

VSA Council

Sunday, October 4, 2015

7:00pm – 9:30pm, New England 106

Minutes by Steven Park

Attendance

Everyone present with no proxies.

Consensus Agenda

- a. Fund Allocations TBA
- b. Appointment of Steven Huynh to 2017 BOEA Rep
- c. Appointment of Seamus Taylor to 2017 BOEA Rep
- d. Appointment of Abby Johnson to BOEA Chair
- e. Approval of New Pre-Orgs:
 - i. Pre-Vet Club
 - ii. Vassar College Majors
 - iii. Vassar Toastmasters
 - iv. Jewish Voice for Peace
 - v. The Clove
- f. Certification of J Street U
- g. Minutes from 9/27/15

President: Does anyone object to the consensus agenda?

Forum with Arlene Sabo from Safety and Security

Sabo: You won't believe this, but I have spent 30 years in law enforcement. I'm not that old, though. Anyways, when this job came up, I read the job description and I said "Wow, I need to go to Vassar! This is for me!" There's a lot to address. Six burglaries! A few trespasses. One with very scary comments. I know a lot about different laws for college campuses; one is for alerts that need to go out. The burglary alerts have to be sent out to

campus according to law. We got some issues and we need to have a discussion with the campus as a whole. Another problem I'm dealing with is that residents on College Avenue, the faculty who live there, are very upset with the noise from the apartments next door occupied by Vassar students. One of those apartments got ticketed by the police. And then they got issued with a nuisance violation. Now there's just another party at another house. What we talked about at the meeting is that there's always somebody upset or traumatized or victimized, so I want to do some prevention stuff. But I need student views on what to do with the loud noises at the TAs and the THs. These are all complaints coming in. The officers are responding to legitimate complaints. The person who reported one thought it was a burglary at the THs. It was a trespass and they were non-students. It didn't look like a burglary and they said they just wanted to go to the party at the THs. But one problem is that officers are accosted for responding and investigating. I don't know how we can keep the noise down. The officers were screamed at by intoxicated students for doing their job. How do we come to a consensus on what is the proper way to respond to a complaint? Can I get your help on these things? I'm open to listen and open to hear.

Operations: Before we get to the forum part, can we talk about guidelines? After the forum with Marianne, Operations and Execs came up with a system to manage the forum so we can organize it based on subject topic. Also, the meeting with Marianne didn't go that well, so we should be respectful and provide feedback in a productive way.

President: The topics are surveillance technology, general projects, and lighting on campus.

Sabo: Actually, we do have a meeting about the issue of surveillance. We came up with an idea. She thought that at least every residence hall should have a camera at the entrance where the card is swiped. If the card isn't swiped, there is an alarm. We want to know if students want that or expand on that. I will further propose that we think about barriers and/or cameras. Maybe at the THs and the TAs, but especially the THs. Some residents were talking about physical barriers to block unwanted people out. We want to close off these dangerous routes. Right before I interviewed for this job, I dealt with two cases. One was about a boy who overdosed on heroin. Another was a young man who left a party and had something to drink and had medical issues and he wandered off and froze to death.

So I am very familiar with these situations. What I support is more frequent non-alcoholic events on campus. Regarding lighting, the campus safety advisory committee is meeting this week. One of the things they have done annually is the lighting walk and they pick out some priority areas. If the student government has thoughts on specific lighting areas, then I want to hear it.

At-Large: I have a question. Do you know why we are seeing more burglaries this year?

Sabo: I asked for the numbers to be scanned. There is an uptick. It's hard to say what the causes of that are without having caught anyone. My theory is that typically when people are burglarizing, they're feeding a drug habit. Drug use has exploded lately and we're no exception.

Town Houses: We had a lot of issues. We tried to change the culture so people will lock their doors. People are wondering what the next step is. Many people are worried that there will be increased police activity and they don't want that. One idea is having a neighborhood watch where people are actually wandering around. People are gung-ho right now, but once winter hits, they won't want to walk around outside anymore. Also, police and security have a set hours for surveillance and it's not large things that are stolen; they're small things under the cover of night. The cultural shift is hard to change, but it is happening. It's good that it's happening. We appreciate the alerts so more people would be aware.

Sabo: I agree that the neighborhood watch is a good idea.

Terrance Apartments: There is a liability about a neighborhood watch. We have a student EMS and we already have student respondents. I encourage you to read up on the history of that.

Sabo: Well, I think there is a difference between security and EMS.

Cushing: I want to know about the follow-ups. What actions have been taken at the end of the semester? I would like a system in place where everything is reviewed at the end of the semester or at the end of the year.

Sabo: I like that idea too. I'll look more into that.

President: We are now switching to surveillance technology.

Strong: I think that it's concerning that we don't have a security system. We can't track who comes in the building and how long they're there. I don't know if other residential areas have this problem, but our door sometimes doesn't lock when it closes.

Sabo: We're going to have to check that out. Send me an email so we can try the lock together.

Strong: We'll make a statement.

South Commons: So three questions regarding surveillance. First, how are you going to approach this issue of security? Are you going to get consensus from the security committee or will you push on or have a forum with the students? Will the cameras be utilized when it's apparent that there's evidence of a crime or will someone be there and watch the cameras all day? The second question is I want to know your thoughts on access to dorms. On this college campus, students have universal access to dormitories. For all nine residential dorms, all students can access them as long as they have a card. That's not common with other colleges. Finally, I want to know your feelings about how the card office controls card access and about what you're planning to do about card control. The card office actually has records of when you exit and enter buildings.

Sabo: Here's my thoughts. On the surveillance and how it's going to work, we're having our first meeting and residential life is involved. As far as any surveillance, the monitoring of it constantly: that's impossible. Right now there's already 125 cameras. We can't monitor them constantly. Maybe we can have more focus on specific rooms like 24 hour room, but they're so busy with getting calls and dispatching and a lot of other stuff. Surveillance is typically used after a report has been issued or as an investigation tool. I also think there should be guidelines on who gets to access the records and what they can do under the guidelines of the law. My thought on universal dorm access is that at 11 or at midnight, that access changes to residents only.

South Commons: But there are a lot of things going on during that time, too. Keep in mind that we're a mostly residential campus. A lot of students stay here instead of commuting.

Sabo: I will say that, in my opinion, is that that makes it much harder. As part of my job, I will be more conservative on this. I'm supposed to keep people safe. But I don't have or want the authority to make sweeping decisions. I'm aware about the card access and I don't think there is a problem with it...?

Cushing: I have a few recommendation. When you talk about this, students should be involved since day 1. Maybe you can visit residential areas to talk to the students to make sure they agree on everything. My second recommendation is to have security only outside the resident buildings. We're also concerned if you will report anything that security film picks up, like smoking.

Sabo: We'll overlook the minor stuff. We plan on focusing on issues where people are hurt or property is destroyed.

Cushing: Another thing is that we would like to keep the 24 hour access, because I know that if printing doesn't work where I am, I can just rush to a different building to print. I don't need to call a friend to print it for me. It's very important we have that access.

2018: Just to keep in mind, a lot of students might not be a fan of surveillance, but we know there are issues with people coming into our dorms. And I think it's crazy that there is no surveillance where we live. There were cases where people came in and stole stuff and security couldn't find them or do anything about them since there were no video tapes. So while you might hear students talk about how they want their privacy, remember that the students' safety is their number one concern.

Ferry: Some concerns I have: I think there should be rules set in place on who can access them, rules about deleting videos, when they should be deleted and so forth. Vassar is a free and loving place and there are things like the Naked Run that people don't want filmed, and if they aren't deleted, then it might be a serious issue. There should be set rules on who can see the videos so that they aren't disseminated online.

Sabo: I agree. The videos should be deleted after 30 days or something like that. I'll keep that in mind.

Lathrop: One recommendation I want to make is about the bikes being stolen. Maybe we can have cameras pointing at the bike racks. I think that might be better than pointing them at students.

Sabo: These are great ideas.

Town Houses: In regards to technology, when you respond to events like a burglary, is there automatically a shift in the patrol? Like if something happens, does the normal routine change to respond? Maybe we can change the places and times of surveillance every once in a while.

Sabo: There isn't a set way we patrol anything except the residence halls. So, there are no shifts, but the officers have to go through every residence hall three times a night.

Town Houses: Maybe we can find new ways to use tech and maybe specialize different places and times.

Sabo: That might be difficult in regards to people actually carrying that out. It doesn't seem really necessary to have that.

Main: Something quick about having a privacy check on people who can check the videos. I know one university where there's a checking system and you can email certain people asking to see a specific time frame if there was something stolen at that time but you would have to log it out and recorded that you checked it.

President: Switching over to general projects...

Ferry I have a quick concern. I'm concerned about the way if someone felt endangered and called safety and security to pick them up and how that works. I had a lot of complaints about that on the response like how they won't respond in certain areas.

Sabo: You mean off-campus?

Ferry: Yes. Also, there have been people in the past who haven't been good with responding.

Sabo: We have look further into that.

Town Houses: As a direct response, females who call tend not be questioned while males who call do. Like when a girl calls, they're immediately responded while a guy calls, they ask "why are you feeling unsafe?" This shouldn't be an issue. If someone feels unsafe, they feel unsafe.

Sabo: Let's think about how we deploy our resources. I think that's important here. That's another operational issue we have. How thin can we spread and still be effective? How many people should we have on duty at a time? On Fridays and Saturdays, we have six people on duty. That's a lot of people.

Josselyn: But if we're so spread thin, shouldn't we focus on additional staffing? We used to have more people on patrol and more people on duty.

Sabo: Well, we're hiring two or three more soon. There's a lot of issues in this staffing. It's complex. I can't make changes immediately, but I might want to restructure everything a little bit. We'll see.

Josselyn: I think the student body would be very interested in that.

South Commons: First, thank you for coming. I just want to say, since you were the chief of police before, that Vassar is not a university police department and we don't want it to be a university police department. If Vassar becomes an accredited police department, officers may have power to lay out huge fines and felony charges. Do you want Vassar to be a police department? Also, this is a small and unique campus and I really hope that we'll a partner relationship, not an authoritative department.

Sabo: What I see right now is that we need to enhance what we have.

South Commons: Well, I hope that whether what the situation is with staffing, I think we can do better. If staffing is the issue, and we have a massive campus, we shouldn't sacrifice.

President: Our last comment will be about lighting starting with the THs.

Town Houses: The THs are very under-lighted. I was wondering if you can walk with me and I can show you exactly where. Also it'd be nice if the path was repaved because it might be dangerous for bikers.

Sabo: Sure, we can schedule that soon.

President: Thank you for coming!

Arlene Sabo leaves

Reports

Activities: We are currently in the reviewing process of the pre-orgs. There's six applications more to go. After break, we'll review current pre-orgs and level them up if possible. The last project we're working on is cleaning out closet space with the ROC.

Josselyn: So, we've been meeting resistance regarding closet space. There are groups where some groups think they are entitled to closet space after using them year after year, and it's annoying.

Activities: I think closet space is handled under the collaboration with the ROC and the Activities committee. If there's something you want to discuss, you can set up a meeting with me.

Town Houses: Regarding our last Activities meeting, we had an issue where a group of students came to manipulate a vote and one of the things we need to have is a set rule for each of our divisions that an open meeting does not mean people can come in and get a vote. There are a lot of misconceptions about open committees. You should have attended three meetings before you can. There should be a system where you have to attend a certain number of meeting before being able to vote.

President: TO directly respond, each committee has the power to change that and also each VP has the power to close their committee at their discretions.

Operations: I encourage you all to come to these restructuring meetings. This government will not be restructured if you don't know why it looks the way it is now.

President: It will be extremely frustrating if you do not attend these meetings and then afterwards go "What? No."

Finance: After October Break, there will be treasurer training. The Finance Intern and I have been working on the issues regarding the Dashboard among other things. I can talk about fund levels now. For capital funds, we've used 1% of that so far...

Everyone: Wait, slow down for a minute.

Finance: Don't worry, I'll send everyone the email.

Joss: We did talk one point about moving the meetings and I feel like those discussions have ceased.

Finance: Yes, we're going to review those discussions after October.

President: So, I'll be talking about the Seven Sisters update. So basically the Seven Sisters conference is at Barnard this year and it's from Friday November 6th to Sunday November 8th. The theme of the conference is "Advancing Women's' Education Globally." We are allowed to send 12 people so who wants to go. Let's see: Joss, Davi, 2016, Noyes, Ferry, Raymond, Lathrop, Main, 2019, 2017, Cushing, 2018, Strong, THs, and Jewett. That's way more than twelve, so I'll be sending out a Google Form that you have to fill out by Wednesday since we have to register by Friday. Ruby will have to go along with Rebecca.

Constituent Concerns

Raymond: I would like to complain about the heating.

At-Large: Some B&G guy said that it won't be turned on until after October Break.

Raymond: We should push so that if the weather goes below a specific temperature, we should have heating no matter what because people are sick and this is isn't helping.

Operations: I just want to say that our campus is very old and old buildings don't have quite as good heating capacities.

Noyes: I just want to bring up the issue that people have been bothering the Noyes residents on the first floor since they're right there and can be seen right outside.

Open Discussion

Everyone looks at Cushing.

Cushing: Okay, I didn't want to bring this up because the administration has been trying to do something about it. Things have been done, thank God, and we're having a forum with B&G next Friday. One problem is that new pressure has been placed on maintenance workers, so be mindful of that. It's important to show the maintenance workers that they're appreciated.

Lathrop: This is a prime opportunity to have an open discussion on hiring more workers.

Town Houses: Beyond just cleaning our shit, they're also in class with us. These are serious community members.

Ferry: Just piggybacking on the appreciation of workers, let's have appreciation days for them.

At-Large: Some of those days do exist. But the administration doesn't want students with the staff, so students are not notified and they don't show up.

South Commons: Let's bear in mind that it's a very complicated system. We should always appreciate them though.

Town Houses: I would argue that we should go beyond appreciation and beyond just saying thank-you.

Cushing: They're trying to get Bob Walden to get a walkthrough through our dorms.

2017: Maybe we can do something on all-college day? They work all the time. Also I wanted to bring this up earlier, but maybe we can have a texting service for security? We want to be discreet when we contact Safety and Security.

Student Life: Different topic. I've been in talks with Sam Spears about putting together a vigil for the lives lost at Oregon shooting. He's been approached by other students and he asked me today whether if this is something the VSA would be interested in cosponsoring? In my understanding, I believe it's just a sign-on for it, maybe even show up?

Motion to vote to cosponsor the vigil (not committing money or time; just having the name on as cosponsor):

2016

Yes

2017	Yes
2018	Yes
2019	Yes
Cushing	Yes
Davison	Yes
Ferry	Yes
Jewett	Abstain
Joss	Yes
Lathrop	Yes
Main	Yes
Noyes	Yes
Raymond	Yes
Strong	Yes
South Commons	Yes
Terrace Apartments	Yes
Town Houses	Yes
Town Students	Yes
Finance	Yes
Academics	Yes
Activities	Yes
Student Life	Abstain
Operations	Yes
President	Can't Vote

President: Alright, we're cosponsors.

Finance: I got this email yesterday about a workshop by the ALANA center called "Whiteness: Understanding and Challenging Racism." The description for this workshop said that it will be a white affinity space designed to talk about the history of race, whiteness, power, and privilege. While I appreciate these conversations are happening,

I'm wondering having a white affinity space in the ALANA center is appropriate, so I'm approaching the VSA to see if we can make it clear that it's uncool and should not happen there. I feel uncomfortable with conversations about race happening in Alana center that people of color can't attend.

Student Life: First, I want to apologize to Josh. I was approached by Diane Eshelman a while ago and I should have brought it up. They did this past year and it was a three-part series. It wasn't by the ALANA Center, but it was sponsored by Diane Eshelman and last year's ALANA Center Director. This year, it will be a seven-part series directed by Diane Eshelman. While I am also uncomfortable about this, I do believe that there is a merit to having this talk about privilege. I know that last year, it was well-attended. Yes, I have heavy reservations about it being in the ALANA Center.

Finance: My mistake, it's apparently in Rocky not the ALANA Center. I'm still concerned why this is still a thing and people of color aren't invited. It feels exclusionary.

Cushing: I agree with Josh. Also, it's just weird that the first workshop by the ALANA Center is about a white affinity center and that there are no other workshops. If this is a seven-part series, I would really appreciate if there was a workshop regarding my identity, too.

Terrance Apartments: Just asking, who emailed you about that?

Finance: It was forwarded as an email by Cappy's intern.

2018: Does anyone know who will be in charge of these discussions?

President: Dianne.

Student Life: I guess this is a good a time as any. Diane Eshelmen approached me about this last year asking me to liaison at the VSA Council and if they want to do this again since the VSA paid for it last year. Obviously, there seems to be a lot of opinions in the room. Maybe it's a good time to discuss it? They will be cosponsored by the ALANA Center.

President: Point of clarification: The VSA funded it instead of the ALANA Center last year, because we thought it'd be fucked up if Alana center paid for it.

2016: If Luce lead the training last year, I wonder what kind of training Diane has had for this seven-part series.

Ferry: This is ONLY for white people?

Finance: All I know is that it's a white affinity space whatever the hell that means.

Student Life: What it is to my understanding is that it's a seven-part series where if you sign up, you have to go to all seven. It's a white affinity space in that it's tailored towards teaching white people about their privilege and power. I don't know if color people were turned away. It was on a volunteer basis.

Cushing: I appreciate the effort to make white people conscious. But I don't like that it's the first workshop and it excludes people of color and that there are no other workshops.

President: There will be a workshop for only people of color in November.

At-Large: I see the point. The idea that it excludes people of color bothers me. How can we address this situation?

Lathrop: There is a series of programs talking about race, but the problem is that very few people attend them. I talked to a professor and he said that very few people do not attend them and they happen all throughout the year.

Student Life: To respond to At-Large, I don't have an answer. But I know that it was meant to be a direct way to grab the attention of white people since they're not very conscious about this like other people and I think that's why it's happening first.

Finance: Is the Office of Residential Life cosponsoring this as well?

President: I don't know.

2019: I agree with everyone. I'm just asking if this is very beneficial at all. I don't understand how this will be beneficial when people who sign up are ignorant of their privilege.

President: I just going to say that during VSA training, we talked about how there needs to be more identity education for first year students. It also kills me that the college is

paying for white people to learn about whiteness and race, but if it's a way to finally get them to talk about it...

South Commons: Two quick things. First is the Reslife task force. The idea was that we chartered with Reslife and go forward with what we want changed and improved. Unfortunately, at our last meeting, only three people showed up, so if people are interested in joining, then I encourage you to. We'll talk about structure of Reslife and talk about how student fellows are treated and such.

President: Shout-out to Main and Lathrop for an awesome Fallest and LUV. Also, make sure to sign up for one-on-one meetings with me.

Cushing: Just to get it out, Cushing's all campus event is on November 7th. It's at the CCMPR and it will be called "69."

2017: Can you tell me what's going about Food Truck Friday?

President: It'll take a while. We're still working on it.

South Commons: About this space, I think it's very effective.

At-Large: I would also like to mention that it's hard for students outside the VSA to come to these meetings if it's held here since the front door is locked.

At-Large: Also, several of the outlets on the back right do not work. That's very annoying.

At-Large: I just want to ask about communication on where the meetings are held. As someone not in loop, it's been troublesome to get to these meetings.

2018: I wanted to ask the At-Large members in the room about if the meetings are too far away from dorms.

Finance: I want to congratulate Ruby for finally getting the space.

At-Large: I do think the acoustics here are pretty bad, but I think the acoustics at the CCMPR are worse.

Meeting Ajourned.