

November 25, 2024

Board Meeting Minutes

GROUP	Ontario Tech Student Union (OTSU) Board of Directors
LOCATION	SHA 136
DATE & TIME	Monday, November 25, 2024
NOTE TAKER	Various
ATTENDEES	<p>Directors: Faculty of Science & Chair, Eloghosa Avenbuan; Faculty of Education, Arajenthira Narenthira; Faculty of Health Science, Kashaf Awan; Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, Sifatul Mostafi; Faculty of Business and Information Technology, Arujan Parameswaran; Faculty of Social Science & Humanities, Lindsay Horner</p> <p>Executives: President, Rai Muhammad Ali; VP Student Affairs, Zainab Hussain; VP Student Life, Areej Fatima; VP Downtown, Matifadza Chidovi</p> <p>Staff: Executive Director, Brian Robson; Financial Controller, Mayooran Thurairajah; HR Generalist & Chief Returning Officer, Salvador Caruncho</p>
REGRETS	Director for Faculty of Graduate Studies (Vacant)

OPENING PROCEDURES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called into order at 6.49 p.m.

Moved By K Awan, Seconded by L Horner

2. TERRITORIAL RECOGNITION

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

A Narenthira requested In camera sessions be grouped at the end.

HR Generalist stated that adjusting the agenda could compromise the proceedings.

RESOLUTION

Moved by K. Awan and seconded by A Narenthira. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors amend the agenda such that items 4, 9, and 10, become items 15, 14, and 12.

4. MINUTES APPROVAL

Chair asked that in-camera minutes be distributed to board and suggested some discussion points were missed. A Narenthira asked about whether By-laws need to be approved by the board. Financial controller suggested a change of wording re: selection of external auditor.

RESOLUTION

Moved by K. Awan and seconded by A Narenthira. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors table the approval of October 2024 meeting minutes.

AGENDA TOPICS

5. Executive Reports

See the full executive reports on the OTSU website.

Questions for President:

A Parameswaran asked about timeline for print shop and who will be trained. President noted that vendor would be providing information which would help to formulate timeline. President would let staff decide who is trained.

A Narenthira noted issues with feasibility of smile cookie initiative as OTSU is not a charity. Suggested liaising with Wellness Coordinator who had done research on food insecurity options the prior year.

L Horner stated that she would love to see research to support food insecurity initiatives.

VP Downtown noted a few obstacles to food bank, noted DCSA's food bank which requires full-time staffing and on top of funding.

A Parameswaran suggested gift cards as an alternative. Financial Controller notes this was done in the past.

Chair raised concerns about VP Affairs doing OUSA work, noting VP Affairs seems to be going over scheduled hours. Ask for mitigation options.

President notes that he is also co-author on the paper VP Affairs is involved in. Suggests that VP Affairs attendance at conferences helps VP Affairs fulfill the role – helps with awareness of what other student unions are doing.

VP Affairs notes that she does work unpaid hours but considers it a volunteer opportunity and states that it does not affect the other work she does for the OTSU.

S Mostafi appreciates the work VP Affairs is doing but suggests that actual hours worked should be tracked.

Chair suggests providing VP Affairs with additional resources for example the ability to use lieu time.

Questions for VP Student Life:

Financial Controller asked if he could be added into the Clubs and Societies Committee meetings. VP Student Life noted this had already been discussed as an option and he can join from now on to answer finance related questions.

Chair asked if there was a Clubs & Societies Committee meeting last month. VP Student Life noted that there wasn't.

VP Student Affairs:

Notes that along with report, there was an Ancillary Committee Meeting today regarding UPASS and wants to add an approval item to New Business. In the past the renewal increase had been 2%, this year it is a 4.9% increase per year for 3 years (which was reduced from a 6-year commitment). Suggests that this should go to student referendum.

Executive Director noted that all other ancillary items are going up at the rate of inflation, only the UPASS is up a potential 4.9% per year.

A Parameswaran asked for a reasoning for the increase.

Executive Director notes that no explanation is offered by DRT, but that increases for general ridership is increasing by 7% per year.

Financial Controller noted that this would be a \$320 increase per student in the first year [not correct, increased amount will be \$320 maybe], an additional 4.9% each year after that. DRT is getting approximately \$3.6 million from Ontario Tech students.

K Awan asked if anyone had spoken to Trent or Durham College. VP Affairs said not yet.

L Horner asked what happens if students vote no. VP Affairs confirms that they would need to use adult passes.

L Horner asked if OTSU was in a position to negotiate further, President noted that was not possible.

S Mostafi notes that the student rate is better than adult rate but wishes commitment was only a year.

Financial Controller noted that the price is discounted but that it becomes increasingly unfair for students who do not use DRT.

A Narenthira notes that it would be inappropriate for OTSU to make that choice and that students need to vote

S Mostafi suggested a usage survey moving forward, noting that grad students often pay for UPASS in the summer when they are not on campus.

Questions for VP Downtown:

A Parameswaran referenced the metrics/data collection mentioned in the report. VP Downtown said it was extant but not yet formatted for distribution.

A Narenthira noted the downtown Town Hall happened during the Faculty of Education student placement and asked that this be considered in the future.

RESOLUTION

Moved by K. Awan and seconded by L Horner. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve the November 2024 Executive Reports.

6. OPERATIONAL REPORTS

Executive Director:

Noted the Inaugural Campaign School was small but a good night for those who attended. Staff working on putting together Frost Week. Noted the Ancillary committee was today and that rates are rising at the rate of inflation which is less for next year than over the last few years.

A Parameswaran asked if we were doing similar surveys like for O-Week. Executive Director noted that this has already been presented, that he will try to gather data about the Town Halls and that surveys will be done for Frost Week.

A Narenthira noted his concerns about reports that operations staff are experiencing exceptional stressors and that there are indications that some staff are considering departure. Notes that he would rather hear about supports in place for them rather than focusing on contingencies in case of their departure. Executive Director replied that reminding staff of the resources available is a large part of helping the staff who may not realize the supports that should be taken advantage of. A Narenthira asks what made the Executive Director think that staff departure is a risk. Executive Director notes that this is based on conversations he's had with staff and that while keeping staff is a priority, he must also plan in case there are departures.

7. PRESIDENT EXPENSES

President: This month's expenses are largely from the OUSA General Assembly at Brock University for four executives (including lodging, meals, mileage, etc.) totaling \$2,130.94

L Horner asked if receipts were available and how many nights the lodging was for. President answered that they were and that it was for five nights.

Chair asked President to add president receipts to the board report.

RESOLUTION

Moved by A Parameswaran, seconded by S Mostafi. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve November President's expenses of \$2,130.94.

8. RATIFICATION OF PUBLIC STATEMENT

Chair noted that was only ratifying the statement as it has already been approved by the board according to by-laws and in good faith.

VP Student Life asked if this was approved in a board meeting and if there were meeting minutes.

A Parameswaran noted that this was an in-camera ad-hoc meeting.

VP Student Life asked why the statement was released before ratifying.

A Narenthira notes that the statement was approved, but that this item was to put it on the record.

Financial Controller asked if all the board members attended

A Narenthira noted that they were all present

President noted that if this was already approved by the board, then it has already been ratified, there is no need for this item

A Narenthira noted that it was ratified but that it was not on the public record.

President asked if a lawyer was consulted in making the decision

A Narenthira stated that the board does not have to answer that question.

President asked if the meeting minutes could be reviewed, A Narenthira declined.

RESOLUTION

Moved by ??, seconded by ??. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors ratify the public statement published on November 12, 2024.

9. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

A Parameswaran expressed interest in the role. Stated that he has been an elected board member since May, is a good fit for the role and has knowledge about the bylaws

L Horner also expressed interest in the roll, noted that she has been supporting the Chair with the leadership role and that she is very passionate about this student role.

RESOLUTION

Moved by K Awan, seconded by S Mostafi. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors table the discussion of the Vice Chair appointment

10. AGM Debrief

VP Downtown suggested that a lot of the confusion was around the Roberts Rules of Order. Noted support of a professional staff at OUSA and also suggested providing handouts to attendees. Noted that delays in accessing online rooms and suggested booking larger rooms farther in advance. Noted the availability of rooms on the downtown campus and noted the Regent Theatre as an option. Suggested adding microphones in the room, providing more detailed information in the agenda, making sure that meeting minutes were available before the meeting. Noted that students were dissatisfied with what was done.

K Awan noted that how we present ourselves is important to students and that we have to be considerate of how we act.

S Mostafi noted instances when there was a delay in admitting entry to attendees and noted the room was not large enough.

A Narenthira noted that the hybrid element required more support than what was available.

Chair noted difficulties in managing online and in-person questions.

VP Downtown also suggested having another avenue for receiving complaints as the current system of setting up meetings with executives is insufficient.

VP Affairs asked what the point of discussing these improvements and who it was for. Suggested that this should have been a discussion with the team or an apology to the students, but this could have been done more appropriately and then communicated out to students.

11. ADDRESSING BOARD AND STUDENT CONCERNS

Chair noted that board members have received hundreds of call to action emails and have heard them. Feels the need to address student concerns. These have included issues with understanding motivation for by-law amendments, transparency, governance and harming downtown students. The board recognizes these concerns

RECESS CALLED at 8:51pm

BACK IN SESSION at 8:59pm

Chair notes that any discussion about by-law amendment will be halted by the board. Chair also noted that there have been attempts to contact Board members in order to divide them. Chair notes that any attempts to question the integrity of board members has not been done in good faith.

MOVED IN CAMERA 9:10pm

MOVED OUT OF CAMERA 12:24pm

RESOLUTION

Moved by ??, seconded by ?. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the board of directors establishes an indirect reporting between the financial controller and the board.

12. NEW BUSINESS

Vote on putting the UPASS increase of 4.9% per year for three years up for referendum.

RESOLUTION

Moved by K Awan, seconded by A Narenthira. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve bringing the 4.9% annual increase for the next three years to students as a referendum.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

14. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 12:28pm. Moved by K Awan and seconded by A Narenthira.