

Minutes for the December 9, 2024, FORNL Board Meeting

Call to Order and Amendments to the Agenda – Ellen Smith

Ellen Smith called the Zoom meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. A quorum was present.

Attendees:

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

Board Members Present: Carolyn Krause and Alan Lowe.

Adjunct members in attendance: Annette Brun, Herb Krause, and James Rome.

Minutes of February Meetings – Fred Peretz

Minutes for the November 11 board meeting were circulated to the board. The minutes were approved and will be posted on the FORNL website.

Treasurer's and Membership Report – David Mullins

Several major expenses were paid out this past month, including \$1,000 each to the Tennessee Science Bowl and the Southern Appalachian Science and Engineering Fair. A payment to Judy Dodd catering for the State of the Laboratory talk was also made. Lunch costs remain nearly even, with a net deficit under \$100.

Several annual membership dues were paid, including both renewals and new memberships (including one new member in Germany). All dues are now being credited to 2025.

We have a certificate of deposit maturing at the ORNL Federal Credit Union next week; it will be renewed for seven months at a 4.75% holiday special rate.

Steve Overbury observed that upon spot checking, he found names on the membership list maintained by Dave Mullins that did not appear on the Mailchimp list. Jim Rome said he could fix this by superimposing the membership list on top of the existing Mailchimp list, and by the end of the board meeting Jim reported that he had completed this action.

ORNL Liaison's Report – Annette Brun and Katy Brown

The State of the Laboratory address was a success, with an estimated attendance of about 70 people. For that attendance, the AMSE auditorium served well. Although several recalled significantly higher attendance numbers in the past, there was no such address for several years and arrangements were completed only a short time prior to the event. There was a discussion on possible strategies to expand the audience in the future; both in terms of Oak Ridge leadership and for the broader public and student communities. Carolyn Krause submitted a nice article for local media, which was picked up by The Oak Ridger. Annette will find out if there was a video of the presentation that could be posted on the FORNL website. The possibility of a regular, possibly annual, address was raised and will be presented to the director's office.

Nominating Committee – Alan Lowe

Alan observed that he had been away for part of the past month and needed to review objectives for the nominating committee. It was stressed that board member nominations and recommended officers should be identified by the beginning of January to be formally presented to the membership one month prior to the annual meeting in February. One final non-board nominating committee member is needed (and was identified after the board

meeting) and discussions on possible nominations were initiated. Reviewing the status, Fred Peretz will drop off the board and Ellen Smith will remain on the board but not as President. David Fields has stated he would be willing to continue but would also welcome a more active replacement. Phil Britt was suggested as a possible board member candidate, and further suggestions were solicited from committee members and the board in general.

Monthly Lectures – Ellen Smith, Carolyn Krause, other board members

Selection of a microphone-speaker combination that allows in-room attendees to hear better but does not interfere with the Zoom camera microphone was discussed. David Mullins will try to borrow one used by another organization as a test. David also pointed out that such a unit may be of modest cost, under \$100. The board voted to approve David purchasing a unit based on his judgement.

The November 12 speaker was Lætitia H. Delmau of the Radioisotope Science and Technology Division and the 2024 winner of the Glenn T. Seaborg Actinide Separations Award. Her talk was titled “Actinide Separations Tailored for Californium-252, Plutonium-238, and Promethium-147 Campaigns.”

There is no talk in December.

The January 14 talk will be by Warren Grice, speaking on quantum communications. A title for the talk will be provided in December.

On February 11, Robert (Bob) Hettich, leader of the Bioanalytical Mass Spectrometry group in the ORNL Biosciences Division, will speak on the microbiome (gut bacteria) and his work in analyzing it using mass spectrometry.

Recent suggestions include building technologies and “green” building design, based on work in the ORNL Buildings and Transportation Science Division and associated spin-off companies; a talk on climate modeling (with a possible connection to recent flooding in the area), and electric grid research including the Grid-C laboratories operated by the Electrification and Energy Infrastructures Division. Don Spong was mentioned as a possible contact for an overall survey of fusion energy research.

The current list of potential speakers is being maintained as a Google online spreadsheet used for recruiting and scheduling prospective speakers. The worksheet has been updated for 2025 and can be viewed and edited using the link https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ETI6DIem5_jf_0rNfZUfHf5PycV11b2vIOpNT6KFjH0/.

Community Lectures – Kent Williams

The State of the Laboratory Community Lecture was addressed in the ORNL Liaison’s report. Other topics that continue to be of interest include commercial endeavors such as the Kairos Power demonstration reactors or the ORANO enrichment facility. Concerns remain over how much information these companies are willing to share.

Requests from Other Entities to Use FORNL Membership and Email Lists (new business)

Prior to the meeting, Alan Lowe asked the board if FORNL would be interested in participating in a seminar on wealth management and charitable donations (planned giving) at AMSE. Although several board members interpreted this request as inquiring whether FORNL would be interested in donating to AMSE, in fact the question was would FORNL wish to participate in the event as a charitable organization seeking donations. Regardless, with short notice the board did not take action to participate. This did raise, however, the question of such participation as well as using the FORNL communication pathways (website, email, etc.) for member communication of select activities outside of FORNL.

Ellen Smith presented another example, in which a benefit advisor for local home healthcare provider with ties to the DOE sick-worker program asked to advertise its services via FORNL. In this case, Ellen did not feel supporting a commercial provider was appropriate.

Discussions among the board suggested that FORNL communication pathways might be appropriate for certain non-profit organizations with closely aligned missions, but not for commercial or unrelated organizations. Concerns were expressed, however, over making the FORNL email list available for such purposes. Instead, it was agreed that a “bulletin board” be created on the website, available for non-profit organizations with compatible missions. Advertising for businesses, even if related to ORNL, is considered not to be appropriate.

Outreach:

Website and Web Content – James Rome

The website bulletin board recommended above was implemented by Jim Rome soon after the meeting.

Brochure, Poster, and Promotional Materials – Fred Peretz and Syd Ball

Copies of the brochure have been provided to ORNL and are now being inserted into retirees’ packets. ORNL requested the file to allow electronic insertion (making a round trip, as the version was initially created by ORNL). Modifications to the brochure for wider use beyond ORNL and retirees have not been completed. Fred Peretz attempted to use the FORNL tax-exempt form at OfficeMax, but found their system impractical for a one-time, short-turnaround application.

Volunteer Opportunities and Needs – Partner Organizations:

AMSE and Public Tours – Alan Lowe

AMSE has begun meeting with DOE on restarting the bus tours in 2025, hopefully earlier than in 2024. This could involve the ORNL stop at the Frontier supercomputer, as was done during 2025.

Construction of the viewing platform at the base of the original K-25 building continues. AMSE is working on an agreement with CROET to operate the old Portal 4 as an entry point to the site, providing general information and possibly including a coffee shop. This could improve the current site experience, which suffers from both poor existing directional signage as well as residual restrictive signage that may no longer be relevant.

Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Fred Peretz

No report.

STEM Education

No report.

Education Support

Additional upgrades to the laboratory room at the Children’s Museum continue to be discussed. This room now contains the Alvin Weinberg corner.

Media reports:

Newspapers – Carolyn Krause

The article on the State of the Lab address by ORNL Director Stephen Streiffer appeared in the December 2 edition of The Oak Ridger on the front page, and earlier on its website.

Articles on talks by Zili Wu and Ivan Selin have been submitted to The Oak Ridger but have not yet been published. An article on a talk Don Spong gave on fusion research and the prospects for commercial fusion power to an ORNL lecture class has also been sent to the newspaper.

The article of Seaborg Award winner Laetitia Delmau's talk on radioisotope separations was published on the Oak Ridger website on Sunday, December 8, and will appear in the print edition of The Oak Ridger this week.

Facebook – Ellen Smith

There was no update on the FORNL Facebook page. Links to recent news articles need to be posted on the page.

Old Business:

There was no additional old business; nominating committee actions were reported earlier.

New Business

There was no additional new business; the use of FORNL resources to advertise activities by related organizations was reported earlier.

Closing

The next board meeting will be held via Zoom at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, January 13, 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Peretz
Secretary, Friends of ORNL