

MINUTES OF THE 2020 AEU ASSEMBLY BUSINESS MEETING

AUGUST 1, 2020, via Zoom
1 PM EDT TO 5 PM EDT

ABSTRACT:

The Assembly was called to order at 1:05 pm EDT upon achieving a [quorum](#).

Sonja Kueppers delivered the [President's Address](#).

Bart Worden spoke about the [State of the AEU](#).

Kueppers gave an explanation of the [voting process](#) for this year's virtual Assembly.

2019 Assembly Minutes ([part 1](#); [part 2](#))

- Motion to approve by Abi Daken; Carolyn Parker seconded.
- Minutes approval [PASSED](#) by majority vote.

[Fiscal Year 2021 Budget](#)

- Motion to approve by Tevis Tsai; Iris Woodard seconded.
- *[Motion to accept [revision](#) to FY2021 Budget by Jan Broughton; Carolyn Parker seconded.]*
- *Revision [PASSED](#) by majority vote.]*
- **Revised** FY2021 Budget [PASSED](#) by majority vote.

[Assembly 2021 Proposal](#)

- Motion to approve by Abi Daken; Trang Duong seconded.
- *[Motion to approve [revision](#) to Assembly 2021 Proposal by Pattie Arduini; Carolyn Parker seconded.]*
- *Revision [PASSED](#) by majority vote.]*
- **Revised** Assembly 2021 Proposal [PASSED](#) by majority vote.

[Bylaws Amendment on Board Terms of Service \(Article III, Section 2\)](#)

- Motion to adopt by Tevis Tsai; Howard Rose seconded.
- *[Friendly revisions accepted by authors during prior discussions.]*
- Bylaws Amendment **PASSED** with majority vote of [Societies](#) and majority vote of [qualified voters](#).

[Bylaws amendments on Society Status \(Article I and following\)](#)



- There were no objections to adoption, so the motion passed by consensus.
- *[Friendly revisions accepted by authors during prior discussions.]*
- *Motion to accept new [revision](#) by Abi Daken; Pattie Arduini seconded.*
- *New revision **PASSED** by simple majority vote.]*
- **Revised** Bylaws Amendment **PASSED** with majority vote of [Societies](#) and majority vote of [qualified voters](#).

Election of Board [Directors](#) and [Officers](#)

- Motion to vote approved by consensus.
- [New Directors for FY2021](#): (see also [here](#) for details of the vote tallying process)
 - Sonja Kueppers (3 year term)
 - Linda Richardson (3 year term)
 - Bill Aul (3 year term)
 - Elizabeth Singer (1 year term)
 - Jon Meador (1 year term)
- [Officers for FY2021](#):
 - President: Sonja Kueppers
 - Vice President: Elizabeth Singer
 - Treasurer: Tom Castelnuovo
 - Secretary: Casey Gardonio-Foat

[Resolution on Death with Dignity](#) (submitted by Northern Virginia Ethical Society)

Motion to approve by Bob Bueding; Josh Blinder seconded.

- *[Friendly revisions accepted by authors during prior discussion.]*
- Resolution **PASSED** by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of voters.

[Reaffirmation that Black Lives Matter to AEU](#)

- Motion to approve by Josh Blinder; Carolyn Parker seconded.
- *[Friendly revisions accepted by authors during prior discussions.]*
- *Motion to approve revision striking second paragraph (“amendment 1”) by Chris Kaman; Fred Breidt seconded.*
- *Amendment 1 **opposed** by majority vote.*
- *Motion to approve revision replacing “white supremacy” with “white bigotry” (“amendment 2”) by Rebecca Fisher; Jackie Sims seconded.*
- *Amendment 2 **opposed** by majority vote.]*
- Reaffirmation **as written PASSED** by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of voters.

The Assembly was adjourned by the President at 5:03 EDT.

[Sincere thanks](#) to everyone who helped to make this 2020 AEU Assembly a success!

MINUTES OF THE 2020 ASSEMBLY

AUGUST 1, 2020, via Zoom

1 PM EDT TO 5 PM EDT

MINUTES:

Agenda

The Zoom meeting was recorded

- [Video recording](#)
- [Audio recording](#)
- [Chat transcript](#)

Voting to achieve a Quorum was opened at 12:43 pm, EDT

Quorum of 32 out of 62 reached at 1:05 pm EDT with a total of 58 out of 62 qualified voters.

Musical presentation by Lea Morris

To Do The Work (Emily Elbert)

Sonja Kueppers delivered the [President's Address](#).

Bart Worden spoke about the [State of the AEU](#).

The Assembly has changed during the pandemic, with meetings moving from in person to virtual. The AEU had been working to develop inter-Society communication and cooperative work. The movement to meeting virtually has opened new possibilities for connections and collaboration, which the AEU has leveraging. These include updating the website to include information on new virtual events and encourage Societies to open their events to people from other Societies. The removal of geographical barriers has spawned a number of new activities and services, including the Art of Zoom salon, Virtual SEEK program, Colloquy series, and ethical actions. The 2020 Virtual Assembly received *** visits, representing a significant increase in engagement from previous years.

Explanation of Voting

Kueppers explained this year's voting process, which is different from in previous years. Discussions will not follow the Consensus process due to the possibility of technical problems for participants. Discussions will be strictly timed; each discussion will be limited to eight minutes and four speakers (each of whom will receive two minutes, followed by a warning).

ElectionBuddy electronic voting system will be used. Links and login information have been emailed to each participant; the number of votes to which each Delegate is entitled have been automatically assigned to each account. Each vote will appear as the item is discussed, and all votes will be open until 11 pm eastern daylight time to allow for all participants to vote. Participants will only have the option to vote on issues to which they are entitled to vote (e.g. only Delegates are allowed to vote for Officers, Board members, Quorum, etc.). A new email will be sent for each vote that will also contain the access key and password for that voter.

Amendments will be considered and voted on before the final vote on each item. It may not be possible to know the results of these votes before voting takes place on the final items, but additional time will be taken in the hopes that the required number of votes for or against each amendment may be received quickly. In the event that the vote can be tallied before voting on the final item, the version that is voted upon will be considered to include the amendment. If the results of the vote on amendments are not available at the conclusion of initial voting, the votes to approve the affected issue will be left open for an additional 12 hours (until 11 am eastern time) to allow Delegates to know the final versions of the documents to be voted on. If a Delegate has cast an incorrect vote, they may email Kueppers for a new ballot, which will replace the initial, incorrect ballot.

Question: Do votes require a majority of participants who are eligible to vote or only eligible voters who are present?

Response: Technical difficulties may prevent some voters from being “present” and some voters may abstain from voting; passage is based on the total votes cast by 11 pm EDT (except for items whose voting deadline has been extended due to pending revisions).

Motion to approve the Minutes from the 2019 Assembly ([set 1](#); [set 2](#)).

Abi Daken moved; Carolyn Parker seconded.

- ***Voting was opened to approve the 2019 Assembly Minutes.***
- **PASSED** with 69 in favor and 10 abstentions.

Motion to approve the [FY2021 Budget](#).

Tevis Tsai moved; Iris Woodard seconded.

Introduction by Treasurer Tom Castelnovo:

The budget achieves the following goals: reducing expenditures to achieve a reserve; supporting member Societies, and implementing administrative efficiencies. Major changes and the reasons for them are described in the [Budget Narrative](#).

Motion to accept the proposed [Amendment to the FY2021 Budget](#).

Jan Broughton moved; Carolyn Parker seconded.



Discussion of FY2021 Budget amendment.***In favor: Carolyn Parker (Austin)***

Amendment calls for restoration of full salaries and benefits for the Executive Director and Administrative Director. Applaud the creation of emergency reserves, but believe that the current crisis will require the full efforts of the Directors. The AEU can lead by example in treating these employees with respect and compassion.

Opposed: Sonja Kueppers (Washington; AEU Board President)

The Board has not had the opportunity to discuss the amendment and Kueppers is speaking for herself and not on behalf of the Board. The AEU has a commitment beyond our feelings for the persons in staff positions. Our responsibility is to support our member Societies, and the decision to reduce administrative costs was grounded in a vision of a new staff structure that would allow us to spend more of our budget on program expenses instead of administration. There are many worthy projects that the Board addresses that it cannot fund because of the absence of a reserve fund at the beginning of the year, which reduces our potential for supporting our members.

In favor: Tom Castelnovo (Brooklyn; AEU Board Treasurer)

We now have additional money in the budget to fund this amendment (due to additional income and the reduction of other expenses; the Board has not yet decided which specific line items will be reduced to fund the amendment). We have just cut one administrative position, so the Administrative Director will have more work. There is currently no plan for how the reduction in hours will affect the responsibilities of these staff members. The Board can work this year to create a new staffing structure that allows for adjustments to the 2022 budget.

Against: Abi Daken

The Washington Delegation feels that their Society believes the AEU would provide more value to them if it offered stronger support for programs. In this time of uncertainty, it is irresponsible to not have an emergency reserve built into the budget. It is unfortunate that the Board did not have the chance to plan how the changes in the budget would affect AEU staff responsibilities, but a large meeting such as the Assembly is not the best place to make such decisions; they trust the Board to make changes that fulfil the expressed priorities of the Assembly. Washington favors the AEU being more lightly administered, which is reflected in the current budget.

Voting opened on the Budget Amendment.

Passage requires a simple majority to pass (54 votes either in favor or opposed); results were unknown at the time that voting for the Budget was opened, so voting for budget was extended until 11 am EDT.

Amendment **PASSED** with 49 in favor, 29 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Discussion of FY2021 Budget.

No speakers volunteered.

Voting opened on the FY2021 Budget.

Voting remained open until 11 am EDT to allow Delegates to know whether the Budget Amendment passed.

FY2021 Budget as amended **PASSED** with 73 in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Motion to approve the 2021 Assembly Proposal.

Abi Daken moved; Trang Duong seconded

Introduction by Carolyn Parker (Assembly Planning Committee):

The Assembly Planning Committee proposed a new format for the 2021 Assembly. The Board chose to push a decision on that proposal until Assembly 2021 (with the proposal being applied in 2022) and hold the 2021 Assembly virtually due to uncertainty about the safety of meeting in person in summer 2021.

Motion to accept the Amendment to the 2021 Assembly Proposal.

Pattie Arduini moved; Carolyn Parker seconded

Introduction by Carolyn Parker:

The amendment calls for the Assembly Planning Committee to recommend to the Board by January, 2021, whether the 2022 Assembly should be held in person or virtually. Voting on this 2022 in summer 2021 would not allow enough time to plan an in person meeting in 2022, which takes eighteen months.

Voting opened on the Assembly Proposal amendment.

Immediate results suggested likely passage.

The Assembly Proposal revision **PASSED** with 80 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Discussion of the 2021 Assembly Proposal.

No speakers volunteered.

Voting opened on the 2021 Assembly Proposal.

Voting remained open until 11 am EDT to allow eligible voters to know whether the proposed revision had passed.

FY2021 Budget as revised **PASSED** with 75 in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Note on voting procedure for Bylaws:

Passage of Bylaws amendments requires both a majority of both Societies and of Society Delegates. Two ballots will be offered, one each Delegate and an additional one for each Society, which will be completed by that Society's Lead Delegate.

Motion to adopt the [Bylaws Amendment on Board Terms of Service](#)

Tevis Tsai moved; Howard Rose seconded

Introduction by Sue Walton (Board Development Committee):

The amendment strikes language that established staggered Board terms and only applied to 2006 and the years immediately following. The amendment also allows Board members who are elected for one partial term to serve the fully allotted two consecutive terms in addition.

Friendly revisions to the original amendment were proposed and accepted by its authors (current text reflects these revisions).

There were no objections, so these revisions were accepted by consensus.

Discussion of the proposed Amendment with revisions.

No speakers volunteered.

Voting opened to Society Lead Delegates on the Amendment on Board Terms of Service.

Amendment as revised [PASSED](#) with 18 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Voting opened to individual Delegates on the Amendment on Board Terms of Service.

Amendment as revised [PASSED](#) with 74 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention.

The combined results of these two votes mean the Bylaws Amendment on Board Terms of Service PASSED.

Motion to adopt the [Bylaws amendment on Circles and Society Status](#)

There were no objections, so the motion passed by consensus.

Friendly revisions to the original amendment were proposed and accepted by its authors (current text reflects these revisions).

There were no objections, so these revisions were accepted by consensus.

Introduction to the revised final version by Sonja Kueppers (Board President):

These amendments eliminate the hierarchy of membership types, making new Societies feel more fully accepted into the AEU while retaining the financial advantages accorded to newly

accepted Societies. To allow for the acceptance of new Societies in between Assemblies, Provisional and Full membership are introduced.

Motion to approve a [new revision](#) to the proposed amendment in Article I, Section 2 d.

Abi Daken moved; Pattie Arduini seconded

Introduction by Sue Walton:

This revision will allow the Chicago Ethical Circle to achieve full Society status (instead Provisional status) based on the date of its previous acceptance as a Circle instead of waiting until a vote at the 2021 Assembly.

Voting opened on this new revision.

(Passage of a revision requires a simple majority of Delegates.)

Revision [PASSED](#) with 74 in favor, 0 opposed, and 3 abstentions.

The Bylaws amendment on Circles and Society Status was discussed.

In favor: Richard Koral

The amendment simplifies the framework of Society membership and reflects our current practice. It also honors the contributions made by smaller, newer members. The amendment allows for the Board policies to include further requirements and standards for membership and only retains basic requirements; this allows for flexibility in adopting standards without needing to amend the Bylaws.

In favor: Ken Novak (via chat)

The amendment removes the 19th century word “Fellowship” from the Bylaws.

Question/Comment: Atish Sen

The references to Fellowships and Circles must be removed from the rest of the Bylaws as well.

Response: This has already been taken care of, with the exception of one instance in Article I, Section 5 c which is historical in nature.

Voting opened to Society Lead Delegates on the Amendments on Circles and Society Status.

Voting remained open until 11 am EDT to allow eligible voters to know whether the proposed revision had passed.

Amendment **as revised** [PASSED](#) with 19 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Voting opened to individual Delegates on the Amendments on Circles and Society Status.

Voting remained open until 11 am EDT the following day to allow eligible voters to know whether the proposed revision had passed.

Amendment **as revised** [PASSED](#) with 73 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention.

The combined results of these two votes mean the Bylaws Amendments on Circles and Society Status PASSED.

Motion to elect new [Board Directors and Officers.](#)

There were no objections so the motion was approved by consensus.

Introduction by Sue Walton

Five positions are open and six candidates are running. Four candidates are running for Officer positions. Profiles of [Board candidates](#) and [Officer candidates](#) are available on the Delegate Materials website. Candidates did not speak, but were introduced during two discussion sessions prior to the Assembly (videos are available of [session 1](#) and [session 2](#)).

Note on voting procedures for Board elections:

Board elections are conducted by ranked voting; each eligible voter ranks all of the candidates in their order of preference. Their first-ranked candidate receives 5 points, the second-ranked receives 4, etc. (the highest number of points assigned is based on the number of open seats). The total points for each candidate are tallied. The three candidates who receive the most points will fill the 3-year terms of office. The two candidates who receive the fourth and fifth highest number of points will fill the partial 1-year vacancies. The candidate who receives the fewest points is not elected. Only Delegates voting on behalf of their Societies are eligible to vote for Directors and Officers; Assembly participants whose voting privileges are due to their status as Leaders, Past Presidents, and/or current Board members are ineligible to vote.

Voting opened for the election of Board Directors.

[Raw voting data](#) and [ranked voting tallies](#) are available.

The following candidates were elected to 3-year terms:

- Sonja Kueppers, 231 points
- Linda Richardson, 188 points
- Bill Aul, 137 points

The following candidates were elected to 1-year terms:

- Elizabeth Singer, 99 points
- Jon Meador, 94 points

The following candidate was not elected:

- Sharon Stanley, 85 points

Voting opened for the election of [Board Officers.](#)



- Sonja Kueppers was approved as President with 59 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.
- Elizabeth Singer was approved as Vice President with 43 in favor, 0 opposed, and 14 abstentions.
- Tom Catelnuovo was approved as Treasurer with 59 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.
- Casey Gardonio-Foat was approved as Secretary with 57 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions.

Current results of the votes on revisions were reviewed

Revision to the FY2021 Budget: not yet passed or rejected, with a vote count of 45 in favor and 29 opposed as of this review.

Revision to the Assembly 2021 Proposal: **PASSED** with 72 in favor, 1 opposed, and 0 abstentions as of this review.

Revision to Bylaws Amendment on Society Status: **PASSED** with 68 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions as of this review.

Motion to approve [Resolution on Death with Dignity \(submitted by Northern Virginia\)](#)

Bob Bueding moved; Josh Blinder seconded.

Introduced by Iris Woodard (NOVES)

The AEU passed a resolution in 2006 supporting the decriminalization of providing prescriptions to aid qualified patients in ending their lives. Legislation to this effect has been proposed in various states in the intervening years, including in Virginia, and NOVES members have been taking action in support of its passage. This resolution would encourage and support members of other member Societies in taking similar actions if/when such legislation is introduced in their home states.

Friendly revisions were proposed and accepted by the authors (current text of v.4 reflects these revisions).

There were no objections to voting on the final version, so the revisions were accepted by consensus.

Discussion of the Resolution on Death with Dignity.

No speakers volunteered.

Voting opened on the Resolution on Death with Dignity.



Passage requires a 2/3 majority of votes cast.

Resolution **PASSED** with 76 in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Motion to approve the Black Lives Matter to AEU Re-affirmation

Josh Blinder moved; Carolyn Parker seconded

Introduction by Bart Worden

This is a reaffirmation of past resolutions but not a resolution in and of itself. It was introduced in response to current anti-racism-related social unrest, to encourage a renewal and deepening of our commitment to taking anti-racist action. Much discussion took place, resulting in four versions being drafted.

Discussion of the Black Lives Matter to AEU Re-Affirmation.

Note: *changes to the document that are not about factual errors can be addressed through the submission of written amendments including specific language to be added or struck. Such proposals should be emailed to the Secretary, whereupon they will be raised for discussion and possible voting.*

Friendly revisions to the v.4.1 of the text were proposed and accepted by its authors (linked text reflects these revisions).

These revisions struck factually incorrect references to the AEU having had no Black Leaders or Board members in the past.

There were no objections, so these revisions were accepted by consensus.

In favor: Joe Chuman

The most recent annual Assemblies have addressed issues of racial inequity. This reaffirmation is in keeping with actions that multiple member Societies have been taking. When evaluating the references to “white supremacy,” its two meanings should be considered: one meaning is in reference to hate groups, and one in reference is to our (general) society’s assumption that white culture is superior. However, this language may still be inflammatory because most understand it as carrying the former meaning--can we remove it from the reaffirmation?

Opposed: Atish Sen

There is agreement within his Society the language “white supremacist” is not necessary in this reaffirmation. Many members of his Society have lived in communities where racism existed and have worked tirelessly against it. Apart from this issue, the reaffirmation is laudable, but its passage as written would communicate that the AEU supports white supremacy.

In favor: Carolyn Parker

The framing of the statement has been adjusted many times as a result of much discussion. The heart of the statement is that our previous resolutions have addressed systemic racism,



but that further action is urgently needed. This reaffirmation is intended to bring to our attention these shortcomings. The language about white supremacy is shocking and is meant to be so, because it forces us to come to terms with how we have benefited from/and or failed to adequately confront systemic racism.

Opposed: Susan Solomon

Her Society is in favor of the reaffirmation, but finds the use of “white supremacy” unnecessarily harsh. The reaffirmation may be front loaded with too much *mea culpa*, and these negative portions could be taken out of context in ways that do not represent the Ethical Culture Movement.

In favor: Krystal White

This reaffirmation requires us to grapple with our past. White supremacy has two definitions: one is the belief that white people are better than others, which no one in the Ethical Movement supports. The other definition is that white supremacy is a socio-economic and political system that advantages white people over people of color; this is the intended definition used in this document.

There was a motion to make a revision by striking the entire second paragraph (“amendment 1”).

Chris Kaman moved; Fred Breidt (Triangle) seconded

Subsequent discussion included discussion of the text as written and in favor of and opposed to this proposed amendment.

Opposed (original text without amendment 1): Chris Kaman and Fred Breidt

Their Society discussed this document with strong feelings. Do we really hold up and give material support to white supremacy? Is failure to take action equivalent to tacit support? Even if we have not taken enough action, we have not taken *no* action. Moves to strike the second paragraph (rather than amending the language).

In favor (original text without amendment 1): James Croft

Thank you for the vigorous discussion. The St. Louis Society wanted the reaffirmation to do three things: confront the truth that we have benefitted from structural racism; highlight the ways that we have fought to eradicate it; and exhort further action. While the language white supremacy makes us uncomfortable, the statement does not suggest that we are in favor of it, only that we have benefited from it.

The decision was made to continue debate (by consensus).

Opposed (original text without amendment 1): John McCormick

If the reaffirmation were a private document for members and Societies, the language about white supremacy would be ok. But this is a public document, in which making a statement connecting us to white supremacy is not necessary.

In favor (original text without amendment 1): Jone Johnson Lewis

In favor of the reaffirmation and opposed to the amendment. The motions against the reaffirmation have been made by white people; Black people who have seen the reaffirmation are in favor of it as written. The statement as written would be seen as a welcoming statement supporting the membership of people of color in our Movement. Recommendation to read works by Muzzey, founding Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester, that contained explicit statements about the superiority of white culture.

Opposed (original text without amendment 1): Atish Sen

As a person of color, I have a problem with supporting a statement that implies that I am in favor of white supremacy, or that the members of my Society are.

There was a motion to replace the word “supremacy” in the second paragraph to “bigotry,” (“amendment 2”).

Rebecca Fisher moved; Jackie Sims seconded.

Subsequent discussion included discussion of original text and in favor of and opposed to this revision and “amendment 1.”

In favor (original text without either amendment): Josh Blinder

The statement centers on the ways that members have benefited from systemic racism and white privilege. It would lose this meaning if the term supremacy was replaced with bigotry or removed. Not in favor of this amendment to the language.

Additional discussion took place in the chat; a [full transcript](#) is available.

Discussion was concluded because time had elapsed.

Voting was opened on Amendment 1 to remove the second paragraph.

Amendment **[FAILED](#)** with 22 in favor, 48 opposed, and 4 abstentions

Voting was opened on Amendment 2 to change references to “white supremacy” to “white bigotry.”

Amendment **[FAILED](#)** with 19 in favor, 51 opposed, and 4 abstentions.

Voting was opened on the Black Lives Matter to AEU Re-affirmation.

Voting remained open until 11 am EDT the following day to allow eligible voters to know whether the proposed revision had passed.

Re-affirmation **[PASSED](#)** with 55 in favor, 11 opposed, and 3 abstentions.



Concluding thoughts from President Kueppers:

Thank you for your participation and your thoughtful discussion. Everyone is appreciated, even when there is disagreement among different opinions. Voting on most items will be open until 11 pm EDT and final votes will be announced to all participants when they are available. Voting on items for which revisions have been proposed will remain open until 11 am EDT on August 2 to allow eligible voters to know whether the revisions have been approved.

The meeting will remain open to address further questions on procedures and technical issues.

The Assembly was adjourned by the President at 5:30 EDT.

Recording concluded.