

[In these minutes: 1. Proxy Voting, 2. Alcohol Policy, 3. Sweatshop Labor Forum]

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2000

3:00 - 4:30

229 NOLTE

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: George French (chair), John Beatty, Mike Davey, Selma de Ridder, John Jensen, Joel Nelson, Wesley Matson, Jean Niemiec, Julie Sweitzer, Amelious Whyte, Jennifer Young.

REGRETS: Robert Brown, Catherine Forseide-Hussain, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Luis Ramos-Garcia, Angelita Reyes, Mary Steinke.

ABSENT: Meghan McCauley.

GUESTS: Drew Hempel, Kelly Kleppe.

1. PROXY VOTING

Kelly Kleppe, from Asset Management, distributed a revised list of the University's stockholdings as of January 31, 2000. Because investments change daily, some companies that were on the last report are no longer included and some new companies, and their resolutions, have been added.

Resolutions can also change from month to month as new ones are added or as they are withdrawn or omitted. The list has companies sorted by their annual meeting date. Once the committee votes on a resolution, that vote is then transmitted to the University's representative at the stockholder meetings. For April meetings, the committee would need to have a vote ready by the middle of March.

Q: Is it possible to find out if last year's resolutions passed or were defeated?

A: I will get this information and distribute it to the committee.

Q: How many committees look at this information?

A: The Social Concerns Committee is the only one designated by the Regents to review these resolutions.

The committee then discussed what would be the best way to vote on each resolutions. Because some required outside research, it was decided that the committee would divide up the resolutions today. Members would then research their resolutions and come back to the committee with an informed vote at the March meeting. The resolutions were then divided up:

George French - end political donations, establish employee matching gift program, establish stockholder matching gift program, commit to/report on board diversity

John Jensen - develop debt cancellation policy for poor countries, adopt drug price restraint policy

Jean Niemiec - report on community hazards, cancel plans to drill in Arctic National Refuge, encourage financial stability in LDC's

Selma de Ridder - report on global climate change, report on foreign offset agreements

Mike Davey - review social criteria in financial ventures

John Beatty - don't make contributions to abortion providers, disclose prior government service, implement MacBride principles

Q: How can committee members arrive at an informed decision?

A: Member should read the information on the resolutions that was sent to them. They can also look on the web or contact Kelly for additional information.

2. REVISED UNIVERSITY ALCOHOL POLICY

Amelious Whyte said that since the ATOD Task Force has not finalized the alcohol policy, a resolution was written for the committee to support these changes in principle. He then read through the resolution and asked for any questions.

Q: What is the difference between exemptions and permits?

A: This is more of a semantic change to signify that departments apply for permission. The term exemptions implies that this is a rare circumstance, which is not the case when 800 are issued. In practice, there will not be any significant changes.

Q: Is it possible to add the word "inappropriate" before use in the last paragraph, since not all drinking is bad?

A: What is inappropriate use and who would determine this? What is inappropriate for one person is not always for another. Also, it is not usually the use that is inappropriate but the behavior afterwards. This is also just an expectation of staff since there is no penalty that the University can enforce if they are over 21 years of age.

Q: Why is alcohol not sold on campus?

A: It is a University policy that money cannot be collected for liquor. A group can give the alcohol away, but cannot charge for it. A liquor license is also needed if money is collected and only Northrop Auditorium has that.

Q: What is the administration's position on Student Service Fees money being used for alcohol purchases?

A: The administration feels that purchasing alcohol is an inappropriate use of Fees money since these funds should enhance the student experience. Also, since University departments cannot use department funds for alcohol, then it would seem logical that student organizations should not use fees money for alcohol either.

Q: Is it illegal for the University to use its money to purchase alcohol?

A: I am not sure what the legal aspects are since some funds are state money.

Q: What do student members of the committee think of this change?

A: Consistency between policies seems appropriate. This change also does not prohibit serving alcohol. It simply makes organizations find a different way to purchase alcohol for events.

Q: Can other money be used to buy alcohol?

A: Officers or members of the organization could buy alcohol and then donate it to the event. The only group that this change really affects is GAPSA.

Q: Can the restriction on use of University funds to purchase alcohol be included in the resolution?

A: The resolution only includes changes that are being made to the policy. The stipulation already exists on the form.

Q: What are the costs for security at events?

A: The Police Department supplies off-duty officers, usually at overtime wages, at roughly \$70 per hour. While this detail is not included in the resolution, organizations can use fees money for insurance and security costs at events where alcohol is being served.

Amelious Whyte stated that while at some schools most events included alcohol, at the University there are few events that include it.

George French suggested two changes. First, that the term "work day" be better defined since there are people that work different shifts at the University. Second, that the term "enabling" be changed when referring to exemptions.

With these changes noted, a vote was taken and the resolution was approved as amended.

3. SWEATSHOP LABOR FORUM

George French informed the committee that the Forum has once again been postponed. The new date is February 15 and he hopes that all members can attend and listen to the discussion.

Drew Hempel then said that sweatshop labor parallels the Burma issue that the committee dealt with a few years ago. For the Burma issue, the committee wrote a resolution which was endorsed by the Senate. When it went to the Regents for approval, the last line had been removed, which changed the overall tone of the document. Burma is also involved in sweatshops. Workers get paid four cents per hour and two million people have been put into forced labor.

The creator of Earth Rights International recently spoke at an event and said that the FLA is a corporate conflict of interests since it asks manufacturers to monitor their own sweatshops and allows them to veto their own human rights violations. The White House has not helped matters by subsidizing free trade zones. The Workers' Rights Consortium is monitored by the IRRC and held to high standards.

This issue was brought to public attention by students and needs to be dealt with accordingly. The task force that was established is being run by the same people that sign license agreements for the University and therefore have no reliability.

The committee then made the following comments:

- What is the University process to pick vendors?
- How would the University enforce policies on vendors?
- The licensees list has many companies for a little bit of product. Chances are that small companies get the bids and then distribute them to larger operations
- Most big companies are just an office but contract out all the actual work
- Many countries wait for contracts from American companies

George French then read an e-mail that has been sent regarding California and Notre Dame not allowing any university-licensed products to be produced in countries that do not allow workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining. This seems to be a step in the right direction and something that the University might want to consider.

Q: Why was the Burma resolution changed?

A: Sometimes changes do take place when documents are presented to the Regents, mostly because of form issues. In this case, it seems odd since it was just the last sentence. It should be noted that the committee had long deliberations over this entire resolution.

George French thanked the members for their comments and said that this would be on the agenda at the March meeting.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Davey said that affordable and quality housing is a challenge that the University must face. A recent study completed by MPIRG showed that 40% of students pay more than 40% of their monthly income on rent. This makes it easy to see why students cannot afford to go to school and live at the same time.

He then distributed an article from the Minnesota Daily regarding housing in Dinkytown, figures on dorm costs, and costs for other housing in the Twin Cities. For the dorm costs, he focused on the new apartment-style dorms at University Village. The figures that are presented in the housing catalog equate to \$486 per month for an efficiency, \$522 per month for a single occupancy per bedroom, and \$425 per month for a double occupancy per bedroom. He did note that the per month cost is approximate since dorm contracts are only for 15 weeks, one week short of four full months.

He then compared dorm prices with prices from Apartment Search for several other luxurious apartment complexes around the Twin Cities. For the most expensive apartment, at the Calhoun Beach Club, rent would only be \$412 per month for four students in a two bedroom apartment. This is still less than University apartment-style housing which is supposed to offer students a cheaper alternative. The average Twin Cities rent is only \$832 for a two bedroom apartment.

Q: What about the quality of off-campus housing?

A: The city of Minneapolis would love to get rid of many rental properties that are considered slums. The problem is that if these properties are demolished, no new affordable structures will be built to replace them. The University has great leverage power with all the students that it houses and must come up with alternatives to Dinkytown.

With no further questions, George French said that this would be a topic at next meeting. he then thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Rebecca Hippert
University Senate