



### Updated March 27, 2020 MAER Special Announcement

Our MAER Board of Directors met **March 20, 2020** and voted unanimously to **not cancel** the MAER conference this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, after much time and thoughtful research, the MAER Board voted to take the innovative step and move to an online platform. On March 20<sup>th</sup> after making the announcement of the decision to our members, we told you that we would keep you updated on developments that were happening. **Today**, the MAER Board of Directors met once again because there have been some changes that we want to communicate with you.

First, let us give you some background information, when Governor Whitmer made the decision in early March to limit the amount of people who could gather, our MAER Board began to wonder if the conference was feasible. We contacted the Livonia Marriott and inquired about canceling the event all together due to these unforeseen circumstances. At that time the Marriott stated that our event was too far into the future and in order to cancel our contract, stated that we would have a \$9,000 fee if we made the decision to terminate the event prior to **March 26, 2020** and after that it would be an \$11,000 fee. As a Board, we researched, and developed a plan to help us make an informed decision on how to move forward. Canceling this event would include a loss of the following fees:

- Fees to our paid out of state speakers (approx. \$3000)
- \$9,000-\$11,000 in conference venue fees
- Event fees (the company that registers the event- \$1,500)

We then learned of the O&M Symposium's online format and looked into the company that supported their online platform, Allied. We contacted Allied and found that although the use of their Zoom platform is free, **their support is not free**. In order for the MAER Board to move to an online platform in an expedited amount of time, we voted to pay Allied for their services and supports. After considering the fees for the O&M Symposium, we also voted to keep the MAER conference fees the same, as they were significantly lower than the O&M Symposium conference fees and would allow for a smoother transition to this online format.

On **March 23<sup>rd</sup>**, Governor Whitmer made another announcement. We are, as you are aware, in Shelter in Place Mode until April 13<sup>th</sup>. Had she indicated that we were in this mode until the end of April, we would have received a full refund from the Marriott. The decision was made to contact the Marriott at the final moment, in case there was a

change with the State of Michigan that might impact our contract terms. Contact was made with the Livonia Marriott on the evening of **March 25, 2020** to let them know we were canceling the event with them. To our surprise, they stated that although we owe them the cancellation fee, they wouldn't in recognition of our relationship with them, charge MAER the fees. Great news!

Due to the recent changes with the circumstances, we held an emergency board meeting this morning to brainstorm how to pass this savings onto our members. This is what the MAER Board has decided:

Keep in mind there is no more 1 day registration option versus 2 day registration option because the event opens up on 4/23 and is open for all registrants for 3 weeks regardless. Also keep in mind that you can collect CEU's and ACVREP's because you can earn them **with each session attended** which means you could possibly earn more than 30!

AER Member Fee: \$50  
Non-Member Fee: \$75  
Parents: \$55  
Presenter Fee: \$50  
AER Non-Member Retirees: \$55  
AER Member Retirees: \$50  
Students: \$0  
Vendors: \$0

It will take time to refund money that has already been paid. Please be patient and expect your **refund in the next 1-2 months** as we are still focused on having the conference prepared.

As a reminder, with the online format, all speaker presentations will be online, some live, others recorded, and vendors will also be participating. MAER Board nominations will take place prior to April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and you will receive an electronic ballot to participate. We plan on holding our annual MAER Business Meeting in this space, as well.

Please stay tuned for further details in the weeks ahead.

Registration is now open for the new online version—so tell your colleagues! We hope you are staying healthy and we look forward to “seeing” you online in late April.

Finally, keep in mind that these are stressful times for all of us. We are doing our best to navigate this new scenario we have been placed into as thoughtfully and as efficiently as we can. Please be kind and considerate of us and each other as we work to make this conference just as great as previous years.

Amy McDonald-Lamiman & the MAER Board

Click the link for the online MAER conference: [registration](#)