



**BOARD MEETING: NOV. 3RD 2009**

Presided over by Jared Wigdor. Minutes by Bryan Kam.

**MEETING DETAILS**

Date: Tuesday, Nov. 3rd 2009

Time: 7:00 PM

Venue: WLH 205

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Jared Wigdor, President

Filip Savatic, Vice President

Sebastian Serra, Treasurer

Bryan Kam, Secretary

Rachel Wolf, MUNTY Head Delegate

Bryce Scanlan, SCSY Secretary General

Natalie Kotkin, YMUN Secretary General

Jharrett Bryantt, UNCSY Secretary General

Elizabeth Breit, Outreach Chair

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

**2. PRESENTATION FROM JOHAN VAN RIJN ON SPEAKERS COMMITTEE PANEL**

- Johan explained that he had gotten in touch with Swati, the Head of the Speakers Committee 3 weeks earlier regarding his proposal for a Speakers Event; he explained he had received a Gaddis Smith Grant to organize a talk by a specialist in genocide and international law who had worked on the Yugoslavian Tribunal.
- Johan further said that Swati had told him to lay out his proposal to the Board for funding, as his proposed budget was \$800 - \$900, while the Gaddis Smith Grant provided only \$500.
- He explained that the event would probably take place in the Spring, and might be over a brown-bag lunch.
- Rachel asked what the audience for the event was; Johan replied that it would be all sorts of people, including international relations and international studies students, as well as those from the law school, and anyone else interested in the topic of genocide.
- Jared asked what kind of publicity the event would require; Johan explained that publicity would mostly take the form of emails through panlists.
- Lizzie asked what the budget would be allocated to; Johan said this was primarily for the plane or train trip to New Haven. Jared followed up by asking if Johan could send the full proposal to the Board; Johan explained he had sent this to Swati.
- Jared said the Board would talk to Swati; Johan said this sounded good, and there was no rush to make a decision.
- Jharrett said it might be possible for a Master to host the speaker in a guest suite, which might reduce the costs.
- Natalie said one possible source of funding might be the Law School.

- Bryce explained that he liked the idea, but that ideally, Johan should find a way to cut costs, as \$400 was a large sum.
- Natalie asked what the timeline for scheduled Speaker Events was for the Spring; Jared said that Swati had two or three panels planned, in particular a panel on China.

### **3. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

- Bryan explained that he had circulated the minutes earlier, and that Natalie had submitted revisions.
- The Board unanimously approved the minutes from the previous meeting.

### **4. DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

- Lizzie said she had not submitted a Department Update; she explained, however, that she had finally shored up a curriculum, and that the kids in her program had attended SCSY to spectate and had really liked it. She explained the classes were currently in the process of holding debates.
- Jared then asked Sebastian to explain the issue with tax returns that had arisen. Sebastian explained that he had just completed the tax returns for the 2008 financial year, but that these had been completed late, and had not been signed. As a result, YIRA had incurred a substantial fine of several thousand dollars.
- Sebastian explained, however, that he had submitted a letter asking for an abatement of the fine, and that the woman he had spoken to at the IRS had said it was likely the fine would be reduced substantially.
- Natalie asked Sebastian when he had first heard of the issue; Sebastian said he had received letters over late tax returns over the summer, but had only been told of the fine when he had called the IRS.
- Sebastian said that the figure quoted for the fine was extremely high, and the IRS had not been able to explain why it was set at this figure; he had he would continue to monitor the issue and report back.
- Jared asked Bryan to explain his progress with setting up a YIRA page on Wikipedia. Bryan explained he had tried setting this up twice, but both times, it had been deleted for reasons of “not showing the significance of the matter.”
- Rachel said she had some past experience with posting on Wikipedia, and that one good strategy was to place links to other pages, such as Yale University, to legitimize the site.
- Jared asked if there were any further questions on department updates. Rachel said she had one departmental suggestion, which was that the conferences should inform staffers of the time commitment beforehand, preferably at signups, as many staffers hadn't necessarily known that they were expected to staff the entire weekend of SCSY.

### **5. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**

- Jared explained that an amendment had been submitted by Bryce and Fil, and that this Board meeting would be the beginning of the process by which this amendment would be considered; he explained that this amendment would require a 2/3rd vote of the Board to be presented to the general membership for consideration.
- Bryce began by explaining that the basis for this amendment was discussions he had Fil several weeks prior regarding the selection process for Secretary Generals; they had both agreed that the position was too expansive for any one person, and that the way that they had divided the work between them, with Bryce overseeing most of the admin-related work, and Fil overseeing much of the committees-related work, had worked very well.
- Bryce further explained that, given this relatively equal division of work, it seemed unfair that the Director General had not been given a Full Board title.
- Bryce explained that the constitutional amendment would basically elevate the position of Director-General to the status of a Board position; the Director-General would deal with the committees-half of the conference, while the Secretary-General would deal mostly with the logistical work.
- Rachel began by asking whether it would this amendment would work, and whether the conferences could function with two leaders; she also asked whether this amendment would constrain the ability of the conferences to choose to operate under the current YMUN system, whereby there was one Secretary-General and two DGs.

- Lizzie explained she was imagining a situation where this would retroactively occur, and whether YMUN would have worked had there been a “co-Natalie”; she said she understood Bryce and Fil had worked well together as partners, but that this might not always be the case for a Secretary-General who liked to delegate.
- Lizzie further asked what would happen in a situation where a Secretary-General and a DG were independently chosen, but did not get along.
- Bryan asked who the ultimate “decider” would be in situations where the both disagreed; Bryce said that this would depend on which area of the conference was being decided upon – the Secretary-General would have decisions over admin-related decisions, while the DG would preside over all Committees-related decisions.
- Bryce further reiterated that the primary problem with the existing system was that the position of Secretary-General was too “all-consuming,” which often deterred people from applying to become Secretary-General.
- Lizzie then said, in which case, it seemed what needed to be addressed was why the DG system of having one Secretary-General and two DGs was not functioning as it should, rather than introducing “Co-Presidents”.
- Jharrett asked for a clarification by asking how this would apply to the situation of YMUN; Natalie said the amendment would have basically abolished the Secretary-General role, and it would be as if there were the two DGs, eliminating one position, but ultimately spreading out the work between two “Co-Secretaries-General”.
- Lizzie commented that she thought the problem was that, although Bryce and Fil had worked well together, this situation might not be replicable across all circumstances.
- Sebastian said he had two comments; firstly, he explained that two questions were pertinent – firstly, whether the amendment was most effective for the functioning of the conferences, and secondly, how this amendment would apply to the functioning of the Board; he explained a large concern of his was the effect of this amendment on the Board, as it would increase the number of Board members to 12, a large proportion of whom were never elected.
- He also commented that he believed Board meetings, as they were, were already too large and inefficient, and that having 12 Board members would make it even more so.
- Rachel said she agreed with Sebastian, and that adding 2 additional Board members would alter the dynamics of the Board, as well as alter the idea that you could turn to one person on the Board for all the information you needed on any given department.
- Fil replied that he thought, firstly, that Sebastian’s argument that the Board might become too big was a valid argument, but that perhaps Board functionality might be sacrificed in favor of conference effectiveness.
- Fil also returned to the issue of whether the Secretary-General and DG selected would get along if independently selected; he replied that this was something that would be taken into the account in the application and selection process.
- Bryan said he had two questions: firstly, he asked Fil and Bryce whether the title of “Co-Secretaries-General” would be better and perhaps less confusing, and secondly, what substantively was wrong with the current YMUN system of having 1 Secretary-General and 2 Director-Generals.
- Sebastian said he agreed, and thought that the Bryce / Fil dynamic might have been unique rather than the norm; he also asked what this division of roles would do to accountability; if either the DG or Secretary-General was incompetent and did not complete their work, there would be no enforcing person above.
- Bryce explained that the Board was the primary accountability mechanism, and that the issue of accountability was still important even if there was only one Secretary-General, and currently, there is no way to enforce work on an incompetent Secretary-General, regardless of whether there is one Secretary-General or two.
- Rachel said, accountability aside, she wanted to return to the issue of conference effectiveness; she explained that she thought the idea of codifying there being two head positions did not leave sufficient flexibility for the conferences to return to the previous system in case that that fit the particular candidates at hand.
- Lizzie said she agreed, and thought that YIRA might not necessarily be able to find 4 stellar Secretaries-General each year, year after year.
- Natalie replied, in response to Rachel’s comment, that there was still some flexibility in the system, as the structure of the Secretariat was not codified, and still up to the discretion of the incoming Secretaries-General.
- Sebastian asked whether it was possible to implement this system without necessarily having two positions on the Board; Jared replied that it might not be possible, because both positions supposedly offered different perspectives.
- Sebastian replied that he had thought Bryce had done a good job of representing both the Admin and Committees side while on the Board; Bryce said while this was true, this was a huge burden of responsibility and that he should not have had to.

- Lizzie said that, conference effectiveness aside, she still had a significant problem with the fact that, if implemented, this amendment would create a Board where half of the positions would not be elected.
- Natalie replied that that was a concern that related to the selection of Secretaries-General in general, not just with the new system provided by this amendment.
- Bryan asked for a clarification; he explained he had not yet heard a full explanation for what was wrong with the current system of having one Secretary-General and two DGs; Jharrett said he agreed that this was not an issue that had been fully addressed.
- Bryce explained that having two DGs had created too much lag between the ultimate decision-maker, the Secretary-General, and the USGs doing the actual work, and that therefore the new system would be more effective.
- Lizzie said she again questioned whether this was Bryce and Fil working together well under such a system, or whether this was truly universally applicable.
- Bryce said that on another note, the independent selection of Secretary-General and DG might improve accountability, as the Secretary-General wasn't necessarily simply selecting someone he or she was friendly with.
- Rachel said she had a logistical question, and asked whether any Board members had changed their minds on the amendment. Jharrett, Lizzie and Sebastian said they remained unconvinced.
- Sebastian asked what Natalie's experience with YMUN had been; Natalie said she thought that having one person ultimately oversee so much was not a viable way to run an organization, especially when YMUN accounted for nearly 70% of YIRA's income.
- Rachel asked whether Bryce and Fil had spoken to Zharna or Amandla regarding the amendment, as well as to other previous Board members; she said there needed to be some consultation, as there might otherwise be strong opposition to the amendment.
- Sebastian said the heart of the problem was that there was too much pressure on the single Secretary-General; he explained that he was not convinced that the best way to resolve that was to have two conference heads, and especially two members on the Board.
- Jharrett said he agreed, and he thought that DGs in fact relieved pressure, since the Secretary-General, to some extent, could rely on the DGs to make certain decisions.
- Rachel reiterated one of her concerns was Board size; she explained that given the deliberative nature of the Board, this amendment might make the Board somewhat unwieldy, and that she wasn't convinced one person could not achieve on the Board what this new amendment would give to two persons.
- Sebastian asked if Bryce and Fil had been "Co-Secretaries-General", would the dynamic between them have changed? He said he thought perhaps the dynamic may not have worked necessarily as well.
- Bryce replied that while he was ultimately in charge, Fil had done equally significant amounts for the conference; he explained he thought it was not fair that Fil did not receive the same level of title and equal power.
- Lizzie explained that she thought the amendment was not going to pass that night, and that the next step should be to consult Amandla, Zharna and other past Secretaries-General to gain more information.
- The Board agreed to discuss the amendment at a special Board Meeting the following week, after more work was done on the amendment by Bryce and Fil.

## **6. INTERNATIONAL TRIP UPDATE**

- Fil began by saying he had been disappointed by the number of people who had stayed after the SCSY Preconference Meeting to hear about international trips.
- He said one important question was whether or not to raise the stipend per trip, since there were only two rather than three international trips, as had been planned.
- Bryce asked what strategies could have been employed to keep people at the international trips meeting; Rachel said there should not have been as long a lag time between the end of the SCSY Preconference Meeting and the international trips presentation.
- Sebastian and Rachel both agreed that raising the trip stipends was fine; Lizzie said she worried that this might lead to the feeling that trips might over-budget because they knew this was the amount they would receive.

- Sebastian said he nevertheless supported raising the stipend to \$500, but that the Board should view raising the stipend from the perspective of what else YIRA would otherwise spend the money on; he said he thought there were no other options that were as valuable.
- Rachel asked if more applicants would be attracted if the Board announced the raising of the stipend before the deadline for applications; Fil said he thought there wouldn't be any particular effect, and this should not be the reason to do so.
- Jared said that, given this, the Board should postpone the decision on raising the stipend until it could best consider what alternatives for spending the money there might be; this was agreed upon.

## **7. HAPPY HOUR**

- Jared explained that the last two Happy Hours had been fairly poorly attended, but that perhaps this had been due to factors outside of the Board's control, such as Midterms. Jharrett said that there had been Midterms, as well as three Screws on the day of one of the Happy Hours.
- Rachel asked why the Happy Hours were now in the Saybrook-Branford Room rather than the Athenaeum Room; Jared explained that the Saybrook Athenaeum Room was now a "dry" room due to other events that had occurred in Saybrook.
- Natalie suggested one good idea for attracting more people to Happy Hours would be for each department head to send their departments an email; it was decided this would be done.
- Fil said he would email out setup and cleanup duty assignments.

## **8. FALL BANQUET**

- Jared explained that the Board had allocated \$2,500 for the Fall Banquet.
- Sebastian explained he had been to Scoozi, Pacifico and Hot T's, and that the cheapest option had been Hot T's, although the quality of Scoozi and Pacifico was higher. He said the primary difference in cost was the cost of food, rather than drinks, which were fairly consistent in all three restaurants.
- He explained that Scoozi and Pacifico would cost \$35 per head, while Hot T's was \$29, but that this depended on the drinks arrangement, and whether there would be a limit to drinks provided.
- Sebastian said that Hot T's would roughly \$2,500 altogether with food, and \$3,000 with drinks.
- As time was running short, Jared said the Board would defer the conversation on the Fall Banquet until the next meeting.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 PM.