

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee**

**10 March 2008
National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA, via teleconference**

Members attending:

Garth Illingworth (Chair)
Bruce Balick
Scott Dodelson
Wendy Freedman
Katherine Freese

E. Sterl Phinney
Marcia Rieke
Keivan Stassun
Alycia Weinberger

Agency personnel:

G. Wayne Van Citters, NSF-AST
Eileen Friel, NSF-AST
Dana Lehr, NSF-AST
Vladimir Papitashvili, OPP

Elizabeth Pentecost, AST
Michael Salamon, NASA-HQ
Jon Morse, NASA-HQ

MEETING CONVENED 3:00PM EDT, 10 MARCH 2008

The Chair called the meeting to order, and all participants identified themselves.

The Chair asked for any items from the agencies, including recent events that might have occurred since the February meeting.

NSF Division Director for Astronomical Science, Wayne Van Citters, noted that the NSF FY2008 Operations Plan had been delivered to the Hill for approval. It will likely be another month until NSF hears whether the NSF Director's plan will be acceptable on the Hill. Otherwise, no other new developments.

NASA Astrophysics Division Director, Jon Morse, reported that like the NSF, NASA's FY2008 Operations Plan has also gone to the Hill but there has been no feedback yet. Morse updated the group with a few items:

- GLAST had been shipped to Florida; the thermal vacuum testing was finished; currently undergoing additional work on communication boxes, solar arrays, etc. Things had gone really well; NRL performed well with the environmental issues. This might affect the GLAST launch date by a couple of weeks but not critically. NASA was still looking at a May launch.
- NASA was looking at about a month delay in HST SM4 launch date, but may slip a little.
- Kepler was assembled at the photometer level. The mission was proceeding well and was on track for launch a year from now.
- NASA was working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DOE for the Joint Dark Energy Mission (JDEM).

- NASA had placed a notice on the SARA website that Herschel R&A funds had not been affected by budget cuts.

Morse noted that NASA was planning a medium-class exoplanet mission (i.e., New Frontiers ~\$600-700M) that may not necessarily align with recommended ExoPTF strategy and timeline. The Chair noted that the expectation should be that the ExoPTF report would be considered, as key input during the Decadal Survey process and play a major role in their recommendations in the Exoplanet area. Morse noted that NASA planned to release an Announcement of Opportunity (AO) in one year to solicit techniques and technical management processes for the best path forward for these medium-class missions.

NASA had proposed in its Operations Plan to study a Space Interferometry Mission “light” (SIM-lite) concept going forward and was funding a Planet Hunter concept (with principal investigator Geoff Marcy). The plan for the AO was to cover specific exoplanet science rather than general astrophysics. The Discovery-class exoplanet mission concepts had struggled to fit in the cost box, so NASA was hoping to have a little more flexibility with the Frontier-class missions.

The Chair asked about potential slip for HST SM4, potentially into the FY09 budget year. Morse replied that NASA was working through what the cost impacts would be. (currently an expenditure rate of \$10 million per month.)

The remainder of the meeting was dedicated entirely to discussion of the structure and content of the Committee’s annual report due 15 March 2008.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4:00 PM, 10 MARCH 2008