



Minutes for the December 11, 2023, FORNL Board Meeting

Opening – Herb Krause

Herb Krause called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. A quorum was present.

Attendees:

Officers present: Herb Krause, President; Ellen Smith, Vice President; David Mullins, Treasurer; and Fred Peretz, Secretary.

Board Members Present: Syd Ball, Al Ekkebus, David Fields, and Carolyn Krause.

Adjunct member in attendance: Jim Rushton.

Announcements – Herb Krause

Herb is working on the 2023 FORNL Annual Report; a draft should be ready for review early in 2024.

There are two windows of opportunity for UT-Battelle grant application: in January and July. Herb is willing to file an application if we can resolve our leadership issue.

Lab Liaison – Katy Brown

No report this month.

Secretary – Fred Peretz

Minutes for the November 13 board meeting were circulated to the board with the agenda. They were approved and will be posted on the FORNL website.

Treasurer – David Mullins

Donations of \$1000 each were sent to the Tennessee Science Bowl hosted by ORAU and to the Southern Appalachian Science and Engineering Fair hosted by the University of Tennessee. The need for volunteers for each was advertised in the November meeting invitation sent to the membership and as part of the lunch meeting announcements.

We have not yet received our deposit for use of the New Hope Center; Y-12 has been contacted again. We did obtain our sales tax waiver letter from the State of Tennessee in electronic form, but the hard copy has not arrived. David contacted John Gunning to see if he had either, which John had not. David wondered if there is an issue with our current mail arrangement, and if we should get a formal US Postal Service mailbox.

A certificate of deposit is maturing soon; David plans to renew it when it matures.

Membership – David Mullins

One new (not renewing) annual member was added via PayPal. As of November, there are 55 lifetime and 48 annual members.



Luncheon Lectures - Ellen Smith, Carolyn Krause

On November 14 James Rome spoke on “How to Keep Your Computer (and You) Safe,” addressing threats and mitigation measures in today’s electronic communications world. There were about 32 people attending in-house, with another 32 on Zoom.

Upcoming meetings:

There will not be a lunch meeting or talk in December.

The first meeting and talk in 2024, held on January 9, will be from Mali Balasubramanian, the current leader of ORNL’s Emerging and Solid-State Batteries Group in the Energy Science and Technology Directorate. He guides his team in exploring potential new materials and systems for electric vehicles and other battery applications.

A suggested talk for February 13 is from Zhili Wu, the leader of ORNL’s Surface Chemistry and Catalysis Group in the Chemical Science Division and a Research & Development Staff member at the Center for Nanophase Materials Sciences. Steve Overbury will approach Zhili Wu to confirm.

For the Earth Day talk on April 9, we have scheduled Bob Bolton, deputy of operations for the Next-Generation Ecosystem Experiments (NGEE) Arctic project.

March remains open.

The speaker committee continues to work toward a goal of having a list of a half-dozen potential speakers to draw on. The current list of potential speakers includes:

- Edmon Begoli, the founding director of ORNL’s Center for AI Security Research.
- Carrie Eckert, on the use of quantum biology, artificial intelligence and bioengineering to improve CRISPR Cas9 genome editing.
- John Galambos or Mark Champion, on the SNS Proton Power Upgrade project and its implications for neutron research at ORNL.
- Steven Hamilton, on the Exascale Small Modular Reactor project at the ORNL Frontier supercomputer.
- Madhavi Martin, on the use of laser-induced breakdown spectroscopy in bioenergy, soil carbon storage and environmental monitoring.
- Tony Mezzacappa, on the use of supercomputers to predict gravitational wave signatures needed to detect distant supernovae.
- Karren More, director of the Center for Nanophase Materials Sciences at ORNL.
- Katherine Page, on the use of neutron diffraction to gain new insights into complex functional materials on both bulk and nano scales.
- Lee Riedinger, on the history of the UT-ORNL partnership as described in his new book.
- Tomonori Saito and Md Arifuzzaman, on an organocatalyst that allows selective deconstruction of various plastics.
- A speaker on the recent shipment of Pu-238 for NASA applications, or on the use of additive printing in developing a lunar wheel prototype.

A standardized letter of invitation was circulated to the board members and concurrence was obtained. Along with the standardized invitation, it was observed that any member could be a contact (preferably someone that knows the speaker) and would do introductions. It was also noted that rigid use of the standardized invitation is not required; a speaker contact may conduct invitations in any reasonable manner.

As a strategy to encourage in-person attendance, Ellen will commit to bringing a sandwich or similar food package for the January lunch lecture (using new sales exemption letter).



Media reports

Newspapers – Carolyn Krause

An article on Phil Snyder's talk to FORNL appeared in the November 29th edition of The Oak Ridger. It appeared on the front page and the headline was changed to "Oak Ridge Could Get Fusion Power Plant."

An article on Jim Rome's talk to FORNL appeared in the December 5th edition of The Oak Ridger. It appeared on the front page and the headline was "Danger Lurks Everywhere Online: Local Expert Explains How to Keep Your Computer, Personal Info Safe."

Facebook – Ellen Smith

Facebook continues to have at least some value. Ellen posted a link to The Oak Ridger article on the Phil Snyder talk.

Hybrid Meeting – Herb Krause

There is no meeting this month.

Webmaster – James Rome

No report.

AMSE and Bus Tours – Al Ekkebus

Tours for 2023 have been completed, and plans for next year have yet to materialize. Access to the Graphite Reactor may continue to be limited by decommissioning operations at the adjacent Oak Ridge Research Reactor.

New Member and Public Outreach – Fred Peretz, Syd Ball, Bob Compton, and Herb Krause

No report.

Community Lectures – Kent Williams and Bob Compton

This topic is not a priority at present. Ellen did establish contact with the new Laboratory Director; this might lead to a community lecture in the spring. A suggestion was made to merge community lecture responsibilities into the luncheon lecture committee.

Manhattan Project – Fred Peretz

PDH Certificates – David Fields

Visitor Badges – Syd Ball

The topic of reinstating visitor badges for ORNL retirees who belong to FORNL was briefly raised. It was noted that ORNL has a process for accepting applications for visitor badges; FORNL membership in itself does not ensure qualification for a visitor badge.

Old Business

The primary discussion at this board meeting is a perceived leadership crisis. Although operational functions (treasurer, secretary, speaker committees) can be addressed, the nominating committee has not been able to secure a



potential candidate for president. All the current officers have been serving for several, in some cases many, years. The same is true for much of the board.

Bruce Moyer found that an extended workload precludes his joining the FORNL board. The nominating committee solicited Alan Lowe, director of the American Museum of Science and Energy and K-25 History Center, was recruited and agreed to be on the 2024 board. Kathy Gant, Ray Garrett, Alan Lowe, Dave Mullins, and Ellen Smith are now the NC recommended candidates for the 2024-2025 board member slate. Each candidate was asked to submit a short bio and photo by December 15 for the January announcement of the February 13 annual meeting and election. A motion from the nominating committee was presented to the board, and the slate of board candidates was approved.

A second motion was presented to consider Alan Lowe to be a “FORNL Honorary Lifetime Member” has been done in the past for Ray Smith and Pat Postma. After seconding, a discussion ensued as to the necessity and appropriateness of an honorary member being on the board. A vote on extending honorary membership was called and failed to pass.

Thus, at present, the nominating committee is unable to recommend a complete officer list for 2024. The committee recommends that Ellen Smith, David Mullins, and Fred Peretz continue in their present roles. The board will have to complete the 2024 officer slate by recruiting from the recommended full board member list.

New Business

The discussion on the leadership crisis continues. Although the hybrid meetings have been effective at drawing in good attendance for speakers, it also may be isolating the membership from the leadership team. It was observed that FORNL is at risk of behaving like a YouTube channel, with production and administrative functions administered by a small group and limited participation by many attendees. A move to encourage in-person attendance was suggested. Ideas mentioned include dropping live Zoom (with videos posted after the meetings) so people interested in asking questions would have to physically attend, and (again) to revive a lunch option to increase socialization among the membership. As noted earlier, Ellen committed to providing a lunch option for our next lecture.

Herb Krause also noted a scope creep of the president’s duties during his terms. Herb presented a set of slides suggesting ways that others might pick up some of the roles, including Zoom production, that he has been performing. Broadening the practice of invitations to speak to all board members was also suggested. It was noted that some of these require more volunteerism from the membership, which has been difficult to obtain over the past year.

Herb asked that everyone think about resolving the problem as the board meeting was about to end. The board members agreed to send resolution ideas by email addressed to the full board email list.

Closing

The next board meeting will be held at 9:30 a.m. on January 8, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Peretz
Secretary, Friends of ORNL