

Sunday, April 9, 2017

Report of the Chair - 2016-2017

Dear Council,

First, I want to thank all of you for a phenomenal year. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with so many of you, and I am excited for all of the work that is yet to come this upcoming year. I also want to thank the Watch Board of Publishers and the Watch Executive team for 2016-17. I especially want to thank everyone who sat on Bylaw Review Committee this year, who put in a *ton* of work and were a pleasure to work with.

I believe that this year went extremely well. I didn't face any major problems during any meetings, and procedurally, things went very smoothly, especially with regards to Council. There are only a few things that I think should be addressed in this report, both for the benefit of Council and for the benefit of future Chairs.

i. *Fall 2015 GM Minutes*

In December of 2016, I was approached by a member of the KSU executive who felt concerned about the Fall 2015 GM Minutes. As you may know, those minutes were missing for quite some time. This fall, however, I was informed by the President and the Services and Campaigns Coordinator of the KSU that those minutes had been found. We passed them at this past Fall GM without a hitch. I assumed that someone had taken minutes at the time, and that they'd been misplaced.

The person who approached me told me that the minutes had actually been written by the President, the Services and Campaigns Coordinator, and other members of the executive using informal notes taken at the GM, live tweets from the Watch, and what folks who'd been at the meeting could remember based on the agenda. They were concerned about the validity of these minutes as a result, particularly because they'd been presented to the general membership at this meeting as what one would normally expect KSU minutes to look like (i.e.: formally taken by a Scribe at the meeting). I took this concern very seriously, mostly because I was concerned about the legality of the matter. Over the Christmas break, I wound up spending a lot of time looking into the legal definition of minutes. This proved to be tricky because neither the KSU Bylaws or any law in the province of Nova Scotia actually states what minutes are *supposed* to look like. It appeared that the matter was sketchy, but not illegal.

In later conversations I had with Aidan McNally, the then-President of the KSU, we agreed that I should have been consulted on the matter when the minutes were first written this past fall. This way,

we could have been more transparent with our membership and also have avoided the concerns and discomfort that some members of the executive expressed with regard to this situation. The Chair should be the first point of contact when procedure-related issues come forward. Instead, having been misled about this decision for a few months, I had to face a situation that was both confusing and frustrating for all parties involved.

When a similar situation occurred in January, in which we lost minutes for a regular meeting of Council, minutes were compiled using notes, tweets, and memory of the conversations that had taken place. On this matter, I was consulted. For the sake of transparency, this time, we announced to Council that this had transpired before voting on approving those minutes. In the future, if situations like this arise, this should be the process to be followed. In addition, I recommend involving the Chair in situations where procedure seems murky or sketchy in order to avoid problems like this in the first place.

ii. *Bylaw Review Committee*

As you may know, Bylaw Review Committee did a lot of work this year. We met frequently and compiled a report that was about twenty pages long by the beginning of March. Although I feel that the conversations had at BRC this year were necessary and very helpful in terms of identifying where we can improve our governing documents, we did not communicate with the Executive Committee as well as we should have. Responsibility for this in part falls on me as chair of BRC. In the future, Bylaw Review Committee should consult with the entire Executive Committee throughout the academic year to ensure that everyone is on the same page. In the coming year, I plan on inviting the President of the KSU to the first BRC meeting of the year in order to identify problem spots in our governing documents and so that we can be as productive a committee as possible without running into similar issues with communication. I will also be meeting with the President semi-regularly to ensure that we're always on the same page with regard to BRC's work.

With that being said, communication goes both ways. The first draft of the twenty-page report we wound up writing was sent to the President of the KSU in mid-January for her perusal. It would have helped us a lot to receive coherent feedback around the end of that month. Instead, I wound up making the mistake of assuming that consultation was not urgent based on the lack of feedback we received.

A week before we were going to bring this report to student consultation, the then-Communications Vice-President of the KSU, Julia-Simone Rutgers, and I sat down with the rest of the Executive Committee to discuss it. We wound up having a really helpful and important conversation that showed us areas that needed more work, and areas that wouldn't make sense to change. We wound up trimming down our report to about seven pages, which was presented at the Spring GM. This was

absolutely the right decision to make, but we should've had that conversation much earlier in the semester. This would have helped us solve some of the issues identified at that consultation.

iii. Concluding Remarks

To summarize this report, the issues I faced in my position this year mostly revolved around failures in communication. This is something I will be working on in collaboration with the President in the upcoming year. I'm happy that we will have some continuity this year, since I am staying on as Chair, considering the steep learning curve for this position. I feel very comfortable with Robert's Rules and with our governing documents, which I think will serve me well going forward.

I also want to mention how pleased I am that honoraria for UHPs is increasing this year. My predecessor in this position made about \$3.50 an hour, and I made a little over \$5 an hour this year. I am happy that the KSU is working to ensure that all of its employees are going to be paid more fairly in the future.

Finally, I recommend that the agenda for Council be sent out **at least 24 hours in advance at all times**. It's very difficult for me to prepare for Council if I don't get to see the documents beforehand, and it's fairer to our general membership who should also be aware of what's coming forward at these meetings ahead of time.

Again, thanks so much to all of you. I look forward to working with so many of you again this upcoming year.

Charlotte Sullivan