



INTERVIEW WITH *Incoming Chair*

Andrea Wagner Watts

As ABAA enters an exciting new chapter, we're pleased to welcome Andrea Wagner Watts as our incoming Chair. With a career spanning research and development, technical leadership, and now education and outreach, Andrea brings a unique blend of experience and passion to the role. From first attending an ABAA Conference more than a decade ago to helping lead key committees, she has been deeply involved in shaping the association's growth.

Q: To start, could you share a little about your background and how you first became involved with ABAA?

A: I have a degree in civil engineering, but right out of college I took a sidestep into manufacturing. I began in sales, then moved into research and development, application engineering, and technical support. As part of that work, I was on a team tasked with developing an air barrier product—a new area for the company. That's how I first came across the Air Barrier Association of America.

I attended my first ABAA Conference around 2012 in Chicago, which gave me my first real exposure to the association. Like many first-time attendees, I wasn't quite sure what to expect—it felt a little surface level

at first. Then Brian Stroik (who was on his way to becoming Chair at the time) pulled me aside and invited me to help energize the Technical Committee, co-chairing with John Posenecker. That was around 2014, and coincidentally about the time the air barrier material we'd been working on launched. From there, I became much more actively involved.

Over the years, I've worked primarily in R&D for manufacturers, so the Technical Committee was a natural fit. Along the way, I've had career changes—starting at Corning, through acquisitions and restructurings, and ultimately finding my way to DuPont. But through it all, ABAA has been a constant presence.

Q: What motivated you to step into the role of Chair at this point in your career?

A: Timing is never perfect, but it feels right. Most of my career has been focused on research and development. In my current role, I've shifted more toward education and outreach, which has always been a passion of mine. This change also gives me more flexibility and visibility to commit time to ABAA.

It's also an exciting moment for the association. I think we're at a turning point, moving from a smaller, "growing" organization into

one preparing for a much bigger future. It feels a bit like we're moving out of our "teenage years" into early adulthood—figuring out who we are and where we want to go. Having the opportunity to help shape that strategy is something I really value.

Q: As you look ahead to your term, what are the key priorities or goals you're most excited to focus on?

A: While things like bylaws and contracts may not sound thrilling, they're essential building blocks. Much of our documentation was created when ABAA was still a smaller organization. As we approach our 25th anniversary, it's time to update these foundations so the association is well positioned for the next 25 years.

Another big focus for me is transparency and communication. There's incredible work happening in our Technical Committee, Research Committee, Contractors Committee, and others. I want to make sure members know what's going on, how they can get involved, and how their contributions matter. The more people are aware of what's happening, the more excitement and engagement we'll generate across the membership.

Q: What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the association and its members right now?

A: One of our greatest strengths—and biggest opportunities—is being the go-to source for education and technical knowledge in the air barrier space. With evolving building codes, professionals across disciplines—contractors, designers, engineers—are all being asked to do things differently than before.

That can be daunting, but it's also where ABAA shines. We've been building this expertise for decades, learning from trial and error. Now, we have the opportunity to share that knowledge so others don't have to reinvent the wheel. Whether it's expanding our education offerings, finding new ways to deliver content, or becoming a more accessible reference resource, I see tremendous potential for ABAA to grow its impact.

Q: On the flip side, what challenges do you anticipate, and how do you plan to help the association navigate them?

A: One challenge is generational transition. Many of the founding members who shaped the association and carry valuable institutional knowledge are retiring or stepping back. Capturing and documenting their wisdom now is critical so we can pass it on to the next wave of leaders.

At the same time, we need to bring new voices into the fold. Not everyone is ready to jump straight into a leadership position, so part of our challenge is finding ways for people to get involved in smaller ways that build comfort

and confidence. The energy and enthusiasm of our membership has always set ABAA apart, and ensuring that continues for the next 25 years is essential.

Q: Thinking long-term, how do you envision the association evolving over the next few years?

A: I see the Standards Institute (ASI) playing a major role. Having ABAA's name tied to standards that can be adopted into code is a game-changer. It will draw more attention to the association, and with that comes both opportunity and challenge.

One of the things I value most about ABAA is the spirit of collaboration—even among competitors. We all come together to move the industry forward. As standards become codified, we'll need to ensure we keep that collaborative, industry-wide focus, even as the stakes get higher.

Q: What excites you most about the future of the association and the industry it serves?

A: The progress we've made in 25 years is incredible. We've gone from "what is an air barrier and why do we need it?" to a broad understanding of its value, especially in new commercial construction.

Now, I'm excited about shifting that focus to existing buildings. How do we take the stock we already have and improve it—affordably and practically—without always aiming for extreme benchmarks like passive house standards? The work being done by groups like the Existing Buildings Task Group is just the beginning. I see huge potential



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for us to expand our scope and make a real difference.

Q: Finally, is there a message you'd like to share directly with members as you begin your term?

A: I'm honored and excited to serve as Chair. ABAA has always been a place where I've felt welcome, and I hope every member feels the same.

If you're curious about getting more involved but aren't sure where to start—reach out. Call me. I'm always happy to talk and help find a spot that fits your interests and availability. There are countless ways to contribute, from committees to conference participation, and every piece adds to the whole.

What makes this association unique is the willingness of members to share knowledge, ask questions, and learn together. I look forward to seeing more of that spirit in action as we move forward.