MINUTES, MSEC ONLINE MEETING, JANUARY 9, 2021

KICKOFF MEETING FOR 2021

President Bill Wong convened the meeting at 7:05 PM with 10 members in attendance: Jonathan Allen, Bob Bushar, Frank Foulkes, Amanda Gillum, William Gillum, Lee Goldberg, Srihari Gopal, Andrew Marinucci, Armin Rump, and Bill Wong.

Announcements:

Bill Wong began with the following Announcements:

1. The 2021 Science and Engineering Fair will be virtual via Zoom, and that the ISEF will also be virtual this year.

2. Student registration for the Fair is promising. We have already received 40 Senior registrations, and although the Elementary and Junior registration deadlines are farther in the future, many students have expressed interest.

Fundraising:

Since the ISEF will be virtual this year, we will not need funds for travel, lodging, etc.

Sri announced that although we have not conducted the usual fundraising campaign this year, Cronos has donated $2000, and J&J has given $1000.

(Secretary: We also received $1000 from Church & Dwight.)

Amanda Gillum asked how we would assign sponsorship without the usual donations.

Amanda and Sri’s suggestion that we use the names of our regular donors from the recent past, received consensus.

Judging:

The 2020 Fair switched to virtual on short notice so there was little time to prepare judges for this change. This year we will start earlier with online training well in advance of the Fair. Also, during the actual judging, we will exploit the Zoom feature of “Breakout Rooms” so each group of judges can meet separately to discuss the projects in its category. The meeting agreed to schedule judges’ preparation for Saturday, Feb. 13, continuing on the 14th if necessary. This will also be an opportunity for us to test the Zoom functions that enable the host (Bill Wong) to assign judges to appropriate breakoff rooms and move them around as necessary.

Amanda Gillum will handle the training of Senior Division judges, and Bob Bushar the Elementary and Middle Divisions, although he has not yet recruited them.

Amanda pointed out that the trainers would need to know the categories of projects, and if possible, the individual projects for each judging group. This will influence the number of judges needed. She recalled that for the 2020 Fair we assigned 20 minutes to interview each Senior but that judges would be “on duty” only during the times the projects to which they were assigned were being evaluated.

Bill Wong noted that the Fair Management page of the Website would provide that information. He also pointed out that we would record the interviews in order to reexamine them both to clarify any uncertainties, and especially for the caucus of all the judges to decide on Grand Prizes.

Amanda noted that the interview schedules will be necessary when assigning both student and judges.

Jonathan asked about the students having to wait a week between judging and the announcement of winners. Bill replied that this would not be a serious problem.

There was also a consensus that the judging should occur on Saturday in mid-March, with the Award Ceremony the following Saturday. That would give the judges and staff time to evaluate the projects properly and prepare for the awards.

There should also be an online “open house” the day after the awards. That way the Senior participants and the First Place winners in the Elementary and Junior divisions could exhibit their projects to the general public in online “rooms.”

During the Fair, judges could examine each student’s application, display board, and (optional) research paper. Students may also post presentations, short videos, and answers to posted questions on appropriate pages of the Fair Website, but in general these would not be part of the judges’ evaluations.

Bill Wong recommended that all members review the applications, and the “Quad Chart” for each project. Students are also urged to provide a short PowerPoint presentation for review by the judges, rather than just a picture of the board.

Bill then gave the meeting attendees an online tour of the Fair Website and showed how to navigate it. The members commented on the improvements and professional quality of the revised Website.

There was also a discussion of the certification process for projects requiring it, and the plan that this should take place well in advance of the Fair. That way, if a project fails certification, the student will have an opportunity to fix the problem, even if it requires more than one exchange. This should reduce disqualifications.

All the paperwork and certifications should be completed at least one week before judging.

Jonathan asked how the judges would decide on those special awards whose eligibility spanned more than one category or division. Bill Wong offered to make the final decisions based on the judges’ recommendations, as he did for the 2020 Fair. The special awards will generally be limited to those projects which have earned at least an Honorable Mention.

The next question was the recruitment of judges. Bill Gillum volunteered to help recruit Senior judges and Andrew Marinucci offered the same with regard to judges for the biological sciences, and Sri will search the J&J Co. We should especially seek younger judges. It was noted that since judging will take place online, there is no need for judges to be local.

There followed some discussion on where we might recruit judges, noting that local ones would be able to serve in future in-person fairs.

Returning to project categories, we noted that there are officially ten, but that based on the numbers of entrants in each, it may be appropriate to lump some categories, but there should be only one (final) category per judge group.

Students in all divisions will be allowed to post additional materials, including a short video, a PowerPoint presentation, and written answers to questions, but judges will be instructed to judge on required content , not the extra materials.

SUMMARY

Timeline:

The meeting finally agreed on the following timeline:

Feb. 6 and 13—Train judges

Feb. 13 Afternoon—Training for all judges “Dry run”

Mar. 6—Deadline for completing projects in final form

Mar 7-13—Judges study projects and associated paperwork

Mar 13, 10 AM - 3 Pm-- Judging begins

Mar. 14---Judging continues if more time needed

Week of Mar 14-20 (To be determined)—Judges’ caucuses

Mar. 20, 1PM—Awards Ceremony

Mar. 20, 3PM—Online Open House

Mar 21—Online Open House

Jonathan pointed out that all judges should note candidates for special awards and forward their observations to the judges’ caucuses.

Armin proposed that students be invited to participate in the Open House.

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Allen, Secretary