

Expanded AOPA Board Nomination Statement.

The following extract from the original Board Nomination Statement can use some expansion:

I am driven to provide good, open and transparent governance combined with the delivery of quality and relevant membership services through leadership and administration, that promotes, and relies, upon members stepping up to delegated responsibilities and roles for the betterment of both the organisation and the industry at large.

Open and transparent governance requires better communication between the Board, the administration and the membership. It is simply not good enough to expect members to visit the website regularly to get information when there exists a very cost effective and efficient way to advise them when new information is available for them to peruse.

The use of email “Alerts” to advise members of new postings to the website meets all of the above requirements for keeping members informed. Board and committee minutes, together with agendas, can be uploaded on to the site and members advised the very same day for little or no cost thus allowing members the opportunity to participate, in an up-to-the-minute, real time, way.

It is my belief that this is the very least we can do as service delivers to our membership.

I also believe that the President could produce a summary of each Board meeting in what it set out to achieve and what it actually achieved for email distribution to members within 7 days of a Board meeting. For me, leadership is as much about keeping members informed and involved as it is about vision and purpose.

To this end, I support the concept of the President being appointed by the membership through elections for the position.

I am not a big fan of executive positions being filled from within a Board (transparency issues) and am very much for contenders for the leadership position having to sell their message to the membership, in general, to become their elected leader. I know that when I vote, I want to know who the leadership aspirants are, what they want to do and what their over-riding vision for the organization and the industry are – I do not want the Board to make that decision for me.

In the interests of transparency and membership endorsement, I will work to have the bylaws amended to allow for the President to be elected by popular membership vote.

From time to time the issue of Board member burnout is raised (hardly ever discussed but certainly raised) and I have absolutely no doubt that this happens quite regularly. Because

it is so debilitating to both the individual involved and the organization in general, it is something we need to address, as is the concept of succession planning.

It seems to me that the Board assumes far too much responsibility for management that it should more effectively put in the hands of the administration (we have more than enough people on our staff) and committees.

I would like to see a number of Standing Committees chaired by a non-voting Board member and comprising ordinary members with brought-in specific skill sets, set business targets for their Committee's and report to the Board against those targets by way of recommendations (sometimes called a White Paper). The Board would then either accept the recommendations or not (by sending the papers back for re-consideration) and not get involved in line-by-line discussion and ratification.

In short, I will campaign to give the committees direct representation to the Board through their Chairperson who would represent them 100% as their Chair and do away with liaison positions that can lead to conflict of interest and undue compromise. The very nature of the word liaise suggest dual obligations whereas Chairpersons are clearly representing their committee first and foremost.

To further reduce the workload I would promote the concept of a bigger Board by increasing the number by two positions.

The ongoing governance of AOBA through the rules associated with voting numbers needs some work and rectification.

It is completely unacceptable to me, for a minority of members to render the majority useless through gerrymandering the percentage of votes needed to bring about change. In my view, there should never be a situation where a person choosing not to vote has more power than someone who does, yet this is what happens with voting results in AOBA.

It is also clear that those self same rules will prevent the voting requirements from ever changing and that, to me, is completely unacceptable. The move by a Board of years past was, in my view, prescient in its ideals but poorly planned in its execution. The intervenors won the battle but not the war, so the organization is as bound by rules that make change next to nigh impossible and so disenfranchise those that want to manage their organization, by setting the bar so high that it will never be reached.

I would work toward getting judicial relief to allow simple majorities to decide non-financial motions and 66% to decide financial matters by making the number of votes cast the benchmark, not those that are not.

The future development of a viable, sustainable and profitable alpaca industry is of foremost concern to me.

I see an AOBA being strained to meet increasing demands as an industry body while its primary charter is to provide marketing opportunities to its members. There is no doubt that when anyone talks about AOBA they are talking first, second and third about marketing of alpaca animals – and this is as it should be because that is what AOBA's charter was, and is.

AOBA has, and continues to do this incredibly well and its members have been more than well served over the years by this commitment, expertise and delivery of service.

However, there is now a pressing need for something other than marketing and I am not so sure that AOBA is ready, willing and able to step up to an expanded role that would place pressure on the main role it has so expertly and successfully done.

I would promote a thorough study and report of the future of AOBA in an agriculturally focused alpaca industry, whether it meets the structural requirements for such an expanded role, whether, in fact, it has the will and resources to do it, and to determine income streams that it will need to not only maintain its existing role but to finance future possible commitments as the industry grows and its stakeholders demand.

Allied to this is a need for a professionally researched and produced industry development plan, a plan, I suspect, that is long overdue and a plan that been worked on and, through absolutely no fault of the various committee's, has not been delivered.

This is so important, in my view, that it must be funded by whatever means so we can not only determine where our future lies, but how we get there and what we need to do to make it happen.

To not control our destiny is to hand it to someone else with all the risk and downside that goes with not owning our future.

I believe that the time is NOW for a step into the future, a future not limited to AOBA members but also the other alpaca industry stakeholders and custodians of these wonderful animals.

I seek your vote to move both AOBA and the industry forward.

Thank you.

Ian Watt
Morro Bay
California