

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society

Executive Board

(ONLINE VIA BLACKBOARD) MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 18, 2020

EXECUTIVE PRESENT: Mehdi HASHEMI, Chair; Carla OSBORNE, Director of Finance; Sima SHANJANI, Director of Services; Saeed REZVANI, Director of Student Affairs (part); Stacy CHAPPEL, Executive Director.

STAFF AND/OR GUESTS PRESENT: Karen L. Potts, Governance Coordinator

REGRETS: Elaine Laberge, Director of Communications

STANDING ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 PM with HASHEMI in the chair.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

*Motion: RESOLVED that the agenda is approved as presented.
APPROVED BY CONSENT.*

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

*Motion: RESOLVED that the minutes from the March 11, 2020 Executive Board meeting are approved with a minor correction.
APPROVED BY CONSENT.*

MEETING BUSINESS

A. COVID 19 UPDATE

Food Services: HASHEMI and CHAPPEL discussed emerging situation over the phone during the week. It was decided to close food services at the end of day on March 17, 2020. It was noted that one or more employee may need to work beyond the closure for kitchen clean up.

[REZVANI arrived at 3:14 pm]

*Motion: WHEREAS the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus makes it unsafe for GSS Food services to operate; THEREFORE
RESOLVED the Grad House and Side Project employees will cease work March 20, 2020 due to an emergency closure and until a further decision of the Executive Board.
M/S REZVANI/OSBORNE
CARRIED.*

[There was an in camera discussion.]

Motion: RESOLVED the Restaurant Manager hiring process is suspended.

M/S HASHEMI/REZVANI

CARRIED

Motion: RESOLVED to extend pay for restaurant staff to March 24, 2020 to allow a full work week's pay after the closure.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Employee Emergency Hire and Leave Fund be allocated in its entirety to assist in covering this cost.

M/S HASHEMI/REZVANI

CARRIED

CHAPPEL noted the employee leave fund would be approximately \$1500 after this meeting.

[POTTS joined the meeting at 4:05 pm]

CHAPPEL provided other updates due to the public health crisis:

- Office staff are all working from their homes. Two have UVIC laptop for secure and common files.
- Bookings: All upcoming room bookings and catering have been cancelled.
- Events: GSS Events have been cancelled.
- Facilities: Facilities management and security have been notified about our operational changes.
- GSS Meetings: The GSS has an ongoing bluejeans meeting, and staff are coordinating to book this software resource, the same as GSS groups would book a meeting room.

B. GSS SAGM RE: COVID-19

Motion: BIRT the GSS will postpone the March 24 SAGM to a date determined to be safe and in line with public health guidelines by the Executive Board in the future.

M/S: HASHEMI/SHANJANI

Discussion:

SHANJANI asked about the obligations of the bylaws.

HASHEMI noted that the Society Act requires one General Meeting, which we have held.

POTTS reported she has researched the BC Society Act, sought expertise advice as well as spent time reviewing and considering the GSS bylaws. As a result, is strongly recommending the SAGM move forward to ensure the incoming Board has a clear mandate.

POTTS provided a written recommendation:

Governance Coordinator SAGM recommendation: That the SAGM proceed through a videoconference alternative format.

Rationale:

- The BC Societies Act Section 83 allows for online/electronic general meetings (GMs).
- That GSS has access to software and tech support to hold a GM online.
- That there are legitimacy questions of any transition to new Directors without a GM.

- *That there would be legitimacy questions of any core spending e.g. wages, without the approval of a budget at a GM.*
- *That 1/3 of our members do not have the option to attend in-person GM. It is time we 'upped-our-game' in terms of providing equal access/participation for all members at GMs.*

Logistics for consideration:

- *Blackboard site has been requested. This software is UVic supported and can accommodate up to 200 people with strong moderator controls, participants wait to speak by raising hands, votes can be taken and counted.*
- *SAGM content needs to be prepared and uploaded well in advance.*
- *Written reports from committee chairs etc. need to be prepared and submitted in advance.*
- *Electoral officer should remind members and GRC that anyone considering running for Director of Student Affairs can submit a written candidacy statement for distribution up to 24 hours prior.*
- *A generic webvote from UVic could be requested to accommodate a secret ballot election of Director of Student Affairs.*
- *Suggest that the Board and staff gather in-person at the GH for the SAGM. Using the GH space, people can sit far enough apart for social distancing.*
- *Will need staff to help check photo ID and sign people in online, as well as help Chair with speaker lists, timekeeping etc.*
- *Suggest GSS use Blackboard (or whatever platform UVic settles on recommending) for its internal meetings for now until the SAGM for practice."*

OSBORNE noted that Blackboard is a good platform.

SHANJANI agreed the GSS should hold the SAGM, even if it has to be postponed into early April, but it should be done as soon as possible.

REZVANI expressed concern about achieving quorum.

CHAPPEL noted that quorum is 25 for approving a change to bylaws, however 15 members is the quorum for approval of the budget and election.

HASHEMI expressed a preference for postponing, but supported setting a definitive future date.

OSBORNE noted her support for an agenda that focused on the two main issues important for GSS continuation, particularly if presenting the budget as an interim budget which will need review as the situation develops.

HASHEMI expressed concern about managing the technology and how difficult it is to facilitate or chair an online meeting.

OSBORNE stated, and HASHEMI agreed, that for this decision the issue was not GSS distance members and their participation.

SHANJANI said she felt that the GSS election was essentially held and the new board should be able to take office without ratification since this is an extraordinary situation and it can be postponed.

POTTS acknowledged the difficulties of online meetings. However, she believes that GSS does not have a new Board since the election process has not been completed through the ratification vote at

a general meeting by the members. Additionally, only the general membership can approve the budget, and this has to happen for GSS to continue to pay its bills, including its staff.

Asked to provide her opinion, CHAPPEL stated a preference for holding the SAGM, but to simplify the agenda and only address the agenda items vital to continuing GSS governance and operations.

SHANJANI and REZVANI were more optimistic about the potential to hold the SAGM in an alternative format if the agenda could be simplified, reports could be submitted in writing (instead of oral presentations) etc.

[CHAPPEL left the meeting at 4:25 PM]

Vote on the original motion:

FAILED

Executive members clarified with each other whether the vote reflected concerns about moving to an online format for the SAGM, or concerns about keeping the March 24th date, or both.

Executive members agreed on a simplified, reduced agenda to make the online format more manageable, focusing on only items essential for GSS governance and continued operations.

Motion: BIRT that the March 24, 2020 SAGM go ahead as an online/electronic meeting, with a simplified agenda focusing on director ratification and approval of an interim budget.

M/S REZVANI/SHANJANI

In the interest of keeping the agenda simple, and the online meeting brief, it was agreed that all reports to the membership that did not require action (a motion) would be provided, in advance, in written form. There will be a motion to acknowledge that the reports have been provided to the membership but there will be no accompanying oral presentations or discussions. Members will be asked to raise any significant concerns and ask substantive questions ahead of time. Written reports will include:

- 2019-20 Executive board report:
 - Who the Executive were
 - Who the membership were during this year (stats, demographics)
 - Goals for the year
 - Events that happened in the year
 - Key achievements/decisions made
 - Challenges facing GSS going forward
- Committee reports
- Health and dental semi-annual update
- Executive Director year end report (with any year information about staff achievements, services etc.)

After further discussion regarding the materials to be prepared, and the interest in time to practice using the Blackboard interface,

Friendly amendment: RESOLVED to move the SAGM date to Monday, March 30.

M/S SHANJANI/REZVANI

Amendment ACCEPTED.

Amended Motion: RESOLVED that the SAGM go ahead as an online/electronic meeting on March 30, 2020, with a simplified agenda focusing on director ratification and approval of an interim budget.

CARRIED.

Motion: RESOLVED that the 2020-21 draft budget be presented as an interim budget to be revisited at the October 2020 AGM, or at an extraordinary General Meeting earlier if the public health situation and economic implications worsen.

M/S OSBORNE/SHANJANI

CARRIED Unanimously.

TASK: POTTS will circulate a draft of a re-ordered, simplified agenda. Once approved by Executive, POTTS will draft a full agenda, complete with text of motions, and circulate to Executive and the Electoral Officer.

TASK: In the absence of a Director of Communications, HASHEMI volunteered to take over the task of consolidating content from Executive members, to create a written report on the work of the 2019-20 Executive Board. Input should be provided to HASHEMI by Tuesday March 24, 9 am.

TASK: All Executive Board members will provide written reports on the work of their respective committees to GSS Staff by 9 am Thursday March 26. CHAPPEL will also provide a written update/report on the Health and Dental plan.

TASK: CHAPPEL to contact incoming Executive, provide information about the SAGM date change and ask for training days to be moved to March 31, April 1 to accommodate the March 30 SAGM.

TASK: CHAPPEL to book UVic webvote for March 30 vote if needed.

TASK: TRIMBLE (Electoral Officer) to be asked to promote any members interested in the Director of Student Affairs position to submit a written statement of candidacy (as per GSS bylaws) to help accommodate the online meeting format.

C. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

TASK: POTTS will remove completed tasks listed in the motion log, and will email the Executive for status confirmation of remaining items.

D. INCOMING BOARD TRAINING

HASHEMI asked for feedback on the updated two-day incoming Executive training plan. Executive expressed a preference for having their contribution to the training completed on March 31 and not extend over 2 days if possible. Discussed ensued about the time allocated to various components.

TASK: HASHEMI will modify the training plan based on the feedback provided.

TASK: POTTS will provide HASHEMI options regarding online content resources and online platforms to support delivery of the training.

E. YEAR END INTERFUND TRANSFERS

Motion: RESOLVED that the following amounts are transferred to the Employee Leave and Emergency Hire Fund:

\$500 from the Operating Fund

\$250 from the Health and Dental Fund

\$250 from the Food and Beverage Fund

M/S OSBORNE/REZVANI

CARRIED.

F. COVID-19 STUDENT SUPPORT ISSUES

To be discussed in upcoming meetings with UVic administration.

G. 2020-21 DEPARTMENT GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governance Coordinator is compiling information from this year's grant allocations, comparing to previous years, and will be making recommendations regarding maximum grant amounts, eligibility criteria and some procedural changes. Due to time constraints, discussion TABLED.

H. STUDENT EXTENDED HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN RENEWAL UPDATE

Due to CHAPPEL's absence, discussion TABLED.

I. VOLUNTEER VICTORIA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Due to time constraints, discussion TABLED.

CLOSING ITEMS

NOTICE OF MOTIONS, AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT EXECUTIVE MEETING

As work on the SAGM and planning for the transition would be ongoing, Executive members committed to reserving Wednesday, March 25, 3-4:30 pm to be available for a follow up meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6 pm.

sc/KLP/SC

X

Mehdi Hashemi
GSS Chair 2019-20

X

Stacy Chappel
GSS Executive Director