The final piece of the puzzle

“Heather Foley ... is picking up on things quickly. We will gain a lot from her presence here.”

Dwight Hymans, ASWB Chief Operating Officer

When Heather B. Foley, CPA, the first person to hold the title of director of finance and administration at ASWB, joined the association’s staff in early September, it may have seemed to her like a new beginning. But for ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan and COO Dwight Hymans, Foley’s arrival represented the end of a significant period of transition across the organization.

The process of adding new positions to the staff structure began about four years ago. “We have built in a new layer of organization,” Hymans said. “Member Services, Exam Development, and Exam Administration now have directors.” Adding a director of finance and administration, Hymans explained, “is the final piece of the puzzle we’ve been building. About three years ago, we started talking about how much staff time was needed for accounting and finance. Up until then, we kept it basic.”

“As ASWB has become more complicated and more complex,” Monahan said, “we needed a director with a CPA background who has a long view of the organization’s future.” She adds that the Finance and Administration Department is doubling in size, adding both a director and a full-time human resources manager to what was previously a staff of two.

Christine Breeden, office operations manager, has expertly stayed on top of the day-to-day details; but as ASWB grew, the need for more services led to contracting with Warren Whitney, a management consulting firm. Gene Gregory, the accountant who consulted on-site two days a week, helped ASWB leadership figure out the organization’s needs and then stayed on to help with Foley’s transition. Gregory will continue to provide his expertise as needed. “As we’ve grown,” Hymans said, “we’ve wanted more information to track our programs and to get our directors more involved in budgeting and oversight of finances.”
change will help provide even richer data for decision-making.

The creation of the new position is timely, coinciding with the debut of the strategic framework that delegates will vote to adopt at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in November. “As we go into a new strategic framework,” Hymans said, “We will have a strong organization to support the plan. Heather will provide our treasurer with better insights, and that will help overall to develop a budget with pieces that relate to the strategic framework.”

Once the decision to hire a new director was made, a search for the right person to fill the position brought Heather Foley to ASWB. “Heather has a firm grasp of nonprofit finances,” Monahan said. “She has an understanding of budgeting and the ability to help management staff understand their responsibilities related to budget.”

Beyond her background, Heather brings other qualities to ASWB. “She embraces our corporate values of integrity and service and has a positive attitude,” Monahan said. “Heather is a problem solver whose expertise will benefit us as we add new systems.”

Foley brings 30 years of experience from the nonprofit and for-profit worlds. “I have sat on all sides,” she said. “I’ve been an auditor, a board member, and a consultant.”

Before coming to ASWB, Foley worked as a controller for an equipment repair company; was a partner in an accounting firm; and served as director of finance for a nonprofit. She has served on boards of community nonprofits, including the local domestic violence program Empowerhouse. She is happy to be back at a nonprofit, she said. “I love the idea of working for a nonprofit with a purpose beyond making money for someone else.”

She has already met with the directors of every department, gauging their level of knowledge and talking about budgeting with them. “I wanted to know what information they are missing and what their pain points are,” Foley said. Some of the projects that Foley has already started on include evaluating the current payroll and timekeeping systems, embracing software to make the accounting system accurate in real time and reflective of the department structure, and looking at ways to automate expense reporting.

On top of helping the association manage those changes, she ensures ASWB is compliant with tax laws and prepared for the annual audit. “My goal is to be able to provide accurate information quickly and efficiently.”

Only two months in, Heather Foley has already begun helping the association navigate a time of growth and change. She’s finding her place in the increasingly complex puzzle that is ASWB.