

Minutes of OTC telecon, Thursday March 2 2006, 19:00 UTC.

2006-03-02, DTE, last revised 2006-03-07

Present: Barry Clark, Darrel Emerson (chair), Rick Fisher, Tony Kerr, Marian Pospieszalski, Dick Sramek, Art Symmes & Dick Thompson.

Phil Jewell also attended the first half of our meeting, to discuss the current R&D Planning draft document for the OTC and how best to move forward..

Minutes of last meeting For reference, the final minutes of our last meeting are at:
http://www.tuc.nrao.edu/~demerson/otc/otc_2006-01-19_0_Rev-1.pdf

Reference Documents:

The latest draft of our R&D Planning document is at:

http://www.tuc.nrao.edu/~demerson/otc/R_D_6_1.3.5.doc

The spreadsheets forming the basis of this document are at:

<http://www.cv.nrao.edu/~akerr/R&DbudgetSummary2007b2.xls> .

A more detailed 5-year budget summary is at

<http://www.cv.nrao.edu/~akerr/R&Dbudget2007b2.5yrTotals.pdf>

The full spreadsheet, year by year, is at

<http://www.cv.nrao.edu/~akerr/R&Dbudget2007b2.xls>

Other OTC documents and drafts can be found at

<http://www.nrao.edu/~demerson/otc/>

Agenda:

1. Comments from Phil Jewell on our R&D Plan
2. OTC discussion: how to proceed

Meeting Discussion:

1. Phil Jewell comments on the current R&D Development Planning draft

Phil said he found the document very useful, and had no particular comment on individual items in the plan.

Phil had a comment about the focal plane array discussion, in that he was aware of at least two proposals being considered: One involved beam forming, the other a HFET-based or MMIC/discrete component based project. There was an opportunity for collaboration with Tony Readhead and JPL. Tony is eager to collaborate for an array on the GBT, which we might consider. This is a multi-pixel array, as opposed to a beam-forming array, and would involve development of an economical way of integrating frontend and backend elements. It is for W-band, and would involve 30 to 100 pixels. Phil felt this was an opportunity, but that it was up to the OTC to decide if this should be flagged as such in the report. (See the subsequent OTC discussion reported below.)

Phil noted that we had listed just two levels of priority now, which he found good. He felt it was still confusing as to whether our FTEs listed in the final budget summary table involved new employees, or used existing staff. Tony responded that this was really a separate issue for the observatory, rather than the OTC, to decide. It was more a business office issue than an OTC issue. However, the wording in our report will be clarified.

Phil commented on our intention that the scientists should be able to comment; Darrel agreed, but thought it was for management to distribute the report rather than the OTC. This is just a detail. Phil would like the report to be distributed to the Visiting Committee, and a final version appropriate for that would be needed by the beginning of April.

On the budget: Phil remarked that the President's budget announced on February 1 was much better than had been feared, and represented at least flat funding. George Clark is planning for NRAO's budget for fiscal 2007, which gives an opportunity for input. The OTC document should be focal to that discussion. In the period April-June 2006 there should be discussion, involving both Scientists and Engineers. Phil had mind a 2-hour videoconference then to get opinions from NRAO's scientists and engineers.

Rick remarked that we had been considering just R&D work, and there were other projects funded from construction funds. This should be made clear.

Peter suggested that it would be helpful to list in an appendix, without discussion, those projects that had been considered by the OTC but which did not make it into our priority lists. It would show that the OTC had at least considered other projects.

Dick Thompson commented on FASR and its need for wideband SSB mixers. Should this be added to tour list?

Phil Jewell confirmed that he strongly believes in our need to invest in R&D. He noted that 5 under-funded topics had been identified: End-to-end software, EVLA, SKA , GBT instrumentation, and the R&D projects proposed from the OTC. There is a goal of somehow finding ~1M\$ from existing NRAO budgets to help, although with the recognition that that is insufficient for all projects. R&D has Phil's attention, and also Fred's, but we have to be realistic.

Phil thanked the OTC for their help.

2. OTC Discussion and Action

Marian commented on the focal plane array that Phil had mentioned: it would be a full-blown project with a lot of development. However, Marian was dismayed that the OTC had not informed of the discussions on this. Marian suggests we add to our report something like "The OTC is aware of the W-band focal plane array discussions, but has insufficient information at this stage and is unable to comment further."

Tony and Darrel would retrieve a list of projects we had earlier considered, but rejected for inclusion into our R&D plan, to be included in an Appendix.

Tony would come up with a sentence clarifying the FTEs in the budget; that they are not necessarily new positions, but that that is a managerial decision not for the OTC.

Darrel would try to produce an updated draft for distribution to the OTC in less than one week. Further discussion would be via email. After including further changes and additions suggested by OTC members, the hope is to have a near-final draft ready about 2 weeks from now.