy Kalamata olive oil that he favors, but the Secretary settled for an excellent Andalusian variety. And did he mention the fine oil from his son's grove in Healdsburg, Sonoma County?

Respectfully submitted,

A. J. Andrea, Secretary

6 November 2019