

VSA Council Minutes

November 2, 2008

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01PM.

2. Attendance

Guests: Andrew Bennett (Student Asst. to the President), Matthew Brock (Misc), Brian Farkas (Misc), Julianne Herts (Misc), Emma Mitchell (Misc), Molly Turpin (Misc), Harrison Brody (Misc), Reed Dunlea (Kick Coke), Stephen Cheng (Kick Coke), Mikey Velarde (MEChA, Kick Coke), Tom Facchine (Kick Coke), Ben Reichman (SAU, Kick Coke), Stephen Cheng (SAU, Kick Coke), Gaelin Monkman-Kotz (SAU, Kick Coke), Robyn Smigel (SAU, Kick Coke), Hannah Kullberg (Kick Coke, Real Food), Danny McBree (Food Committee), Sasha Klimczak (CCL), Lea Peters (CSA), Caroline Warren (Idlewild), Jeremy Teperman (Kick Coke), Sarah Cohen (Kick Coke, SAU), Lauren O’Laughlin (Kick Coke), Irina Kaplan (Kick Coke), Moey Newbold (Vassar Greens, Kick Coke), Mike Alberti (Kick Coke), Mike Godbe (Kick Coke), Vanessa Raditz (Kick Coke), Sophia Chambers (Kick Coke), Nadine Souto (Greens, Kick Coke), John Joyce (SAU, Kick Coke), Mario Sosa (Kick Coke), Jeremy Block (Kick Coke), Julia Sison (Kick Coke), Andrew Reed (Kick Coke), Mary Grace Tate (Kick Coke).

3. Consent Agenda

The President presented Council with the consent agenda, which included the following: the adoption of minutes from 10/26/08; the allocation of \$500 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to QCVC; the allocation of \$250 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to Idlewild; the allocation of \$500 from Council Discretionary to Arlington Special Events. No objections were made, and the consent agenda was adopted as presented.

4. Announcements

a. Fines

The VP for Finance announced that THs had been fined \$25 for failure to attend the October 26th Council meeting.

b. Passport to Arlington

The VP for Activities announced that the VSA’s “Passport to Arlington” will begin November 3 and continue through December 14. Students can receive stamps when they visit any of 51 merchants in the Arlington area. Those who complete their passports may submit them to the HSBC on Raymond Avenue and will be entered into a drawing to win a \$1000 prize.

5. Reports

a. Committee Report - CCL

Sasha Klimczak, of CCL, reported that the committee had its first meeting last Wednesday, and will be meeting again this coming Wednesday. One crucial discussion topic has been gender neutral housing; the committee has concurred that a “barrier” currently exists in Vassar’s housing policy, and it hopes to encourage the institution of a more inclusive set of regulations.

CCL has also been working to promote sustainability, and is exploring the idea of bringing Zip Cars to campus. Chris Roellke has been communicating with the company, but the college is still investigating logistical issues. A recent suggestion involves bringing in portable speed bumps and temporary radar systems to promote pedestrian safety.

The committee has begun consideration of the Kick Coke resolution, but is planning to continue this discussion after the VSA's official vote on the resolution. Sasha explained that alcohol use on campus has also been a key topic at meetings, and reported that President Hill has not opted to sign The Amethyst Initiative. A subcommittee will soon be established to focus on alcohol use and abuse.

The meal plan has been up for discussion, but the committee's statistical analysis of survey results are still needed. Additionally, CCL is evaluating student rights and responsibilities, and is exploring the possibility of generating a Student Bill of Rights.

b. Exec Report - Finance

The VP for Finance presented Council with the most recent finance report, and stated that "the VSA is in good financial health".

c. Exec Report - Activities

The VP for Activities reported that she has been working on coordinating the "Passport to Arlington" project, and has also been focused on revamping emergency contact forms for organizations involved in overnight off-campus trips. A new policy will stipulate that orgs must register these off-campus events through the VP for Activities; more information about these changes will be emailed to org presidents tonight.

The Activities Committee has received a large number of applications for org certification, and is carefully considering each one before it makes certification proposals to Council. The VP for Activities has already begun planning next year's Fall Leadersip Conference, and encouraged Council members to share any recommendations they might have.

Improve equipment use at The Mug, perhaps encourage more student employment there.

6. Allocation of \$1150 from Conference Fund to SAU

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1150 from the Conference Fund to SAU for "Renewing the Anarchist Tradition", a "gathering of anarchists, horizontalists, and other radical activists...interested in putting theory into practice". All were in favor, and the motion passed.

7. Allocation of \$1250 from Conference Fund to CSA

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1250 from the Conference Fund to CSA. Students from CSA will be attending "The Binghamton Carnival" at Binghamton University. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

8. Allocation of \$2499.99 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to 2010

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$2499.99 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to 2010 for the "2010 Comedy Night featuring Dan Mintz". After 2010 clarified updated costs, the VP for finance moved to amend the allocation \$2800. All in favor, and the amendment passed. 2010 abstained, though all others were in favor of the allocation, and the motion passed.

9. Certification of Vassar Prison Initiative

The VP for Activities moved to certify the Vassar Prison Initiative, explaining that the group has demonstrated consistent “commitment to its efforts for a few years now”. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

10. Certification of Ballroom Dancing

The VP for Activities moved to certify “Ballroom Dancing”. She explained that “In the Pink” offers a ballroom dancing course, but that this organization would provide students with a unique opportunity to expand their skills, free of charge.

The VP for Finance expressed concern about certifying new organizations in general, given the current economic climate. He announced that he will be voting against all future org certification proposals this year. Joss supported the certification, claiming that the org appeared “well-organized”, and that it offers a unique service that some students will certainly utilize. Student Life concurred, stressing the VSA’s need to give students opportunities to pursue their extracurricular interests. Activities explained that her committee has been careful to consider financial concerns when making decisions about org certifications.

TAs suggested that the Council consider changing its policies on fund allocations, esp for conferences and the like. She emphasized that the VSA should not be restricting the activities in which students can participate on campus. Finance, 2009, Noyes and Cushing were not in favor; TH, Strong, TA, 2010, 2012, Academics, Student Life, Operations, Activities, SoCo, Ferry, Main, Raymond, Jewett, TS, Joss and 2011 were in favor, and the motion passed.

11. Orgs of the Month for September and October

The VP for Activities moved to declare VJU the Org of the Month for September for its “Challah for Hunger” event. All were in favor, and the motion passed. Activities then moved to declare ASA the Org of the Month for October for its “Back to School Concert”. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

12. Declaration of Open Position and Appointment

The VP for Operations moved to declare position in the Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) open and up for appointment, as a member has just resigned. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

13. Kick Coke Resolution

The VP for Student Life moved to pass a resolution to “Kick Coke” from Vassar College, as presented at the previous council meeting. Reed Dunlea, of Kick Coke, addressed three issues he felt had been “raised a lot in this past week”. He claimed that an individual’s choice to buy coca cola products “is not actually on the table in this campaign”. He highlighted that this resolution is focused on Vassar College, an “educational institution with a commitment to social justice” – not “a shopping mall.” Reed also contested recent claims that “Coke is cleaning up its act in Colombia and India”, stressing that Coca Cola has been running a very intense public relations campaign. Another contentious issue has been the suggestion that kicking coke would threaten local business. Reed reported that bottling is carried out by the “Coca Cola Bottling Company off New York, Inc.”, which is a branch of a much larger company that does business in 46 states. The primary vendor at Vassar is Aramark, which is also not a local company; Aramark has claimed that they can eliminate Coke from campus dining areas by next semester, if necessary. Another key vendor, Triple J Vending is a much smaller local company, so the Kick

Coke Campaign would only push for them to eliminate Coke by next year. Triple J Vending has already specified that it has no specific contract with Coca Cola, and has agreed to consider bringing in more local companies.

Noyes responded to Reed's points, emphasizing that the resolution is addressing an "ethical and human rights issue", first and foremost. He claimed that it is "unrealistic" for the Vassar community to expect a massive enterprise like Coca Cola to be so aware of human rights violations "that are 2 degrees of separation away from" its central authority. He concluded that Coca Cola is "clearly making an effort to remediate the situation".

TAs submitted a report with a summary of opinions from various members of the Terrace Apartments and the Class of 2009. Though the results of the report both supported *and* critiqued the resolution, TAs encouraged all those present to read the arguments therein. She wondered whether banning Coke from campus would be Vassar's best option, claiming, "we might be better served to engage the corporation and use other means of influence". She instead suggested divesting funds, leveraging ownership shares, sending letters, or encouraging other colleges to get involved with the campaign. TAs also voiced concern about the potential loss of local jobs at the Coca Cola Bottling Company, particularly given Vassar's current efforts to improve relations with the Poughkeepsie community.

Student Life moved to limit debate to one minute per person for the duration of the discussion. TAs recommended that this motion specify that the President may allow individuals to speak more than twice, if he deems it appropriate. TH, Strong, 2009, 2010, 2012, SoCo, Ferry and Joss were not in favor of this amended motion, though 2011, Lathrop, TS, Jewett, Raymond, Main, Activities, Finance, Operations, Student Life, Academics, Noyes, TA and Cushing were in favor, and the motion passed.

THs urged council members "not to think myopically" on this issue, and encouraged members not to abstain from voting on the resolution. She emphasized that "this is a divisive issue", and the Council members are "here to make decisions that are not necessarily black and white".

Operations moved to call to question, but the President moved this out of order.

Danny McBree, of the Food Committee, proposed an economic argument for bringing in outside vendors, claiming that "if Coke's going to kick itself, it will do so."

2010 moved to amend the resolution to strike the first resolve and change the second resolve to read: "The VSA Council supports making available products from alternative companies on campus in addition to Coca Cola products." He also moved to amend the third resolve to read: "The VSA Council requests that the Food Committee continue its work with the Vassar Kick Coke Campaign and the Committee on College Sustainability and Dining Services in finding the most viable alternative companies to utilize". Student Life was concerned that this amendment would turn "the resolution into a non-statement". THs, SoCo and Reed Dunlea all agreed, stressing that the message of this new amendment is inconsistent with the message that the Kick Coke Campaign is seeking to make. Operations moved to call to question. TH, Student Life, 2009, TA, 2010, 2012, Noyes, Academics, Finance, Activities, SoCo, Main, Raymond, Jewett, TS and Lathrop were not in favor of the amendment; 2011, Joss, Cushing and Operations were in favor, and the motion failed.

Citing the fact that Coca Cola has already responded to critiques, Andrew Bennett expressed his belief that the college should promote promote institutions "that give the people in [India and Colombia] a voice", rather than target the corporation itself.

Per TAs' recommendations, TS moved to amend the second whereas to add the word "allegations". 2009 claimed that this amendment would make the resolution sound "more objective and well thought-out". Reed approved this change, claiming that it was consistent with the campaign's intentions. All were in favor of the amendment, and the motion passed.

Joss moved to call to question. 2009 and Finance were not in favor, though all others were in favor, and the motion passed. Cushing, 2010, Noyes, Activities, Operations, Finance, Activities and Raymond were not in favor of the resolution; 2011, Lathrop, Joss, TS, Jewett, Main, Ferry, SoCo, Student Life, 2012, TA, 2009, Strong and TH were in favor, and the motion passed. The President announced that the resolution move forward to CCL for further discussion.

10. Open Discussion

- 2009 announced that 207 days remained until graduation. He recommended that Council also the TAs report of student opinion on Kick Coke to CCL.
- Joss expressed concern about recent strict security on campus. The VP for Student Life responded that CCL has just formed a Security Advisory sub-committee, and agreed to send Joss the contact information of its members.
- 2011 expressed his desire to see more academic issues discussed at VSA Council.
- Rory Katz announced that the TH co-op deadline had been extended until Friday.

11. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 9:00 PM.