

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of The USAID Alumni Association February 26, 2009

Members Present:

Hank Bassford, Terry Brown, Jock Conly, Kurt Farer, Patrick Fein, George Hill, Gary Merritt, Jim Michel, Diane Ponasik, Tony Pryor, Doug Tinsler, Barbara Turner, Aaron Williams, Frank Young

Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the January 27 meeting were accepted with only the correction of one egregious spelling error.

Recent Developments in the Aid Environment:

Hank Bassford related that legislation by Sen. Durbin et al. has been introduced to authorize USAID to reconstitute its workforce through massive additional hiring.

The HFAC has stated an intention to rewrite the Foreign Assistance Act. Committee staff have been consulting widely on this project and soliciting public comments.

After a discussion of the administration's deliberations (lack of progress?) in selecting a new USAID administrator and given the solicitation of public comments on re-writing FAA '61, the committee decided to poll our alumni on the issues of greatest concern to foreign assistance reform and to solicit suggestions on who would be the best candidates for the administrator's job. The following is a first cut at the questions to be sent out to our membership by email:

*“What are your top three concerns for modernizing U.S. foreign assistance?
To oversee these and other reforms and to lead USAID in the coming years, who are your top (up to) three candidates to be the Obama administration's Administrator of USAID?”*

Executive committee members are invited to offer edits/revisions to the wording of these questions by email through Monday, March 2.

Membership Criteria:

Jock Conly presented membership criteria for review. After discussion and some revisions, the following statement of membership criteria was approved:

“Membership in the USAID Alumni Association is open to individuals who were formerly employed by the United States Agency for International Development or its predecessor agencies (e.g. MSA, ICA) for at least two years and who left the agency in good standing. Former civil servants, Foreign Service Officers, Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), and

third-country nationals ((TCNs) are all encouraged to join the UAA, as are former employees who were employed through inter-agency service agreements (PASA, RASA), fellowship programs (e.g. Population Fellows), and personal services contracts (PSCs).”

Incorporation of the UAA as a 501(c)3 organization:

Hank Bassford reported that neither Mike Kitay nor Ted Carter was able to make a meeting they had scheduled on this issue. We need articles of incorporation, a vision or mission statement, by-laws, a business plan/budget, and a record-keeping system. We will also need a federal ID number and a state tax number. Hank will develop an outline for a business plan and send it to the executive committee members, who should bring their ideas to the next monthly meeting, where Doug Tinsler will lead a brain-storming session. The sense of the committee is that the Association would incorporate in Washington D.C. as a 501(c)3, tax-exempt non-profit (rather than a professional society). Hank believes incorporation may be done within 60 days.

Web Site:

Gary Merritt reported progress he and members of the membership committee and their intern (recruited via SID) had made on the web site. Gary will get a rudimentary web site launched in the next week. Although content will still be largely missing at that early stage, Gary will send executive committee members an email with a URL link and invite them to go onto the site and comment back on its architecture and features.

Treasurer’s Report:

Aaron Williams reported that we have received \$1,150 in contributions from members so far. We have incurred about \$500 in expenses, mostly in getting the web site designed. He and Patrick soon will establish a bank account in the name of the UAA at Lafayette Federal Savings and Credit.

Membership and Events:

It was agreed that the UAA can announce events hosted by DACOR as part of the DACOR Development Dialogue and two pending invitations were approved.

Gary Merritt reported that GMU/School of Public Policy (Arlington – VA Sq) has in principle offered us the free use of auditoriums from 8:30a-3:30p, Mondays - Thursdays . It was agreed that we may convene a series of colloquia there, the first perhaps in June, featuring Henrietta Fore if she is agreeable. This colloquia series will be included in our business plan.

Strengthening USAID:

Barbara Turner had previously distributed notes from this committee’s meeting with Janet Ballantyne, including Gene George and Susan Riley. With the continuing influx of new hires, USAID needs help reviewing applications and coaching and mentoring new staff. There will probably be a role for this executive committee in vetting/recommending volunteers from our membership.

Janet reported that Janet Ballantyne will soon leave her job as coordinator of the DLI program and will be replaced by Bill Douglas.

To help with this influx of inexperienced new employees, Janet told them, USAID needs to bring back senior people who have retired. HR is grappling with the issue of incentives, in particular how to allow a reemployed retiree to retain his pension while performing inherently governmental functions.

Gene George will draft a hiring notice for USAID alumni on personal services contracts to do screening of applications and mentoring and coaching of new hires. We will run that notice on our new web site.

Next Meeting of the Executive Committee:

April 6 at 3:00 pm in the community room at 4001 N. 9th Street, Arlington.