

SOA Executive Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

24th July 2013

1. The SOA Executive Committee met on the 24th July 2013 in the PAO conference room (attendance apologies received from Jurgen Walter and Scott Sunquist). The new Chairman of the SOA, Mr Steve Covington, the new PAO representative, Col Miroslaw Ochyra, and the SOA “Mons 2015 City of Culture” representative, Mr Jean Vanderwal, were also in attendance. The following agenda items were then discussed and the consequent actions noted below:
2. **Approval of the previous minutes and approval of the Agenda:** The Minutes and Agenda were approved and open items were addressed as indicated in this report.
3. **Welcome to the incoming Chairman**

On behalf of the Executive Committee and all SOA members, the Acting Chairman welcomed Mr Steve Covington as the new SOA Chairman of the Executive Committee. Mr Covington’s extensive experience and commitment will be a tremendous asset to the direction and furtherance of the SOA constitution and goals. Mr Covington noted a number of factors changing the fabric of the Alliance and the related impact on the SOA, expressing his desire to extend and sharpen the SOA focus on the serving officer cadre at SHAPE.

In this context, General Jones, as President of the SOA, had already written to General Breedlove regarding the traditional role of SACEUR as Honorary President of the SOA. The new SOA Chairman is already responding to questions by other command staff on the SOA and the Acting Chairman continues to inform incoming NMR appointments of the SOA role, offering honorary SOA membership for their tenure at SHAPE.

The new PAO representative, Col Miroslaw Ochyra, was also formally welcomed, although previous contact had already been made during the handover process.

4. **Action Items from the SOA Executive Committee meeting of 30th May 2013:**
 - a. The SOA Welcome letter prepared for new members had been provided to all Executive Committee members.
 - b. The SOA Brochure is being updated (Action JW).
 - c. The planned Wine Tasting event is being re-scheduled for the autumn period (Action JMB).
 - d. The planned Casteau Lecture/Walk/St Denis event on Sunday 25th August has been arranged. Christiane Hermant provided the details and this information will shortly be distributed by PIO to all SOA members and the SHAPE NMR echelon. Christiane Hermant volunteered to gather the responses and provide final numbers for the day (Action MO and CH).
 - e. A questionnaire had been prepared by the US Chapter Chairman to gather membership views on possible alternative locations for the SOA Symposium. The questionnaire will be distributed to all SOA members, requesting responses by 19 September for discussion at the General assembly in October (Action JMB).
 - f. Updated Web site links for access to the SOA page are being progressed. The SOA Executive Committee undertook to provide regular updates for publication (Action JW and MO).
 - g. The issue of a SOA Membership card is being pursued and software acquired to directly generate Membership cards from the database (Action GB).

- h. The US Chapter had provided further contributions to the Scholarship fund but would not propose any candidate applications this year.

4. Mons 2015 City of Culture

- a. Informal meetings continued with the various 'embassies' associated with the Festival du Carre. It is now understood that the SOA would support the Mons 2015 staff and assist to add the promoted 'International Dimension' to the planned Mons 2015 activities and projects. Ongoing activities included:
 - i. Meeting with the Mons Youth services representative, followed by a very productive meeting with Benoit Davin, Director of SHAPE schools. A further meeting to setup a pilot project will take place in October with representative of Mons and SHAPE teachers. Mons-2015 is not supposed to stop on 31 December but to carry on in the following year and the intent is to develop contacts and generate a program that can be continued in the future.
 - ii. A 'dry run' of the planned monthly bus trip from the Mons Tourist Office to SHAPE will be arranged with PAO and members of the Mons 2015 Foundation. SHAPE will provide the bus and the Mons 2015 Foundation also proposed a presentation in English by their personnel in the SHAPE Auditorium.
 - iii. In the latter half of 2014, SOA will sponsor a Mons 2015 'Embassy' table in the Lobby to inform the Shape community of the Mons 2015 events.
 - iv. Meeting with Mr Blondeau, Mr Rauson and Mr Pedlow, the SHAPE historian, to offer SHAPE support for historical exhibitions.
 - v. As Pilsen will be the other Capital of Culture in 2015, initial meetings are being proposed between the Belgian and Czech NMR's.
 - vi. The St George Project, celebrating the depiction of St George in all the different countries, is being planned but no contacts have yet been made.
 - vii. The potential for a Mons concert by Tops in Blue is being investigated (Action RH).

5. Symposium 2013

- a. The 2013 Symposium package was reviewed and updated:
 - i. The event will follow the same format as that of 2012, with a welcoming Happy Hour on the evening of 10th October, the General Assembly and Annual Dinner on the 11th of October, and a Social Programme on the 12th of October.
 - ii. The Symposium Programme will be completed by 7th August 2013 for review by the Executive Committee and then distributed to all members on 15th August. A reminder will be sent on 9th September 2013 and the final deadline for registration will be 19th September 2013.
 - iii. A reservation has been made with Best Western Casteau Resort Hotel for the Happy Hour event on Thursday evening 10th October and a nominal 10 rooms have been reserved for the Symposium weekend.
 - iv. The venue for the Annual dinner on Friday evening 11th October will be at the restaurant 'Le Vannes'. All participants will be requested to provide full payment on registration (latest 19 September) if they wish to attend the Annual dinner, with the exception of members travelling from overseas, who will be asked to pay at the Happy Hour event on Thursday.
 - v. The Social Programme on Saturday 12th October will consist of a visit to Leuven and the traditional Golf tournament at RGCH. The Leuven trip will be a guided tour of the Hotel de Ville and Cathedral from 1030-1230 followed by a no host luncheon at the nearby Microbrewery. Please note that the guided tour has a maximum participation of 25 persons, so allocation is on a 'first come first served' basis.
 - vi. Room reservations at the SHAPE club have been made and buses will be arranged for the Symposium and Annual Dinner (Action MO).

6. Activities Planned for 2013

- a. The Acting Chairman recapped the proposed plans for the 2013 social events:
 - i. A Casteau cultural day to include a history lecture, 5km hiking tour and visit to the 'Art et Saveur' event at St Denis on the 25th August (Action CH).
 - ii. A Wine Lecture and Tasting – date to be determined (Action JMB).

7. SOA Membership Status

- a. The SOA Membership stands at 511 members. 24 members have not yet paid their dues although three reminders have been sent. These members will now be removed from the SOA database.

8. AOB

- a. The Acting Chairman noted that as the SOA "Mons 2015 City of Culture" representatives were providing regular reports, and their work would continue over the next few years, they should become part of the standing Executive Committee. Jean Vanderwal accepted the invitation.
- b. The new Executive Committee appointments would be ratified at the upcoming General Assembly.

9. Next Meeting

Wednesday October 2nd 2013 at 14.00 in the SHAPE PAO Conference Room.