

VSA Council

Sunday, September 20, 2015

7:30pm – 9:30pm, College Center MPR

Minutes by Steven Park

## **Attendance**

2016                      Proxy (only for an hour)

## **Consensus Agenda**

- a. Capital Fund to Barefoot Monkeys (\$526.05/\$862.80)
- b. Discretionary to Raymond House (\$400/\$1000)
- c. Capital Fund to Miscellany News (\$19.99/\$19.99)
- d. Collaboration to HYPE (\$600/\$600)
- e. Speakers to GAAP (\$1950/\$2100)
- f. Collaboration to Main House (\$1650/\$3000)
- g. Appointment of Ellen Jones to 2016 BOEA Rep
- h. Appointment of Nora Eigenbrodt to 2018 BOEA Rep
- i. Minutes from 9/13/15

President: Does anyone object to the consensus agenda?

## **Forum with Marianne Begemann, Dean of Strategic Planning/Academic Resource**

Marianne: I want to let you know that, in light of performance, I saw it as an amazing event. It was very powerful and made me proud of the Vassar community. It was a really great thing and a great way to start the year. Ramy asked if I could talk about the College Center renovations. I wanted to talk about library as well and I'm happy to talk about other things too. As you probably know, we got a little bit delayed with the bookstore renovations. It'll be simple renovations. We're going to take the front of that place and turn it into a student gathering place with lots of data, Wi-Fi, lighting, projectors for movies, videos, and a performance area, but nothing really super fancy or expensive. We hope to create a place where people can relax. Renovations will begin on October Break

and will open at the beginning of the spring semester. We will also open up a space for SARC. Over winter break, in time for January, we'll improve lighting, improve circulation, take down walls, and etc. It'll have the same function but be more efficient and outfitted. One of the questions I have for the VSA is related to food. As we go through design for the lower level, a suggestion was made to make the place like the UpC and serve the same food as the UpC there. That's an idea we were thinking about and get pricing for it. There is very strong support. An alternative suggestion is to keep it the Kiosk open for late night hours and not do anything for the basement. That'll be an alternate plan. The idea was to close the Kiosk completely. The real question is: Will it be good to have an UpC in the student social space or have the Kiosk open late at night?

Lathrop: The Kiosk is a central location for students, especially for Starbucks coffee. Closing the Kiosk will be detrimental to students. Students prefer coffee at the Kiosk than at the Retreat.

Cushing: I spoke to my residents and they want the Kiosk hours to be extended. I'm against moving the UpC to Main and so are my constituents. Keeping the Kiosk longer is the best solution. My only concern is that the campus does not need fewer dining options; we need more dining options. Let's please extend the Kiosk. Having both the UpC and the Kiosk is best solution.

Jessie: There is an extent to where location is part of the appeal. There's something about the location. If we move that location, it'll be such a change to the feel and the culture of the campus, which is not good. I say extend the Kiosk.

Marianne: The problem with extending the hours for the Kiosk is that if we want the Kiosk open for both day and night, that's an increase in expense and there will need to be additional staffing. We're closing the UpC because it's a duplicate. We thought it'd be best to just improve the coffee in the Retreat. What we heard last year over and over again was that the UpC didn't work. People went to get food but left. We want a place where people can eat and stay. We want a place where people get food and want to stay.

Ferry: I know so many people who go to the UpC to study at 1 or 2 am. It's such a big place too. I don't think people will fit downstairs. Main is already crowded as well. I'm

concerned with how people will fit. Also, the UpC has lines of 50 people. How are you going to account for the lines? Would it be able to fit a crowd?

Marianne: Yes. It will go from the front of bookstore to where the hallway starts. It's fairly significant. It probably has 50 or 75 seatings and some soft seatings as well. Again, this is very different from students last year who said that the UpC didn't work. It's interesting. The idea is to move stuff from the café to downstairs. The UpC will be used for programming. It just wouldn't have...we just want to create gathering places for students.

Noyes: The community needs a place late night and there's no plan for the UpC, so shouldn't you put something new?

Marianne: At least right now, there's nothing planned for the UpC. If there are ideas, please put ideas in the campus website link. It's the campus planning website and you can encourage other people to do the same. The idea of the bookstore place is the first step towards creating a real college center. The first step is to create a space where students can stay late night with food available. This is the kind of space they wanted at the college center.

Noyes: Why not the new café?

Marianne: It all comes down to money. There's a certain amount of money set aside for renovations. We have to get by and we have to get approval from the budget office to get extra funding. It's considered an increase in scope. Students last year wanted this.

AtLarge: I have a question with the change of location. Are there any plans or additions that will be made at the College Center? I don't see the benefits of having an inconvenient location for the same thing.

Marianne: Granted, it's not central during resident's hall, but the UpC is out of the way, especially for the South Commons and the THs.

AtLarge: Are there any plans to improve the UpC?

Marianne: No.

AtLarge: Are there any venue options or bigger seatings?

Marianne: We'll have to see.

Student Life: I personally like the idea. I think that there's an issue of foot traffic. There's already lots of foot traffic at the Kiosk due to the way that it's designed next to the Post Office. I agree with the concerns for budget. Since it's made very clear that the café will open at the Bridge...the foot traffic issue at the Kiosk is already very inconvenient because of the Post Office line. I think that there's no...I don't know. There's one downside for Cushing and Jewett because they'll only have the Deece left.

Main: If you say that Main is the hub during the day, I want to talk about having that basement open during the day. I want to open that space and have it open during the day, like from 11am to 3pm and reopen it at night. And you won't have foot traffic at the Kiosk. Just have the Deece as a one story entity makes sense. But you have to replace the UpC with something. If you don't want to go to Main for food, then you'll only have the Deece and the Bridge building and that doesn't make sense for me. Oh, and the retreat.

Marianne: I think we're going to see over long term additional changes. We'll make sure, hopefully, more ideas will come to table.

Main: If you do keep the Kiosk open late hours, won't you delay the inevitable and eventually go away?

Marianne: That's what I thought. I thought it'd go away in January. I can tell you that keeping the Kiosk open will cost additional hours because we'll open the café at the Bridge building. I understand that we need more places to eat. I heard from students that there isn't enough healthy food and that's what we want to work towards.

Strong: What do you mean by "reduced"?

Marianne: We can do smoothies and espresso drinks and yogurts but we can't do food prep from ingredients made from scratch.

Jonathan: I know this will be hard to answer, but you keep on saying that it'll cost a lot of money, but does the café pay for themselves? Do they make enough money to cover expenses?

Marianne: I don't know. We're contracted with Aramark and they run everything and they're the ones making the profit, not the college.

Jonathan: There's no breaking even?

Mary: The way I know it, opening up another venue will not increase revenue. It'll just transfer money, not make more. And plus, we'll have to staff anyplace that opens.

Operations: Reminder: Please refrain from repeating, please. We have 15 minutes left on this conversation.

South Commons: What is this Bridge café going to serve? What has it been designed for?

Mary: It's essentially like the Kiosk. It's coffee and premade things.

South Commons: But that's the same with the UpC. I'm surprised we haven't talked about the Bean, the student-run coffee area funded by a class gift. If we care so much about the Kiosk, we have options to choose from. In terms of staffing, there are ways to do it. This is another example where campus area is all shifting. You mentioned the lack of a student area? That's because it shifted back in the 70's. We're always in an ever-shifting state. The problem is that people see late night as different. College Center late night is different from the UpC. When we talked with Louis, we agreed that the UpC is a good place to chat because it echoes. It's not a place for studying. I was also on the focus groups back when I was a freshman when we researched student space, and the report mentioned the lack of a 24 hour space that's multipurpose, and I hope we're still getting at it. The difference between all these places is a real difference. Unfortunately, the Bridge building is moving places somewhere else. If we can make the Bean work, we can make the Kiosk work, because the equipment is already there. In the end, both sides are right. The Retreat has served an important role for years. It serves hot food and has an issue with hours. Students complain since we keep changing things, and all the data are all over the place. Ultimately, there's legitimacy for both sides and there's value in a long term college center that's not the Retreat. UpC has already been in flux. It goes to show that students like having multiple places to eat. If it's about manpower, we made it work with the Bean. If you add milkshakes to the Bean, that's the UpC. We need to be more

creative with this. There needs to be collaboration between your office and the VSA and Campus Dining.

Marianne: I encourage you to let me know what you think. I understand more is better, but it's not going to happen all at once. If you think the basement space is going to work without food, then that's great. But I'd hate to have our basement experiment fail because people want food down there. I also want to clarify: if we open a place at UpC, it would also accept dining bucks. On a different note, I also want to hear opinion about a project in the library this fall. An announcement will be made. Some have heard of the glass artist, Dale Chihuly, who makes glass sculptures and glass cylinders. We're bringing in those glass cylinders into the library for five week beginning with October break. There's going to be 40 or so of these cylinders. We are moving tables at the library, but we're not reducing seating because they'll simply be moved not removed. There'll be lectures by English professors and an NYU professor is visting and um...something to do with *Ulysses*. I just want to give a heads up

Lathrop: I agree that the library programing has potential. I just want to bring up the CIS. I was talking to a house fellow and they said they haven't updated wireless. It's very important. I commend changes to network space but I also think we need improvements to the wireless.

Mary: Can you tell me specific locations?

Lathrop: Like Lathrop.

Town Houses: Where does the Internet not work? Generally everywhere. Senior housing, too. And also about UpC, there seems to be an incredible lack of vision from the administration. When we're talking about these things, we need to utilize what's here. We need a group of committed students. With these open conversations, we just keep doing conversations. All of these issues like understaffing are due to a lack of vision. Josh can be so helpful because of his knowledge of institution. We need a committee. Regarding the issue of gathering spaces [referring to UpC], I don't want to hang out there. I just want to buy food and leave. We need to stop having so much conversations and start taking action.

Marianne: I just want to remind everyone that this is a multi-year investment that costs millions and millions of dollars. It's not something students can really do.

Town Houses: We don't need Band-Aids. We keep creating new spaces without planning.

Marianne: That's why I encourage feedback and ideas at our Google Doc.

Cushing: The very fact that we keep jumping back to this is because people all want food and there isn't enough places to eat. Why can't we just shift locations instead of shutting them down? The UpC design is flawed but that doesn't mean it doesn't work. It's popular because it's late night. After 11pm, that's the only option to get food that's not vending machine food. I say expand the UpC and expand everything. Create more work study jobs and offer more food instead of shutting it down. The Bridge café is great but no one lives there, and no one will be going there. Moving it to Main will alienate 500 people. If I'm also late for class, I can't get food from the retreat because it's too crowded.

South Commons: I just want to make sure that were not leaving anything else before you [Marianne] leave.

President: Would you rather stay or come back?

Marianne: Either's fine.

South Commons: Motioning for a 5 minute extension to continue this conversation on non-bookstore related things.

2016	Yes
2017	Yes
2018	Yes
2019	Not Present
Cushing	Yes
Davison	Yes
Ferry	Yes

Jewett	Yes
Joss	Yes
Lathrop	Yes
Main	Yes
Noyes	No
Raymond	No
Strong	No
SoCos	Yes
TAs	No
THs	No
Town Students	No
Finance	No
Academics	No
Activities	No
Student Life	No
Operations	No

President: It's a tie, so I can break the vote! It's the one time I can vote. I'm voting no.

(Marianne leaves)

### **Indictment of BOEA Chair**

President: The next thing is the indictment of BOEA Chair, but Adam has resigned. To fill in for elections, thanks to the by-laws, Ruby is the intern chair. Larua and Josh agreed to help Ruby. I will take over the Freshman Presidential Debate.

Lathrop: When is the debate?

President: It's not scheduled. Probably Friday. It has to be this Friday because it has to be during campaigning.

Jessie: Was there a reason for resignation?

President: It's not appropriate to share that here.

2018: Can I help with the freshman debate?

President: Yes!

Abby: I can help with whatever.

Joss: If we could get dates immediately, that'd be great.

Operations: We apologize. We'll try to get everything transparent and efficient ASAP. Stuff are not set in stone yet. We are now accepting applications for BOEA Chair.

Student Life: Given the lack of effort of the previous BOEA Chair, I want to give a great big thank you to Ruby Pierce for making sure this ship didn't sink.

President: Now, we'll move to reports.

## **Reports**

Operations: We had our first VSA Restruction meeting and no one came. It was just me and the administration intern. It didn't help that it was Parent's Weekend. It'd be great if the House Presidents sent that out to their constituents. It's every Saturday from 12pm to 2pm.

President: An email will go out to all organization presidents. There will be six dates, three before October break and three after. One person from each organization will be trained. We need every organization leader to be trained before the Spring Leadership Conference. Any organization that doesn't come will have their budgets frozen.

Lathrop: Are the house teams exempt?

President: Yes, everyone on house team is exempt.

Cushing: Did you manage to talk to Cappy?

Pres: Yes.

Jessie: Regarding the content of the training, is the specific content mandated by the state or by college policy?

President: The state mandated it due to sexual violence and gender assault. It's a solid curriculum.

Jessie: The thing is that I noticed that something lost is the reporting process. Very little info is given about the reporting process. People don't know how or when to report.

President: I don't know exactly what's in training, but I think Student Life knows something about reporting.

Student Life: In terms of reporting...um...Student Life is working with the Statistics Office to release information from the Title Nine survey. Also, reporting is different from bystander intervention. I agree that reporting is very important. How that can be improved, I don't know. I think that falls under a different group.

2016: If you are president of multiple organizations or can you represent multiple organizations [for the training]?

President: You can represent multiple organizations.

Joss: Thank you Jess for your input. It's important that your class knows how processes works and we need faith in the process. However, I think it's not the most important thing. The culture is more important than the reporting.

Jessie: The thing is, there's a stigma to reporting it...[something, something]...I think that's the heart of rape culture.

Joss: I strongly have to disagree. That's not how I see it.

Strong: I like to respond. I think its insensitive how you talked about it.

Jess: I apologize. I agree they shouldn't be judged. But we should also acknowledge that...the only way...

Strong: I think it's better to have people stop sexual assaulting than focus on the reporting. Sexual assault should not be happening in first place.

Noyes: If a person is an organization leader who went through House Team training, do they still have to attend again?

President: Let me look into that.

### **Constituent Concerns**

President: Alright, moving to Constituent Concerns. Cushing? Is this about the bees?

Cushing: It's an important concern!

Ferry: We have bees too. I think someone almost got stung today, too. It's scary. We don't know how to get rid of them.

Town Houses: We're also having some critter issues as well as widespread plumbing problems. Also, if you see something, say something because lots of crazy things like stealing has been happening. Please, if you see something, say something and please don't feed the animals.

South Commons: I just want to mention that we have a mice problem. There's a lot of moving parts with Reslife. If we approach this the wrong way, we'll seem anti-labor. Just keep track of everything like how long this issue has been happening. The administration prefers data over accounts. I just want to advocate people to pull data and make resources.

Abby: Those with bee problems, I want the House Advisors to see who's allergic to bees. If someone gets stung by bees, there may be possible lawsuits.

Joss: Last year, we got money for providing food for Freshman Halloween night. I think that's a good way to spend that money.

South Commons: I will make a Google forum.

Jewett: I find going to the cleaning staff rather than the administration very effective. For example, one bathroom in Jewett hasn't been cleaned properly and the cleaning staff told me that it was because they can't touch student belongings.

## **Traditions Committee Amendment**

South Commons: I'm meeting with the senior class council and we're going to talk about having better communication and making progress. The core concept is to have Traditions co-chairs to have discussions with everyone else. Now, Traditions have their own treasurer, so things have been happening without them talking to us. We want communication to happen; it should be a partnership.

2016: Did they talk to you about serenading?

Soco: No.

Jessie: Why is it important to meet?

Soco: It's in the constitution.

President: First, the senior class didn't have anything to do with Founder's Day or anything like that.

## **Open Discussion**

Joss: Sorry for being emotional, but there's bitterness about serenading in particular. I want to clarify our decision to withdraw. No, not everyone will agree about hazing and I know there's a lot of potential, but I don't think we could ignore the history of the event. And the thing is, our House Team as a whole felt uncomfortable with this power dynamic. Furthermore, we respect the House Teams and seniors and the class council. Thank you for all your hard work, but there are opinions out there calling our decision lazy and autocratic. And it's hurtful and untrue. I can say confidently that we spent a great deal of energy representing what our constituents wanted. There's more to it than listening to the loudest people. People came up to me and said that they were uncomfortable. I presented to the individual House members what serenading entails and I think we made it as democratic a decision as possible. Also, receiving feedback afterwards is equally important. We received emails and handwritten notes thanking us for our decision. At least the people who we represent are happy. We'll make sure to

represent them. There are also Yik Yaks about us coming for just the free food and that it's disrespectful, but that's not true. We just wanted to come out and mingle with the seniors. Everything we've done comes from deep respect and deep consideration. We didn't make these decisions alone or lightheartedly.

Jessie: I would like to say that I stand with the three houses who withdrew. I feel very deeply in what they're doing is best for their houses. I understand that there is a power dynamic there. I'm not saying to get rid of the tradition, but maybe there needs to be a discussion about the power dynamic and make it a fun tradition for everyone.

Lathrop: Shifting the conversation, as a member of CARES, all House members should've received an email about study breaks. I encourage all Houses to hold these study breaks, especially as midterms approach. These hotlines are crucial for the mental well-being of students.

President: Part of what we did with Traditions last year is that we made the Chair a 2 year position, which will be helpful with institutional memory. In the future, I'm thinking of creating a serenading committee.

Davison: Can we spread that message? Can we make an effort to inform people where we're coming from?

Town Houses: About Marianne, I don't think five minutes is enough.

South Commons: Just speaking briefly, we might want to talk about thinking ahead of time on how to frame discussions. We have committees to have vectors because I think this has been happening every time.

2018: I appreciate everything you said, Maya, but what is their job? What are they doing? Why don't we have a committee working with them? I think students a lot of time make changes here and I want to know what people are doing day-to-day like the president or I don't know, I just want to know what everyone is doing because it's not our job to do what they are hired for.

2017: I agree. I don't know why she came. She did come with an open mind and it felt like she didn't want to listen to what we said based on her body language.

Ferry: Maybe we can write an article in Misc. or something.

Raymond: I don't think it's fair that she came wanting to be unproductive. Although what they do as administration might be muddled, it's not fair to say that they don't have the students' best interest in heart and mind. It's true that she'd been having mixed reviews from students. I agree there should be vision, but there need to be student input and they can't make decision without student input because then we'll complain that they didn't have student input. I don't like to say this, but the way we talked towards her was a bit too aggressive.

Terrace Apartments: I just want to mention that these people do have a student's committee and my friend in one of them hasn't gotten an email from them. VSA needs to talk to the student members and the administration. We have a committee! We don't need to make one! It has four people and we need to make it so that they meet and talk. The committee exists.

Jessie: I was looking through last year's campaign statements. They don't view their position as seriously as they run for and that creates issues. We also need to promote all these positions so the people running for them understand how crucial it is they do their job.

South Commons: Just to remind people, when Marianne comes here, she's different from the big governments. We get it that elections are hard because so many positions are open. It's on us that we start honing the realization that it's Ramy and these joint committees...A really bad habit of the VSA committee is that a topic is discussed once and then forgotten.

Finance: All funds got in on the dashboard. Send questions to the new webmaster. If you know your treasurers have not filled out the Vcard policy, please have them fill it out.

2016: My friend was glad that the serenading is being talked about. If you make a committee, I think she'd be a great addition.

Town Students: When we took a vote a few weeks ago, we didn't get 2/3. Can we change that with the bylaws?

President: The issue is that with Robert Juiles, 2/3 vote is 2/3 of all members. We had so many abstain that it couldn't have possibly passed.

Lathrop: Does the new webmaster have control over the website now?

Ruby: We have a brilliant webmaster and she's more than ready. I'll keep you updated.

South Commons: Have you talked to CIS yet about Casey?

Operations: No, not yet.

Joss: It was brought to my attention that when emails are sent to Reslife, the old president is getting them and we're not getting them.