

Minutes\*

**Senate Consultative Committee**  
**Thursday, October 5, 2000**  
**3:00 – 3:45**  
**Room 385 Law**

Present: Fred Morrison (chair), Sabeen Altaf, Muriel Bebeau, Susan Brorson, Khaled Dajani, Meggan Ellingboe, Paul Enever, David Hamilton, Adam Lyche, Joseph Massey, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Jason Reed

Regrets: Wilbert Ahern, Linda Brady, Paula Rabinowitz, Charles Speaks, Billie Wahlstrom

Absent: Amber Benning, Percy Chaby, Les Drewes, Tim Dunn, Adam Lyche, V. Rama Murthy, Chris Shulstad

Guests: Interim Vice President Robert Jones, Maggie Towle

Others: Pauline Oo (Institutional Relations)

[In these minutes: update on Coffman Union remodeling]

**1. Update on Coffman Union**

Professor Morrison convened the meeting at 3:00 and welcomed Interim Vice President for Student Development Robert Jones and Ms. Towle (director of Coffman Union) to the meeting to provide an update on construction delays.

Dr. Jones observed that all were aware the remodeling project has been delayed. He related that he had learned about the problem in the bidding process on the first day he moved into his new office. Once he learned that the bids were all substantially higher than the amount of money available he began meeting immediately with Associate Vice President Pfutzenreuter, Facilities Management, and others in order to deal with the problem. There was also student involvement in the discussions.

Professor Hamilton inquired what "substantially" meant. The total project cost was \$45 million; the bids came in between \$53 and \$58 million, Dr. Jones said. They were surprised at the discrepancy and looked at every way possible to keep the project on track. They were obligated to notify contractors by September 23 if the low bid would be accepted or if all would be rejected; the Coffman board, on recommendation from his office, rejected all bids.

There are unresolved legal matters pending, Dr. Jones told the Committee, so he was unable to provide additional details, but he said he hoped those matters would be resolved within the next few weeks and that the project could get back on track. Once a contractor is selected it will be possible to

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identify a projected opening date for the union. Dr. Jones said the administration is committed to opening a union as close as possible to what the students had planned.

The Committee, Dr. Jones, and Ms. Towle touched on a number of points in the ensuing discussion.

-- Beginning the bidding process over again will delay the opening of the union, probably by a year; the original projected opening date was fall, 2001.

-- The original estimate of \$45 million came from the architect, although Professor Hamilton was of the view that University representatives can talk with an architect, describe what is wanted, and not be told of the cost implications of what is wanted.

-- The interior of the union was demolished before a contract was signed because of the need to coordinate the remodeling with that of the Riverbend Commons project and in order to move stairwells, remove asbestos, etc. There was much work required to prepare the union for renovation.

-- The administration is considering fund-raising and corporate sponsorship as ways to increase the amount of money available for the renovation and is doing all it can to avoid asking the students to contribute more money. Either more money will be found or the project will be completed within budget, Dr. Jones said. There have been deducts from the original plan but the cost was still too high, Ms. Towle said, so they are going back to the students to review the plans. Air conditioning will NOT be removed, she added. There have been discussions with Mr. Fischer, President of the Foundation, who could not make guarantees but thought it might be possible to raise additional funds without jeopardizing the capital campaign. Dr. Jones said nothing would be done in fund-raising without involving the Foundation.

-- Student services normally in the union are in locations with leases that can be extended. Professor Morrison said he was concerned the union would reopen in two years and have no customers because it will not have been a part of the campus for over three years. Dr. Jones and Professor Ratliff-Crain said that was not likely to be a problem. The new union will also provide services that students have indicated they wanted.

-- It is unlikely that any money will be saved by going slower on the project or waiting for prices to drop. More troublesome, Professor Morrison said, is that the next set of bids, on a smaller project, could be higher. It may be necessary to complete the building in stages, which would probably be more expensive but may be the only way to get it done.

-- The cost overruns are unrelated to the Campus Club project but the delay in completion of the Union will necessarily delay the reopening of the Campus Club as well.

-- The students do not want to see the union corporatized, and originally did not want a lot of corporate presence. They are now rethinking that position and may agree to name parts of the union in return for corporate sponsorship.

-- There is no plan to go to the legislature for funding nor are there plans to add the union to the capital campaign.

-- There has been discussion of demolishing the existing building and starting over but the students and the President made a commitment to maintaining the existing building because of its historical value. Students were not receptive to the idea of demolition. There has also been too much money already invested in the building; demolition is not a feasible alternative at this point.

-- Dr. Jones said he could not predict with certainty when the project would move forward but said he hoped it would be in the very near future, not months from now.

Professor Morrison thanked Dr. Jones and Ms. Towle and asked that they return to the Committee later in November or early December to make another report. He then adjourned the meeting at 3:45.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota