

Board Retreat Notes (September 27-28, 2008)

The first part is Charene's notes.

BIRT RPIRG will pay 35\$ for the website.

Investigate fact that we don't collect fees in Spring/Summer yet still provide services

Go with GBLUR, Women's Centre on BOD elections.

Staff duties: At the bequest of BOD, organize RPIRG election nominees and hold meeting for them explaining their duties; Volunteer recruitment and retention; Classroom talks.

Board duties: Attend bi-weekly meetings; be on committees

The Financial committee will:

- go over monthly expenses
- sign cheques
- be aware of budget
- share assessments with BOD

The Application Assessment Committee will:

- Overview applications
- Pass policy about application qualifications
- Summarize applications and present recommendations the BOD

The Policy committee will:

- Write the mission statement
- Make changes to the constitution when needed

Other Committee ideas:

- Staff Relations/HR Committee
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Education/outreach/PR (which would do classroom talks/posters)

Create portfolios. Overall BOD responsibilities are to act as RPIRG representatives, do classroom talks, do PR/outreach

What we talked about on Sunday after charlotte left, although these AREN'T minutes- it's just to give an idea of what was discussed (from my notes).

What's in the best interest of the public?

Neutral doesn't mean that you can't be issue-based

RPIRG is about representing what's important to people vs. representing what's important to business

Billy wrote on some big sheets of paper words that kept cropping up in order to move us closer to the mission statement.

Nikko asked if maybe we're about nurturing citizenship, not the content of citizenship. Simply provide a platform (for lack of a better word) for students to get involved. (student engagement vs. social justice)

Gabe said university is supposed to be about the free exchange of ideas, where you learn to criticize the status quo, but that's often not how it is. Students don't have control of how we get taught. RPIRG provides the training ground for active, grassroots activism for after they graduate.

Glenna said we shouldn't have funded the Naomi Klein because only the NDP was invited to table at

the event. Furthermore, it was not initiated by students, nor did it go through the application process. Also, funding events just to get our name out there is bullshit.

Billy said we might want to consider, instead of being non-partisan, being multi-partisan.

Nikko added that she likes the word "diverse" because it implies non-partisan whereas "neutral" implies passivity.

Three possible basic qualifications for grant funding:

1. Has to fill out an application form, and go through the application process
2. Has to be student-initiated
3. Has to prove that it fosters citizen engagement

CONSENSUS Notes from the consensus talk (Charene and I's notes amalgamated together):

Rule of the majority has its roots in colonialism and patriarchy. Consensus, on the other hand, denotes a change in values where the listener is just as respected as the speaker. The listener watches the process and the ethic is that not everyone must speak to reach consensus.

Consensus comes from the word "consent", the root of which (con) is also the root for contrary. While democracy was fought for to include the rights of property-owning white men, each person in consensus communities has a right to be included in the outcome. Consensus concerns itself with the rights of the minority. Minorities can use that right to stand down or hold up consensus. The old model of "You're holding up consensus" is authoritarian. Sometimes in the past when consensus has been used, it got nasty and people used their minority rights as a veto. If someone REALLY disagrees, you have to deal with it because they're in the group. The attitude in consensus is cooperative: "Hey- we can actually create something together!", not: "I as an individual am consenting to the decision of the group."

Our mission is to know our body politic and our authority and resources are in the student body.

Is it logical for RPIRG to be a consensus group?

Line to use if you disagree: "I don't understand. If this is what you mean, I don't agree." It's okay to not make a decision because you're not yet ready.

When there is disagreement within consensus, here are some options:

1. Make larger idea so everyone can agree
2. Wait, set issue aside, do more research/thinking, etc. The issue doesn't have to get resolved right now.
3. Individual may stand aside to meet the decision deadline. Shrink circle of consensus; people who are comfortable moving to the next level of activism can go on while others can do support work for them. That way everyone stays active in the group.

During a discussion, at a certain point, people may ask, "let's hear from the listeners now". Listeners are a resource, even those who aren't "all there", because where they are at that present moment may be helpful to the group. Other listeners are sometimes overwhelmed and intimidated, but they still want to belong. You need a facilitator to ensure inclusion, but the facilitator can't do interpretation. It is alright to say, "I don't think we're agreeing yet". You want to listen to everyone's opinion because people might give up because they don't think they're getting heard. The listeners are as accountable for where the group is going as the talkers.

In consensus, you're creating an energy field. Even people who are absent from the meeting are part of that. Then again, some people want to be a party to something but only half there and that's okay.

A Facilitator:

- can't clarify
- sets the agenda
- passes around a stone or feather
- ensures presence of BOD
- manages the speaker's list
- needs to enforce WAIT, make time for silence

A Clarifier:

- gets vibes
- balances speakers and listeners by watching for need for silence
- watching if everyone gets what's going on
- are we agreeing?
- puts own opinions aside to regulate the group
- wrap-up at end of meetings
- is often the minute-taker

Check in and out:

"How many people here are on the edge of getting ahead of yourself?" "Are there other things in life bothering you?" What is your state of mind? Honestly. Do you need to back down or step in?

Erin's fireside notes...

Things we concluded:

Assessment of our Fiscal year end: Why do we have it as June 30th? Is our accountant going to tell Corporations Branch that our fiscal year has changed? Do we want to keep it as June 30th? Will Corporations Branch allow us to hold our AGM after the four months' deadline? We want to have our AGM this fall. We discussed the consitution issue. Someone should call Corporations and tell them our problem (about the minimum requirement to vote on consitution issue) and ask what we can possibly do in this situation. They might suggest a more feasible, cheap solution than our lawyer is proposing.

Billy suggested we find out if we get Spring/Summer funding.

Assessment of Free Knowledge Day:

FKD shouldn't have happened like it did. Charlotte had to get her boyfriend to help her paint posters. She sent out e-mails asking for help but didn't get the help she needed. Furthermore, she logged a total of 51 hours in the week of Free Knowledge Day alone. This is 31 hours over and above what her job description is. She was obviously miffed because we deliberately hired someone we knew wouldn't be around for the next two and a half weeks, but didn't step in to fill the void when we knew this was going to be a really crucial time.

The overtime Charlotte did raises two questions: Will planning FKD get easier so next year it only takes 20 hours a week to plan it? Is not having Nikko there sufficient explanation to explain why she had to work so much over time?

Or is this something Charlotte needs to have volunteers help her with every year? How many hours will it take to plan FKD next year? What can volunteers conceivably do? Making posters on the computer, paint giant posters, do PR work, and actually planning the day were thrown out as activities that took a long time.

We decided to "clean the slate" with Charlotte because she has so many overtime hours logged, it would be unfeasible for her to actually take those hours off during midterms because there were too many.

Nikko said that she already has been through a burnout and doesn't want to be a guinea pig for logging hours to see how many hours this job takes to get the job done. So it was suggested that every month, the personnel committee will get together with the staff, look at the hours they've worked, and evaluate if it's too much, too little, or just enough. A discussion will ensue. It was also suggested that we do monthly forecasts of how many hours it will take in the next month to do the work for the upcoming month. In that way, we can prevent a situation where a staff member has worked their twenty hours, is done working, and the job still hasn't been done. It was said that we can't expect either staff to work over and above their twenty hours. Once their twenty hours have been logged, they can be done. But then the staff is also responsible for letting the board know what isn't able to be gotten done.

BIRT Charlotte will be compensated by RPIRG for up to 20 hours a week above her 20 hours then after that it gets banked. After that it will get banked. This is a one-time thing because the administrative coordinator wasn't able to work during this critical time, but this is something that we can do if it happens again.

Mileage

- check other non profit policies re: mileage

- write up policy for the future

- ie: RPIRG will pay mileage for driving to retreats, running errands, etc. based on what is common for other non-profits.

Signing Authority

- staff should be able to sign for normal ongoing expenses (ie phone bill).

- have 2 staff and 2 board members as signing authorities

- non-regular cheques need to be signed by at least one board member

- staff sign own cheque?

AGM

- quorum=50

- have AGM, but if we don't get quorum, just leave it til next year

- report needs to be compiled (BTB statement, letter to members, etc) (Erin)

- audited statements up for AGM

- summary of activities

- vision for the future

- mission statement

Office Space

- have URSU liaison follow up where our new space will be

- make sure to have space secured before we get kicked out!!

Elections

X1. Elections shall be held in the in the fall and winter semesters, 4 seats at a time (to keep consistency). Each member holds his or her seat for one year.

Not piggy backing off URSU, elections are independent (to keep our autonomy)

*use volunteers to keep costs down

X3.1 BOD or staff will have meeting with nominees

X3.4 BOD or staff respond

Elections

-2 weeks of advertizing for nominees

-tentative early Nov. election: 7 seats (only Travis staying on)

-BOD will actively recruit people!!

Funding Policy

-applicant must be a member

-must submit application

-applications considered based on the following criteria:

(we didn't get this far)