President’s Message: MSE Happenings

Cory Hasaik, PE, President

I hope this newsletter finds you well. You will be happy to note that this is last installment of two years of exceedingly boring President’s messages. Cammy is the incoming President and will be great at it.

Georgia and I will be writing about changes that are coming from NSPE. We have been watching the changes and discussions passing by from NSPE with little input from the state level. NSPE is trying to change their delivery methodology of services to the individual members and state societies. These modifications will come at a premium. If enacted, you can expect to see a $90 annual increase to membership costs next year to $299. Georgia has been a great asset to MSE as the House of Delegates (HoD) representative for Montana. She has been giving us regular updates when NSPE has provided information.

MSE has two options as a State Society to make in the new model: Integrated or Non-Integrated/Independent Options.

Integrated includes state membership in $299 member, Non-Integrated does not.

Integrated will require all State only members to become full members by 7/1/2018. Not-Integrated does not.

The rest of the details are predominately costs associated with support NSPE can provide to MSE. As a society, MSE handles pretty much all of these services with limited interaction from NSPE. - is there something you wish MSE did more of or was better at?

Montana Society of Engineers is considered a state society that requires the most support from NSPE which translates to the ‘Lower’ bracket of state societies. What that looks like to members and to the MSE is not very clear. NSPE has made a sliding scale of membership reimbursements back to state societies per member ($60-$210/member). MSE would receive $60/member (currently $50 membership price for the MSE).

What to expect:

• The HoD will meet for a final vote July 22, 2017 on whether the change to business model.

• MSE will need to formally state its intention either Integrated or Non-Integrated Option if the vote passes at the HoD by 1/1/2018.

• Depending on quantity of Non-Integrated Societies, NSPE National Board may make a vote by 1/31/2018 to override the 2 option State Society Model.

• If the vote is pasts, members can expect an invoice for $299 or $349 depending on model in April of 2018.

What this means:

• We have 1 delegate due to size of membership and therefore 1 vote on this.

• Wisconsin, California, Virginia, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania and Michigan have already voiced an intention to support this change. (I am assuming this is due to an increased revenue stream to their state societies). Each of these societies have multiple delegate votes (up to 6 votes each).

• A vote against adopting the new model may automatically place that State into a Non-Integrated approach. Only 1 document stated this, so I am not certain that is has been set through.

What we need from you is your opinion on how we should vote, so that we may function as your Board with your best interests. Please contact let and us know.

See Georgia Brensdal’s article on page 4 for more information on this issue.

June, 2017

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2017 MT MathCounts Update!

Dan Munson, PE, MathCounts State & Billings Chapter Coordinator

On May 14th, our Montana MATHCOUNTS Team experienced an event of a lifetime as they competed in the National MATHCOUNTS Competition in Orlando along with the very top middle school Mathletes in the nation. Ethan Wynia from Riverside Middle School (Billings), Aidan Morgan from Castle Rock (Billings), Joel Demars from Will James (Billings), and Edward Guthrie from Guthrie Academy (Belgrade) travelled to Orlando to represent Montana at the National Competition. Notable is that Edward is in sixth grade, while the other three team members are eighth graders.

Kari Boucher, the math coach from Missoula Washington School along with Jon Graham from the University of Montana chaperoned the team on this exciting trip. The boys said the test was one of the hardest they ever had taken. They had quite an awakening as they witnessed some of the fastest middle school minds in the nation solve problems during the CountDown Round even before they could finish reading the question.

After the testing, the team was able to tour the Kennedy Space Center to learn about our aerospace industry. Without doubt, the highlight of the awards banquet was getting to watch a launch from Kennedy Space Center on a live feed on the large screens at the front of the room with the volume turned way up. It literally rumbled the room and made you feel like you were on site watching the launch.

The students truly had an experience of a lifetime and forwarded their appreciation to all the MATHCOUNTS supporters. Know that you have helped motivate hundreds of students in problem solving and math skills.

MATHCOUNTS is a combination math coaching and competition program. Students are tested on such topics as probability, statistics, linear algebra, and polynomials. The competition consists of written tests and a fast-paced oral match.

The purpose of the MATHCOUNTS program is to motivate junior high school students in mathematics and interest them in technology related careers. It is designed to create interest and enthusiasm in mathematics by creating an environment similar to athletic programs, including intensive training, competition, teamwork and recognition. Widely recognized as an effective middle school mathematics coaching and competition program, MATHCOUNTS is celebrating its 34th Anniversary.

The MATHCOUNTS program is organized by the National Society of Professional Engineers on a national level. Locally, MATHCOUNTS is organized by the Montana Society of Engineers, with local volunteer effort being provided by area engineers, students, and professionals.

Nationally since September, over 500,000 Mathletes have been using materials provided by the MATHCOUNTS Foundation to sharpen their math skills, with the help of their “coaches.”

More than six million students have participated in the MATHCOUNTS program since its inception in 1983. Over 17,000 MATHCOUNTS volunteers from the business and education communities annually organize and conduct the program in communities nationwide.

Just how hard is this math? Try the Problem of the Week on the MATHCOUNTS Web site, www.MATHCOUNTS.org, and click on the site’s “Go Figure!” math challenge to really push your skills.
State of Montana: Public Sector Sole-source Limit Raised for A/E

Russel Katherman, Administrator, Architecture & Engineering Division

If your firm is interested in providing architectural or engineering services on public sector projects, Senate Bill 278 may be of interest to you. Passed during the recently concluded 65th Legislature, this legislation raised the limit where any public entity from state to municipality to county to school district and others can directly negotiate a contract for professional services without pursuing a competitive selection process.

Prior to SB 278, Montana Code allowed public entities to utilize sole-source, direct hiring when the total fees for all services on a project would remain at or under $20,000. The new limit is $50,000. Here’s the relevant statute: “18-8-212. Exception. (1) All agencies securing architectural, engineering, and land surveying services for projects for which the fees are estimated not to exceed $50,000 may contract for those professional services by direct negotiation. (2) An agency may not separate service contracts or split or break projects for the purpose of circumventing the provisions of this part.”

Increases in this statutory limitation have occurred in the past:
- In 1993, the limit was increased from $5,000 to $10,000; and,
- In 2003, the limit was raised from $10,000 to $20,000.

For state buildings, this requirement also has to be melded with the process managed on behalf of all state agencies by the Architecture & Engineering Division and is outlined in 18-2-112 MCA: “Appointment of architects and consulting engineers. The department of administration shall appoint any architect or consulting engineer retained for work on any building to be constructed, remodeled, or renovated by the state of Montana, its boards, institutions, and agencies from a list of three architects or consulting engineers proposed by the state board, institution, or agency where the work is to be done. The department need not appoint an architect or consulting engineer for repair or maintenance projects.” State A&E is also responsible to manage all agency building projects with a total budget greater than $150,000, per 18-2-103 MCA.

State A&E maintains statements of qualifications on file as provided in 18-8-204 in order to develop a list of three interested firms for projects in the nominal range of $500,000 to balance the prior sole-source limit and to meet the requirement of 18-2-112 while also striving to keep costs down for firms competing for projects of this size and budget. Projects greater that this budget size are announced quarterly through a request for project-specific qualifications. With the change provided in SB 278 for sole-sourcing of services, a corresponding increase in this nominal range may also be in order.

Additionally, if your firm has interest in State projects but has never provided a statement of qualifications to the A&E Division, or if the one on file hasn’t been updated in the last couple of years, please go to architecture.mt.gov for the essential information required.

If you have questions or comments regarding the selection process at the state level, you may contact the Architecture & Engineering Division at (406) 444-3104 or DOAAEDivision@mt.gov.

2017 JEC Update!

Crystal Kuntz, PE, JEC Co-Chair

With summer upon us, we are in the home-stretch of planning the upcoming 2017 Joint Engineers Conference. We still have a few remaining spots to fill in our agenda and will be looking to finalize these in the coming weeks so if you have a potential speaker, please get them submitted on the site so that MSE can review the speaker qualifications and authorize the submission.

Note that this is a great way to raise funds for our organization as any proceeds from the conference are distributed in direct proportion to the number and quality, as measured by attendance, of each speaker. Let’s all work together to complete a full MSE-sponsored track this year. We look forward to another successful conference in November with two field-trips planned as a part of the agenda. Please make plans to join us.

Below is the overall planning schedule for the upcoming year. See everyone in 2017!

⇒ July 31 – Speaker Attendance Confirmed
⇒ August 1 – JEC Participant Registration Opens
⇒ October 1 – All Speaker Presentation Materials Due
⇒ November 1 – 2017 JEC Begins

2017 Joint Engineers Conference: November 1-3
Helena, Montana
“Your input is needed to address the upcoming vote on the proposal and to determine what future changes in MSE would work for you.”

It starts with being more aware of our area legislators and how we can help elect people who intend to serve our state by finding creative solutions rather than kicking the can down the road.”

2017 Legislative Wrap Up!

Jennifer James, MSE/ASCE Lobbyist

It’s hard not to start this update on a sour note... The Session did not end as many of us would have hoped. Once again, the Bonding Bill was stalled until the end of the session and failed to pass. This is a clear case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and a lot of good projects were lost. Some legislators will argue that projects like the museum in Helena, or Romney Hall at MSU should not be in the “infrastructure bill.” Maybe so, but they are still public buildings that need to be addressed in some fashion. Supporters of the museum came up with a creative alternative to use a small increase in the bed tax to fund the museum. To augment the funding ask of the legislature, we need to find either public-private partnership opportunities or other creative matching funds to address university system needs. Beyond that, as organization and individuals, we need to become more engaged in the legislature. It starts with being more aware of our area legislators and how we can help elect people who intend to serve our state by finding creative solutions rather than kicking the can down the road.

As you know, HB 473 did pass the legislature and has been signed by the Governor. The original bill would have increase the tax by

NSPE Business Model—Ready for the Vote

Georgia Brensdal, PE, MSE HOD Representative

The NSPE Business Model in the final phase of development. In last month’s webinar to the House of Delegates, President Kodi Verhalen announced that the proposal is essentially ready for a vote by the Assembly in July. The goals of implementing this plan are to address operational problems posed by declining resources, inefficiencies, and redundancy. I have summarized some scenarios of what this proposal would mean to Montana NSPE and MSE members.

If passes, this proposal will go into effect immediately. MSE would need to choose whether to be integrated or not. The integrated option would mean that NSPE members in Montana would automatically become MSE members (similar to what is happening now). The proposal calls for dues increase for Montana being $50 increase for two years up to $300. MSE and NSPE will negotiate an agreement on whether state or national would provide services in the areas of communication, advocacy, continuing education, and marketing. Part of the national dues would go to state societies, the amount would depend on the services that national or state societies will perform. Because MSE currently provides services in all of these areas, this option would require MSE members to decide which services would remain at the state level and what services would be provided by NSPE. MSE can choose to keep current state only members under this approach; however, MSE would be solely responsible for the administration of a state only member program.

In the future, all PE’s would be required to join NSPE to be part of MSE. MSE can opt to create an affiliate membership for non-PE engineers and non-engineers.

If MSE chooses to not integrate under this proposal, MSE would continue in a more autonomous function with NSPE. NSPE members would need to sign up for MSE separately. MSE would not be allocated any of the dues from NSPE. NSPE members would be provided all the services NSPE has to offer. MSE can decide what programs to continue, but they would separately administer and finance those programs. MSE can choose to continue its state only memberships in whatever manner they can support. In this approach, MSE would be linked but not integrated into the NSPE network, a HOD representative would still be part of the Assembly, and NSPE would continue nation wide marketing for members.

If proposal does not pass the current system will remain in place. The national board would look to other methods to respond to deficiencies in the organization. A number of states are very positive about this proposal, and have responded that this model will save their state society. A number of states are very opposed and feel that it may be the doom of their society. So coming up with another compromise will be challenging but necessary task from NSPE. MSE has expressed concerns over the increase in dues, the limitations on state-only memberships, and the lack of experience with NSPE providing services especially to smaller and more remote states like Montana. Other states have expressed similar concerns that these changes would be detrimental to the operation of their state societies. The next iteration of this model would need to preserve the positive, and address the negatives.

If the proposal passes or not, now is a good time for Montana members to assess what they want from their national and state organizations, and get this information to your MSE board. Your input is needed to address the upcoming vote on the proposal and to determine what future changes in MSE would work for you.

Continued to Page 6 —
If you’ve not heard by now, a big change is taking place at the State’s Architecture & Engineering Division as Tom O’Connell is calling it a career on June 30, 2017, with over 46 years of public service.

Tom was born and raised in Bozeman and graduated from Montana State University with a degree in Architecture. In Bozeman, he worked for the MSU Office of Facilities Services for a short time before moving to Helena to join the Montana Department of Administration’s Architecture & Engineering Division (A&E). At A&E, Tom made an immediate impact where he helped develop the management and structure of Montana’s Long-Range Building Program (LRBP) for state-owned facilities and personally developed the first Capitol Complex Master Plan in 1972.

A&E was formed in 1963 and Tom became part of the organization just seven years later where he has served with tremendous integrity while administering thousands of projects completed during his tenure.

To provide a sense of the span of his remarkable career, of the 65 legislative sessions held since Montana achieved statehood in 1889, Tom has been involved in 23 of them, along with numerous special sessions.

He became the State Architect and Administrator of the Division in 1986 where he was responsible for the planning and construction of State facilities throughout Montana. This includes buildings on university campuses, correctional facilities, mental health treatment facilities, job service buildings, Fish, Wildlife & Parks hatcheries and parks, facilities for Military Affairs and the Department of Transportation and, of course, buildings on the Capitol Complex.

The true gem among all the projects was the Restoration of the State Capitol, which Tom describes as the single most difficult and yet rewarding project in his tenure at the State. The project spanned three legislative sessions that all appropriated funds for the work. Many of the historic features including stained glass, floor tile, chandeliers, and decorative sconces, were removed from the Capitol in the mid-sixties construction effort and taken to Virginia City and Nevada City. These items were brought back to Helena when the State purchased the historic properties and were utilized in the restoration effort. Thanks in large part to Tom’s leadership, vision sharing, and guidance, our Capitol has been almost completely restored to its original character and grandeur for current and future Montanans to enjoy.

We all owe Tom a huge debt of thanks and gratitude for his many years of honorable and dedicated public service. He truly is one-of-kind and we wish him well in his future endeavors.

If you would like share any well-wishes, thoughts, or remembrances with him, they may be sent:
Tom O’Connell
C/o A&E Division
PO Box 200103
Helena, MT 59620-0103

Other Awards:
Tom O’Connell received National Society of Engineers QBS Award in 2010.
Tom O’Connell received Honorary AIA Montana Membership in 2010.

“We all owe Tom a huge debt of thanks and gratitude for his many years of honorable and dedicated public service. He truly is one-of-kind and we wish him well in his future endeavors.”
From MSE Office

The MSE Board needs your input regarding the new NSPE Business Model. Under the new Model, you will pay $299—$349 per year for your NSPE/MSE membership with no increase in programs or services. State ONLY membership will not be allowed. Let’s be honest. As a second society membership for most members, this is going to be too expensive. Membership will continue to erode.

The only button MSE does not meet under the new options is the total members. The model requires that it must be 10% of register PEs in the State. Since the advent of discipline specific societies, MSE has not had 300 plus members.

NSPE will not be offering any new services or programs for MSE. Lobbying, newsletters, work for the JEC Committee, Montana MathCounts, and general business of the Chapter will continue to happen at the local level.

Please reach out to any of the MSE Board members and share your thoughts. Be honest: Will you continue your membership at this new dues level?

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2016-2017 MSE Board

Deadline for the Next Issue of this Newsletter is September 10, 2017
Submit articles and advertising to mse@assoc-mgt.com

2017 Legislative Wrap Up!

Jennifer James, MSE/ASCE

$0.08 per gallon and the legislation that passed puts the increase at $0.045 and increases to $0.06 over two years. HB 650 was passed to increase vehicle registration fees and make up the needed revenue to fully fund Highway Patrol and the DMV.

SB 335 was the Public/Private Partnership bill and which failed in the House. While MSE/ASCE did not take an official position on this legislation, it is one that we watched carefully. There will likely be ongoing discussion throughout the interim, and we should participate.

There were two bills that would have allowed for a local option sales tax, much like the resort tax currently utilized in about a dozen communities in Montana. This would be a great tool for investing in infrastructure with new, out-of-state money. I expect this concept will be further developed during the interim and introduced again in the 2019 Session.

SB 278 to Revise the Procurement Process has been signed by the Governor and this should make contracting projects under $50,000 easier and clarify that local governments can use term contracts.

SB 365 that would have eliminated the Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors was abruptly introduced and quickly disposed of.

HB 141 was a bill that was brought by the Department of Labor & Industry with the intent to protect board members on a number of different licensing boards. There was fear from some as to the intent of the bill, but examples from other states indicated that this structure provides necessary legal protection to individuals serving on volunteer boards.

As always is was an honor to work for you during this legislative session and it is my hope we can do some good work during the Interim and make some more progress on infrastructure funding in the 2019 Session.

“As always is was an honor to work for you during this legislative session and it is my hope we can do some good work during the Interim and make some more progress on infrastructure funding in the 2019 Session.”

The PE Magazine link is http://www.nspe.org/PEmagazine/index.html