



Board of Directors American Society of Plant Biologists

Meeting Summary

Meeting held from 11:00 am– 12:30 pm EST, on Friday, February 14, 2025

Meeting Attendees

BoD MEMBERS:

☒	Chapman, Kent	Chair; President-elect
☒	Ma, Hong	President
☐	Wallace, Ian	Secretary
☒	Chellamma, Sreekala	Treasurer; chair, BoT
	Elected member, by ballot	
☒	Kilaru Aruna	Elected member, by Council
☒	Monte, Elena	Elected member, by ballot
☒	Taylor, Crispin	CEO (ex officio; non-voting)

GUESTS and STAFF:

☒	Thornton, Leeann	Past President
☒	Woodall, Clara	CFO
☒	Covington, Jennifer	VP, Membership and Meetings
☒	Dang, Ashok (AD)	VP, Business Development
☒	Williams, Mary	Features Editor; PI of ROOT&SHOOT
☒	Lee, Sylvia	Executive and governance affairs administrator

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Kent at 11:03 am EST and members of the committee and guests introduced themselves. ASPB's VP for Business Development – Ashok introduced himself to the group.

Approval of past minutes

Minutes from the prior meeting (Nov 8, 2024) were approved by email. Leeann asked that the minutes for this 2/14/2025 meeting reflect the fact that BoD took two email votes earlier this year, as follows:

- 1) On January 28-29, BoD voted on a motion reading "BoD approve continued payments to Marcia Puig-Lluch's salary and benefits from ASPB funds, pending clarity regarding executive branch action on the ROOT&SHOOT grant." The vote was unanimously in favor, with Sreekala emphasizing that this was not an open-ended commitment and would require review within three months.

- 2) On February 10 – 11 BoD voted unanimously to approve a statement to the ASPB Community entitled “ASPB Reaffirms its Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.”

Report from Leeann:

Leeann provided a brief update from her work with the US National Committee on efforts to engage with the International Union for Biological Sciences, which met during the 2025 AAAS meeting in Boston.

Charting a path forward for ASPB’s diversity and inclusion programs

Discussion regarding present plans and moving forward in specific ways to demonstrate ASPB’s robust and strong advocacy for diversity and inclusion more broadly in the sciences.

- The most explicit worry in terms of federal funding is ROOT&SHOOT, which is in year 3 of a 5-year grant. Clara and Crispin spoke with lawyers who handle issues related to grants and contracts with the federal government. Their recommendation is to keep moving forward and to accelerate the billing cycle to NSF from quarterly to monthly.
- Positive feedback was received from members regarding the statement ASPB put out this week reasserting the Society’s commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- A survey will be sent out later today to community members requesting that they share harm they are hearing about related to research programs, grants already submitted, grants delayed, etc.
- It also was suggested that ASPB convene a listening session with BoD members and identify additional ways in which members could take action.
- A point was made that diversity, inclusion, and equity have become lightning rod terms because of the Trump Administration’s recent stance on DEI. A question posed was whether it would be advisable to continue the work but frame it differently while having the same mission. No action was taken at this time—EDIC will retain the committee title for now.
- ASPB will likely have to find ways to support our activities if federal funding is suspended. ASPB also needs to identify new products and services that would lessen our dependency on grants in ways that bring in enough revenue to self-sustain and maintain the nonprofit status of ASPB.

Discussion on ways ASPB can provide ongoing support to ROOT&SHOOT (or to a collectively operated and supported set of programs that achieve similar objectives) if NSF funding for the program is rescinded or significantly diminished

- Mary Williams explained that ROOT&SHOOT (R&S) is a grant that reimburses expenses made by ASPB in the proposed programs. Mary mentioned the R&S travel award program, the Plant Biology conference and other conferences R&S pays for scientists affiliated with either SACNAS and/or MANRRS to attend. Mary notified travel awardees that payments are on pause for now.
- The BoD expressed comfort with ASPB staff moving ahead as they are, knowing that staff will react/respond as necessary if there is any direct communication from the NSF regarding the R&S grant.

Discussion regarding the potential expansion of EDIC to allow greater integration across ASPB/in support of strategic plan

- There was discussion of the possibility of updating bylaws to allow the appointment of one or two additional members to the EDI Committee.
- The BoD supported the concept of additional EDIC members, and it was suggested that this could be done on an ad hoc basis until which time the bylaws can be updated.

Discussion regarding Grant in support of Plant Biology 2025-affiliated event recognizing Joanne Chory

ASPB is working with former mentees of Joanne Chory to develop a one-day event that would take place just prior to Plant Biology 2025. Funds to support this activity will be through grants and/or donations by the mentees, and the impact to the ASPB budget is anticipated to be minimal. Sreekala moved that ASPB move forward in support of the Joanne Chory symposium. Elena seconded, and the Board unanimously approved.

Updates to ASPB's Constitution and Bylaws

Multiple aspects of ASPB's Constitution and Bylaws do not reflect current practice and need to be updated. Discussion ensued around making C&B more consistent. New changes are not being proposed.

- Aruna made a motion for the BoD to charge the presidents and relevant staff, to include CEO, CFO, and Executive and Governance Affairs Administrator to review the entire Constitution and Bylaws document and to work with the C&B Committee to promptly identify needed updates and bring those updates, as necessary, to Council, BoD, and the membership for ratification. Sreekala seconded this motion. BoD voted unanimously in favor.

Updates to ASPB's Hardship Membership Dues Waiver program

Aruna advised the Board that the membership committee processes hardship memberships and the current process for evaluating the applications was based on a 25%, 50%, 75% or 100% criteria. 25%-50% were underutilized. As a result, the application criteria for discounts will be

reworked to 75% or 100% discounts. The committee will work within the allotted budget for this activity, and so there will be no net impact on the approved budget for 2025.

Any Other Business

Crispin advised everyone about the news that an unknown number of USDA employees had been terminated. ASPB may need to collaborate with other organizations to figure out/coordinate how to respond.

List Action Items

1. Staff & leadership will work on updating the Constitution and Bylaws
2. Efforts made to expand the EDI committee with more members aligned with the recent executive orders
3. Affirmed plan for ASPB to host a “town hall” or listening session for members impacted by the executive orders from the White House, and to provide a platform for members to share thoughts and ideas for action.
4. Further details to be worked out for the Joanne Chory symposium.

Adjournment: Kent called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:34 pm; Sreekala moved to adjourn, and Aruna seconded the motion. All BoD members voted to approve.