

TAAA Board of Directors Open Meeting Minutes: October 8, 2025

The teleconference Zoom Board open meeting was called to order at 6:30PM, E. Foley, President presiding. Board members present: M. McDowell, Treasurer; D. Rossetter, Vice President and B. Reynolds, Secretary; as well as Members-at-Large, D. Eicher, S. Ferris and J. Kalas and immediate Past President, Mae Smith. Members attending included: Ross Carnes and Nelsey Toner.

Approval of Minutes:

- A motion was made by Mae Smith to approve the September 22, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mike McDowell and the motion passed by a vote of 8-0.
- It was noted that the minutes for the August 13, 2025 BOD meeting have not yet been approved. As a result, Bob Reynolds will again circulate them and they will be considered for approval in the November BOD meeting.

TAAA Board Action Item List as of 10/8/2025

Date			Date	
Entered	Item	Assigned to	Completed	Comments
Long ago	Develop award plan/structure for TAAA	Pete		Pete to report back with next couple of weeks
3/13/24	Continued follow up on Strategic Plan/Org Chart	Foley		BOD to work attendee list
9/11/24	Insurance valuations for DKO	Reynolds/Kalas		Pending bid for DKO construction
10/9/24	Recommendation to migrate to TidyHQ	Foley/Rossetter		David working issue
2/12/25	Need mount for Stellarview refractor by end 2025	Ferris		Losmandy Levy mount?
5/8/25	Issue policy on candidate conflicts during elections	Rossetter	10/8/25	Policy draft under review
5/8/25	CAC/TIMPA reserve study	Knoll/McDowell		By end of 2025
5/15/25	Establish CAC & TIMPA capital improvement accounts	McDowell		Incl remaining MOP/RV expansion funds in CAC act
7/7/25	MOP Refund	McDowell/Knoll/Foley		Needs decision on refunds associated w/donated labor
7/7/25	Identify funds to Member Pads	McDowell		

Status of Open Action Items

- Ed reviewed the highlights of the February, 2024 strategy review session. He noted the session incorporated member survey results and resulted in fairly detailed work plans/priorities. Ed is in contact with the previous facilitator and will report back on her availability, possible site selection, timing for another strategy session and proposed attendees.
- David still evaluating volunteer tracking systems and relationship of these needs to available replacements for Member Planet. A recommendation on a way forward may be forthcoming before year end.
- David has issued a draft policy on candidate policy and reviewed it, in detail, with the BOD. The draft policy was as follows:
- David has issued a draft policy on candidate policy and reviewed it, in detail, with the BOD. The draft policy was as follows:

Draft Special Policy Pertaining to the Management and Supervision of Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association (TAAA) Elections

ARTICLE V - Committees and Groups within the Association, of the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association's (TAAA) Constitution and Bylaws (CBL) provide a description and delineate the duties and responsibilities of the Nomination and Volunteer Resource committee (NVRC). One of the principal duties of the NVRC, as stated in Section 2, of Article V, is to "Conduct the voting process for all TAAA elections" to and including election of NVRC members. Given that NVRC members are charged with conducting the aforementioned voting processes, it behooves the committee, in the interests of fairness, to assign direct responsibility and management of a particular election to those **committee** members who are not seeking election to the NVRC or any other elected position within TAAA.

To that end, it will be a formal policy of the NVRC and TAAA, as a whole, that the principal manager/supervisor of any particular election is a member of the club who is not standing for election to any position for that particular vote.

- A motion was then made by Mike McDowell to adopt the policy as presented above and the motion was seconded by David Rossetter. The motion then passed with a vote of 8-0. Ed will post the new policy on the TAAA webpage.

Treasurers Report

- Due to travel schedules and preparation of the 990, there is no Treasurer report for this meeting. However, the August and September reports will be provided in November BOD meeting and no exceptional entries are expected.
- Mike walked the BOD through all the pages of the draft 2024 IRS 990 or annual tax return for TAAA. It covers the period for year ending 6/30/25.
- Only minor changes were identified including: increasing the number of reported volunteers to 110 on line 6 in Part 1 and check "no" on line 3 in Part 3.
- A motion was then made by Bob Reynolds to approve the draft 990 as amended and the motion was seconded by Mae Smith. The motion was then approved by a vote of 8-0.

CAC Report

- John Kalas reported that Randy Maddox will not be able to start the DKO and associated projects until November, or more likely, December. However, fund raising is continuing for the DKO as well as pricing planning for the new member pads.
- Ed Foley reported that all 6 of the members on the wait list for member pads have pushed back on proposed \$4,500 price.
- Mike McDowell then presented an analysis of repricing both new and old pads over time. In summary, the analysis shows that repricing both old and new pads at \$3,000 results in a net benefit to TAAA of approximately \$11,000 assuming all pads turn over once after the initial lease. Breakeven would occur after 4-5 pads turnover with an assumption that TAAA subsidizes \$3,200 of the initial cost of the 4 new pads. There is reason to believe

that offering the new pads at \$3,000 each will be well received by potential lessees. Therefore, a motion was made by David Rosseter to offer the new member pads at \$3,000 each and seconded by Stephen Ferris. The motion passed with a vote of 5-0 with Mike McDowell and Bob Reynolds abstaining as they are on the waitlist for new member pads.

- Ed shared pictures of the progress on the installation of the 32” telescope. Overall the installation, reassembly and commissioning of the telescope has gone well under the direction of Tom Melsheimer, a specialist contractor. However, there are some issues that are being worked. One such issue was the need for an updated operating system to allow for a parking position necessary to clear the moving roof. In an act of incredible generosity, DFM telescopes has donated a new operating system worth \$20,000. In addition, the Sky Software license was transferred to TAAA along with the donation of a new laptop to run the software.
- Bob Rose has been appointed as Operating Manager for the 32” and will approve any and all use of the scope until the scope is certified as fully commissioned.
- In recognition of Tom Melsheimer’s contribution to this project, Mike made a motion that Tom be awarded a lifetime TAAA membership with a second by Bob Reynolds. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.
- It was also suggested that a recognition plaque be presented to Tom at the opening ceremony.

TIMPA

- Stephen Ferris made the following presentation:

TIMPA 16”

- Unfortunately, the TIMPA 16” mount control system has failed
- Spent several hours troubleshooting, could not find a solution
- Motherboard has failed



How do we know it's dead?

- Talked to Starizona "Meade Guy"
- "Meade Guy" said motherboard is almost certainly fried, no point in bringing it up to Starizona.
- Taking it up there puts OTA, especially the corrector plate, at risk.
- Spent multiple hours trying to troubleshoot on Thursday and Sunday nights
- No luck in getting anything useful out of the system.
- Can check with Gary Steffens later this month IF we want to risk disassembling the 16"

Bottom Line

- As much as I love and enjoy the 16"



The Most Important Asset is the Pad

- We need a functioning club scope on it



Where to go from here

- Very Short Term
 - Leave everything in place where it is
 - Will evaluate the 14" with Gary S and Joe J later this month
- Short Term
 - Assemble work party
 - Disassemble the 16, place into original packaging for now, place in shed. It's too heavy to safely put into the barn
 - All plans for restoration will require the 16" to be disassembled

Since 16" Cannot be Repaired

- Return OTA to TIMPA shed for storage or refit
- Build or buy case or crate for it (\$)
- 14" will eventually fail too, eventual conversion of Gila Monster to Losmandy mount gives us way forward with 14" telescope
- Begin capital* campaign for 16" remounting

*Cash or In-Kind

Long Term: Four Options

1. Gut 16" mount, replace with alternative drive system
2. Mothball the 16", put something else on the mount for the time being (1-2 years)
3. Remount the 16" itself as soon as possible



Status of TIMPA 16” Funds

- All 7 donors contacted, 6 replied
- Of the six, all wanted funds to remain with TAAA **for use at TIMPA.**
- \$5333.06 in the fund when last checked
- Last donor would be owed \$427

Option 1

- Company offers Replacement Control system for ~\$2000
- Would only be controllable via laptop
- Possible additions add capability for Phone or Pad control via Sky Safari
- Cheapest Option
- Downside: Would require extensive DIY work on part of the team. Also, replacement system **WOULD NOT** be a Meade system and **WOULD NOT** have the same functionality. **Biggest Risk**

Option 2

- Mothball 16" for 1-2 years
- Losmandy G11 was donated for the 14" Gila Monster, but can provide a medium term "bridge" for the 16" pad while we look at other options.
- Defork 11" SCT in shed, attach Losmandy dovetail, mount on G11 on 16" pier
- Purchase a used Hyperstar for the C11
- Cost: Unknown, but less than \$2500
- Downside: Long term disassembly of 16" Telescope, 1-2 years



Option 3: Sky-Watcher EQ-8R

- Capacity: 110LBS
- Weight of 16" OTA: 80-90LBS
- CURRENT Cost: \$4999 plus taxes
- Mount head and Counterweights only.



Sky-Watcher EQ8-R Mount Head Only with Counterweights

by Sky-Watcher

~~\$5,995.00~~ \$4,999.00

SKU 530612

Out of Stock: This product will not ship immediately. [Contact us](#) for estimated delivery.

starizona.com



EQ8-R & Rn features:

High Payload capacity

The EQ8-R series features a massive 110 pound payload capacity.

Built-in cable management

Cable management is an important part of the imaging experience. To aid in this the EQ8-R series features three collections of cable hubs built in below the mounting saddle. The mounts feature four USB 3.0 ports, three 2.1mm power ports and three serial cable ports. Plug all your imaging accessories into these ports and eliminate cable drag and snags from the equation. You can then plug one USB 3.0 cable and one power cable into the back of the RA housing to have a simple and clean set up free of hanging cables.

Homing Sensors

The EQ8-R and Rn series feature homing sensors on both the RA and Dec. axis. Homing sensors aid in alignment accuracy of the first star as the mount starts at an exact preset position every time. For remote imaging these sensors allow the mount to maintain alignment in case of power outages. Simply home the mount and the mount can

starizona.com

Option 3

- Would require that we raise **AT LEAST \$3500** of **New Money** for **additional** outfitting costs beyond what we already have.
- Need to defork the current tube, buy and outfit dovetails and supports: \$1500
- May need to refit or replace the pier for heavier mount: \$1000
- Refit the existing shed to accommodate the new mount: \$500
- Fudge Factor: \$500*
- Total Cost: **\$8,800***, including current funds
- Downside: **\$\$\$\$\$**

*This is probably too low, **\$10,000** would be a better estimate

Cost Estimates

- Option 1: \$2000
- Option 2: \$2500
- Option 3: **\$9000-\$10,000**

Director's Summary

- Long term intention (1-2 years) of all three plans is to get the 16” back on its pad with one mount or another
 - Plan 1 is the cheapest option, comes with significant risk of damage to the good parts of the telescope (especially the OTA), may fail, and even if successful would leave us with a less functional scope that will need a new mount in a few years.
 - Plan 2 would give us time to see if better remounting options shake out over the next year or two (cash or donations)
 - Plan 3 would get a fully functional and improved 16” back into service as soon as possible but costs almost as much as the original project.
- A discussion followed about contacting other vendors to search for another Meade motherboard. However, it was decided that the focus should be on obtaining a more “commercial” mount with some discussion on standardizing on something like Astro-Physics.
- The BOD then empowered Stephen to report back to the BOD with a recommendation for a new mount and the associated cost. It was also noted that fund raising for TIMPA may need to follow the completion of the DKO fund raising effort.

Holiday Party

- Following a generous offer by the Foley's, it was suggested that December 13 would be a good date. A motion was then made by Mike McDowell and seconded by David Rossetter to hold the party at the Foley's on Dec 13th. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

Strategy Retreat Planning

- Ed encouraged all BOD members to read his recent transmittals of the work products from the previous strategy session.

A motion was put forward by M. MacDowell to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Stephen Ferris. The motion was approved 8-0 and the Board meeting adjourned at 9pm.