



110th ANNUAL MEMBER BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 29, 2026 | 11:45 am – 12:15 pm CDT

2026 PAA Annual Meeting | New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, LA

A. Welcome & Call to Order (Benita Garay Litt, President)

Meeting was called to order at 11:45 am CDT.

2025-2026 Board of Directors present: Benita Garay Litt (President), Jacob Blauer (VP), Jonathan Whitworth (Past President), Jeff Miller (Treasurer), Directors: Graham Ellis, Kasia Duellman, Han Tan, Ken Frost, Jim Busse; Section Chairs: Caroline Gray (Breeding & Genetics), Gustavo Teixeira (Physiology), Harlene Hatterman-Valenti (Plant Protection) Andy Robinson (Extension, Production & Management), Amber Walker (Utilization & Marketing). **Board apologies:** Dennis Halterman (Secretary), Carrie Wohleb (Director), Tami Brown (Certification Section Chair)

Incoming Board Members: Munevver Dogramaci (Vice President), Jeff Endelman (Director)

PAA Staff (non-voting): Amy Hope, Brianna Plank, Tressa Patrias, Linda Schmitt

B. Members in Memoriam

A moment of silence was taken to honor passing of members Dennis L. Corsini and George Tai.

C. 2025 Member Business Meeting Minutes

The approved minutes of the 2025 Annual Business Meeting were approved by the Board of Directors on October 17, 2025, and are presented to the members for ratification.

Upon motion, duly made and seconded, the members ratified the 2025 Annual Member Business Meeting minutes as presented.

D. Officer Reports

1. President, Benita Garay Litt

President Benita Garay Litt reported that PAA experienced a year of transition. Membership totaled 411 members, compared with 457 in 2024. The Association continues to explore ways to engage more potato-specific researchers.

She reported that the Association continues to monitor the evolving use of artificial intelligence in relation to the *American Journal of Potato Research*. The journal received 30 open access submissions, and PAA received a 2026 royalty payment from Springer of just under \$29,996.06.

President Garay Litt expressed appreciation for the support provided by Scientific Societies (SciSoc), noting that staff have helped streamline operations, collect and archive historical information, and identify areas for improvement. The Board is reviewing PAA's core values and goals to focus the Association's objectives.

SciSoc will assist the future Board in reviewing the recent strategic analysis planning process, with objectives to:

- Review current strategic goals and assess progress, relevance, and impact.
- Prioritizing goals based on organizational capacity, member needs, and strategic importance.
- Establish priorities for 2027–2029, including strategic goals to guide measurable objectives, implementation plans, and operating budgets.

She noted that attendance at the 2025 meeting in Wisconsin was slightly higher than average. The 2025 meeting included 90 talks and 38 posters, compared with 46 concurrent session oral presentations and 30 posters scheduled for the 2026 meeting.

President Garay Litt reported that, due to lower attendance and unmet contracted hotel room blocks, the 2026 Annual Meeting in New Orleans may operate at a deficit and may require use of reserves. Contributing factors include travel restrictions and economic uncertainty affecting some participants.

She emphasized that collaboration among participants and support for graduate students remain hallmarks of PAA. The 2026 meeting included 18 oral presentations and five posters by graduate students, compared with 34 oral presentations and three posters the prior year. She noted the value of the meeting for student professional development and career connections and recognized the Frank L. Haynes Endowment for supporting graduate student presentation awards. Munevver Dogramaci was thanked for overseeing these awards.

A mentoring event was added to help students connect with experienced members and create additional learning opportunities. President Garay Litt thanked the Mentoring Committee for its work in developing the event.

She noted that proceeds from the traditional annual auction support the Frank L. Haynes Endowment and that member participation remains strong. The 2026 auction raised more than \$4,500.

President Garay Litt reported that historical practice was to plan meeting sites three years in advance; however, travel costs, changing industry conditions, and venue pricing challenges have made that model more difficult for PAA and other scientific organizations. The Board is evaluating locations for the 2027 meeting that will provide the greatest value and member engagement.

President Garay Litt concluded by thanking Jonathan Whitworth, Dennis Halterman, and Jeff Miller for their service and support and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as President.

2. Vice President, Jacob Blauer

- Looking at partnering opportunities with EAPR

- Worked alongside Benita and the Board on updating the PAA Strategic Plan
- Added new activities for our students with the launch of the mentorship program at the annual meeting.
- Adjusting to the current state of affairs related to cuts in research funding and travel restrictions and how it relates to our membership engagement and annual meeting attendance.
- Continuing to look at ways to enhance membership value.

3. Immediate Past President, Jonathan Whitworth

2026 Leadership Development and Awards

- Board Election: PAA had great depth in leadership with Vice President and Director candidates, representing both industry and academia.
 - 2026 elected Vice President: Munevver Dogramaci
 - 2026 elected Directors: Jim Busse (re-elected for 2nd term) and Jeff Endelman
- Honorary Life Members: Honorees have contributed decades of service and coverage from potato regions of Colorado, Washington, North Dakota, and Idaho. The following members were inducted as Honorary Life Members at the 2026 PAA Annual Meeting:
 - Robert “Bob” Dwelle (posthumous 1946-2016)
 - Charles Higgins
 - Mark Pavek
 - Asunta “Susie” Thompson

4. Secretary, Dennis Halterman

- Established the PAA Promotions and Communications Committee
 - Dennis Halterman, PAA Secretary
 - Rabecka Hendricks, University of Idaho
 - Usman Aslam, Colorado State
 - Michelle Odoi, Oregon State
 - Emma Nygren, PAA staff
- Re-launched quarterly newsletter as *PAA Connect*
 - First issue published December 2025
 - Next issue: September 2026
- Engaged with EAPR
 - Discussed opportunities for future joint conferences and webinars
- Enhanced Board Documentation and Record Management
 - Worked with PAA Staff to improve recordkeeping and maintain Board activity records

5. Treasurer, Jeff Miller

As of June 30, 2026, the Association has total assets of \$572,620. Liquidity is solid, with \$432,542 in cash and CDs, representing approximately 76% of total assets. Prepaid expenses increased to \$114,218, primarily reflecting advance costs associated with upcoming meetings.

Total liabilities were \$316,559, including \$244,708 of deferred revenue—largely meeting-related receipts that will be recognized as activities occur. The growth in deferred revenue explains much of the increase in both cash and total assets.

Net assets totaled \$256,061, down \$11,079 from May but up \$11,213 from year-end. Overall, the balance sheet indicates adequate liquidity and financial stability, while the elevated deferred revenue and prepaid meeting expenses reflect the timing of the upcoming annual meeting rather than a structural change in financial health.

SHARED financial snapshot for June:

- Year-to-date total revenue: \$84,141
 - Individual Memberships: \$36,420
 - Sustaining Memberships: \$9,500
 - Webinar income: \$196
 - Bank interest: \$2,029
 - Springer Royalty: \$35,996
- Year-to-date total expenses: \$72,928
 - Personnel expense: \$55,457
 - Member services: \$796
 - Publication expense: \$1,274
 - Administrative expenses: \$4,351
 - Other expenses: \$11,050
- Total Operating Net Profit After Investments: \$11,213

NOTED the 2026 annual meeting will operate at a loss. The financial summary of the 2026 PAA Meeting will be shared once finalized.

NOTED the 2026 PAA Auction took in \$5,555.

E. Annual Meeting Committee (Jeff Miller, Chair)

- The Annual Meeting Committee (AMC) met this week
- Noted previous Ontario, Canada location was no longer feasible due to travel barriers.
- The PAA 2027 Annual Meeting will be held July 25-28 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The venue will be shared with the members once the contract has been signed.

The floor was opened for member discussion regarding annual meeting costs. It was noted that event planning has changed significantly since COVID, including increased costs for food and beverage, audiovisual services, and hotel and venue expenses. The prior model of booking

meeting sites three to five years in advance is no longer considered best practice. Federal grant funding cuts and travel restrictions have also affected meeting attendance. The 2026 venue contract was based on the previous meeting model, which anticipated higher attendance. For the 2027 Annual Meeting, the room block requirement has been reduced to 80 room nights on peak nights, compared with 125 peak room nights in 2026. The 2027 meeting budget will also be based on lower registration projections to reduce financial risk.

To allow additional time for in-depth discussion on future annual meeting planning, member engagement, and other priorities for the year ahead, a virtual member meeting will be scheduled in September.

NOTED that a comprehensive membership survey will be conducted in the coming year.

F. Board Recognition and Officer Installation

Thanked outgoing board members, Jonathan Whitworth (Immediate Past President), and Carrie Wohleb (Director) for their commitment and service to the Association.

Presidential gavel was passed from Benita Garay Litt to Jacob Blauer for the 2026-2027 term.

G. President's Remarks (Jacob Blauer, President)

Welcomed newly elected Vice President Munevver Dogramaci and Directors: Jeff Endelman and Jim Busse to the 2026-2027 Board of Directors.

NOTED a virtual member business meeting will be scheduled in early September. A calendar invite with Zoom details will be sent to the membership.

NOTED Additional committee and section reports will be included in the **PAA Year in Review** article that will be made available in the December issue of the *PAA Connect Newsletter*.

Thanked members for attending and invited them to the Award Ceremony & Luncheon that followed the member business meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:19 pm CDT. The Award Ceremony followed.

2026 PAA Award Ceremony

Members were recognized and celebrated during the 2026 PAA Award Ceremony.

1. American Journal of Potato Research Recognition and Best Paper Awards

- Outgoing Senior Editor: William Rodney Cooper (Entomology Senior Editor, 2014-2026)
- The following authors were recognized and awarded Outstanding Paper of the Year Awards from the 2025 *AJPR Journal*:

- Extension, Production & Management: *“Impact of Simulated Wildfire Smoke on Potato Growth, Storage and Profitability”* Volume 102: 462-472 (2025)
 - Mike Thornton; Co-authors: Owen McDougal, Addie Waxman, Joe Guenther, Ajay Atkinson
- Plant Protection: *“Response of Non-Target Arthropods to the dsRNA Bioinsecticide Calantha™ and Conventional Insecticides Targeting Colorado Potato Beetle, Leptinotarsa Decemlineata (Say)”* Volume 102: 129-151 (2025)
 - Erik Wenninger; Co-authors: Samuel DeGrey, Jonas Insinga, Eric Knopf, Andrei Alyokhin, Ethann Barnes, Ben Bradford, Russell Groves, Brian Manley, Julia Piaskowski
- Breeding & Genetics: *“Cytoplasmic Background of Diploid and Tetraploid Breeding Line Families at the USDA-ARS Potato Variety Development for the Eastern U.S.”* Volume 102: 473-481 (2025)
 - Noah Williams; Co-authors: Zoe Colwell, Diana Spencer, Greg Kornelis, Samantha Mackertich, Brygid Sawitsky, Daniel Balderrama, Adam Carnes, Ek Han Tan, Paul Collins
- Economics: *“Stacking and Intersecting Nitrogen 4Rs on Potato: Economic Analysis”* Volume 102: 440-448 (2025)
 - Samuel Stapley; Co-authors: Christopher McIntosh, Matt Yost, Neil Hansen, Ryan Christensen, Bryan Hopkins
- Physiology: *“Utilization of Essential Oils to Control Sprout Growth of Potato Tubers”* Volume 102: 537-555 (2025)
 - Munevver Dogramaci; Co-authors: Dipayan Sarkar, Evandro Fortini, Rabecka Hendricks, Nora Olsen

2. Frank L. Haynes Graduate Research Competition Awards

- Recognized and thanked the Review Committee consisting of Munevver Dogramaci (Chair), David Douches, Mohamad Chikh-Ali, Raul Guerra, Jianjun Hao, Nora Olsen, and Paul Collins.
- 2026 Best Poster Awardee: Bonventure Mumia, NDSU, for “Host Status and Root Penetration of the Root-Lesion Nematode *Pratylenchus penetrans* in Selected Cover Crops and Potato Cultivars”
- 2026 Best Presentation Awardees:
 - 5th place: Koy Chandler (Washington State University) for “Improving Tuber Calcium Through Fertility Management to Address Internal Brown Spot in Potato”
 - 4th place: Jake Meeuwsen (Washington State University) for “Influence of Plant Spacing and Density on Modeled Evapotranspiration Efficacy and Irrigation-Constricted Production of Two Potato Varieties”

- 3rd place: Joseph Ulasi (Michigan State University) for “Introgression and Pyramiding of Novel Resistance Genes for Diploid Potato Breeding”
- 2nd place: Daphne Crum (Washington State University) for “Wound Healing Interval on Potato Field Performance with Associated Comparative Analysis of Biochemical Response”
- 1st place: Pia Spsychalla (Cornell University) for “Identification of Candidate Genes for *Ry-adg* using RenSeq Tools”

3. Honorary Life Members:

The following members were inducted as Honorary Life Members:

- Charlie Higgins
- Mark Pavcek
- Asunta “Susie” Thompson
- Robert Dwelle (posthumous)

4. Leadership Recognition

- **Thanked the 2026 Annual Meeting Committee Members:** Jeff Miller (Chair), Bee Khim Chim, Nathan Gelles, Darin Gibson, Fahrettin Goktepe, Matt Maughan, and George Newberry, and staff members Tressa Patrias and Tori Clark.
- **Welcomed the 2026-2027 PAA Board of Director members:** Jacob Blauer (President), Munevver Dogramaci (Vice President), Benita Garay Litt (Immediate Past President), Dennis Halterman (Secretary), Jeff Miller (Treasurer), Directors: Jim Busse, Kasia Duellman, Graham Ellis, Jeff Endelman, Ken Frost, E. Han Tan.
 - **2026-2027 Section Chairs:**
 - Breeding & Genetics Section: Mario Andrade
 - Certification Section: Benita Garay Litt
 - Extension, Production, & Management Section: Ibrahim Kutay Ozturk
 - Physiology Section: Aymeric Goyer
 - Plant Protection Section: Mohamad Chikh-Ali
 - Utilization & Marketing Section: Colby Robertson