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# AAPL Identifies Critical Issues, Key Goals Needed to Build Momentum



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**Well... that certainly was an unexpectedly tough year.**

No reasonable person would have predicted how the last 12 months have played out in our industry and country. There is no need to rehash it all, but I sure am glad we are moving beyond that mess.

And moving forward is what AAPL is doing! Instead of sheltering in a bunker this past year, your AAPL leadership and staff were inspired to review the organization's core structure, Strategic Plan, Bylaws and Policy Manual. Under Lester Zitkus' direction, each of these was examined in detail and areas for improvement were identified. We also devoted considerable efforts to the annual budget and the budgeting process, resulting in a complete restructuring of the procedures for creating the budget. This was expertly done by AAPL EVP Greta Zeimetz and her outstanding staff. Although we are facing a budget shortfall again this year, the wisdom of past leaders has provided AAPL with financial resources to weather the economic challenges.

In February, a diverse group of 18 AAPL members and staff met with Association Options LLC to discuss our association and its path forward. During this meeting, seven critical issues for AAPL were identified:

- Industry insecurity.
- Declining membership.
- Expansion into renewables.
- Increasing education on renewables.
- Certification and credentialing for various types of energy landwork.
- Overreliance on NAPE revenue.
- Lack of revenue growth.

An in-depth discussion of these critical issues led to the identification of six key goals to consider going forward:

- Excellence: Advance the culture and structure of AAPL to ensure excellence.
- Education: Position AAPL as the go-to resource for information, certification and training.
- Value: Deliver and promote world-class member value to attract and retain membership.

- Diversity and inclusion: Build and foster within the membership and leadership a diverse and inclusive organization that is representative of both cultural diversity and involvement with other energy industries.
- Advocacy: Promote the profession by elevating the voices of land professionals.
- Sustainability: Ensure the financial security and longevity of AAPL.

The result of the two-day effort was presented to the directors for discussion at the March board meeting. These goals will be fine-tuned by the leadership and committee and ultimately used as the basis for a new Strategic Plan for AAPL. The current Strategic Plan was approved on Dec. 15, 2002, and updated numerous times — most recently on June 17, 2015. Much has changed since 2015, so obviously there is a need to update this important document. As soon as this process is complete, a new Strategic Plan will be presented to the board for consideration.

By the time you read this, the board of directors and Executive Committee, with professional help from Association Options LLC, will be well underway with examining and rewriting the Policy Manual. Initially approved on Sept. 1, 1960, and revised numerous times, the Policy Manual no longer accurately reflects the sophistication of the organization. This rewrite project is vitally necessary and will clarify and simplify the operations of the association. Once complete, the new Policy Manual will be presented to the board for consideration.

In preparation for the Policy Manual revision, the Bylaws were reviewed. The current Bylaws were adopted June 16, 1978, and revised nine times since then. As the Policy Manual revision evolves, possible improvements in the language of the Bylaws may surface, in which case, such language will be presented to the membership for consideration.

An additional outflow from the February meeting was a discussion of AAPL's current board and committee structure. The Bylaws provide that every affiliated local association will have a seated director on the board. This creates a board of 42 directors. When the AAPL structure was created over 60 years ago, I doubt the founders ever considered that there would be so many local associations. Optimal association board size is generally considered to be around 20 directors, so discussion needs to occur around generic board structure.

Additionally, there are 32 standing committees with hundreds of committee members and seven industry affiliated representatives. Several of the standing committees probably need to be combined with another committee, or simply eliminated. When needed, these could be replaced by task forces to address a specific need of the organization. Once the need is met, the task force would then terminate.

By any standard, we have a very large organizational structure. Evaluating these issues provides another great opportunity to discuss and examine potential ways to improve our organizational efficiency, while maintaining the critical networking component of AAPL.

Rest assured that what I have outlined here is not a "revolution" but rather an "evolution." Accomplishing these objectives may take several

years. Every step of the processes described will be communicated to the membership through the various AAPL publications and your directors. I suspect there may be many redirections during the journey. Aristotle said that critical thinking was being able to entertain a thought without accepting it. More than anything right now, AAPL needs critical thinking from its leadership and its membership. Open-minded and constructive contributions are always welcome.

One of my favorite comic strips, "Pearls Before Swine," recently proposed an interesting thought: "Failure is not an option! Unless you let it be, in which case life gets sooooo much easier." Rest assured that AAPL is not opting for the easier route this year. We are equipped with an extremely talented and experienced Executive Committee who, along with the board and the exceptional AAPL staff, are fully committed to serving the membership and preserving and improving this most excellent organization.

In the January *NAPE* magazine, Mike Grimm described his stellar career by saying, "I'm addicted to the adventure." Me too! I can't think of a better industry to be in or a better profession to practice. Thank you for the opportunity to continue that adventure as part of AAPL and its leadership. ▲



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