

737 Comstock Avenue Inc. (a.k.a. House Corp.)

Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2015

Syracuse, NY

Alumni Brothers in Attendance

Hank Suominen (Board President and Treasurer), Bill Gerbig (Board Secretary), Bill Beach (Board Member), Brad Short (Board Member), Steve Oliva (Board Member), John Trop (Board Member), Mike Yates (Board Member)

Undergraduate Brothers in Attendance

Brett Polinsky (Pro Consul)

Hank Suominen opened the meeting at 9 a.m.

Minutes from 2/21 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Resident Advisor discussion

Hank reminded everyone that we've had this objective in mind for multiple reasons since the chapter was reinstated. It hasn't happened because we haven't had the right candidate. An offer was made to a candidate once, but the candidate declined the position for another offer. We now have a qualified candidate and need to open this up for discussion. It's understood that the chapter has reservations, and have expressed that they moved out of dorms to "get away" from the supervision and oversight of an RA. Historically, an RA at the fraternity house has been different than a dorm RA. As a brother, they can serve as a buffer between the chapter and the community, among other things.

Bill Gerbig gave some background information on the candidate, Mike Carter. Mike was on campus homecoming weekend as he was applying to a Newhouse Masters Program. He stopped at the fraternity house and met Bill and many of the undergrads. He returned to campus in November and met with Bill. Bill discussed the potential for an RA position, and Mike was interested. Bill read a letter from Mike expressing his interest. The letter is included following these minutes. Bill expressed his own opinions about Mike and the RA position. The time that Hank spends in his position is extensive, and having a contact on site that he can talk to when issues arise will save time and effort for both Hank and the undergrads. A recent hazing issue with another fraternity on campus is embarrassing to the university and causes more scrutiny of the Greek system, and Psi Psi is certainly a chapter they are watching closely with our recent history. National issues with fraternities enhance the issue. The University should respond well to having a 28-year old RA at the Sigma Chi house and may focus less on what's happening at 737. Mike is the right kind of person for this role, and will get along well with the undergrads, much as RA's did in the 1970's and 80's. Without Red at the house daily, Hank relies on Jim, who shows up once per week, and the undergrads don't have Red to go to anymore – Mike could also

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fill that role well. He can help with issues like covered smoke detectors. He can serve as counselor and advisor to the undergrads. He has a high level of awareness of things that can go wrong based on past experiences. Having an RA like Mike could show the undergrads that this could be an opportunity for them when they graduate. Mike did not approach us about the position. The timing is good without Red, the added scrutiny, and with our recent past. Mike will be on campus for the next two semesters, starting in July for one calendar year.

Bill Beach asked where Mike would live. Hank said that the room behind the kitchen with a shared bathroom would be the RA room. Bill was a former RA, and asked how Mike would be compensated. Hank said that historically the RA received room and board. In order to avoid a payroll situation, we would hire him as an independent contractor (paying him makes it easier than valuing his room and board), working out the details with Sciarabba Walker. Bill is in favor of proceeding with this if Mike is a good fit, especially with rooms available.

Brett Polinsky expressed his opinion that this needs to be addressed in person with the undergrads, and that he doesn't believe it will be received very well. With many more brothers living in the house next year (20 from his pledge class of 26 last Spring, another 5-6 from last Fall, and another 1-3 Seniors), the house will definitely be more full. There haven't been any issues in the last year, and no issues with House Corporation. Brett didn't want to speak on behalf of the chapter without talking to Hunter first. Bill Beach asked Brett what the hesitancy was. Brett restated that there would be resistance and that there haven't been any issues, and with good relationships with House Corp and IFC, they don't think there would be a benefit. He also mentioned that Ben Tashjian said he would like to see a Chapter Advisor closer to campus, and maybe Mike could fill that role without having to compensate him with room and board.

Brad Short stated that he understands how the chapter feels, and the relationship with House Corp and IFC aren't the issue. Presence of a graduate student would be helpful, especially a Sigma Chi. Brad was more concerned with whether or not Mike would be able to complete his academic obligations while living in the house, especially living on the first floor. Brad is in favor of an RA, pending a valid reason for not having one, and agreed that it needs to be discussed in person with the Chapter.

John Trop said that the comments from the Chapter are well taken, considering that they have never had an RA. "We had one and it didn't hinder our social experience." It's probably more about an understanding of the role, and maybe it could be discussed at clambake before a final decision is made. John fails to see why a prudent chapter wouldn't try this if they could get one, and doesn't see the downside for the brotherhood. Maybe there's a perceived downside due to the fact that the RA would be a stranger, is not a Psi Psi, and will hinder the social experience, but John doesn't believe that's what they're going to get from an RA. He is in favor of it.

Mike Yates agreed with Brad and John, but understands the Chapter's perspective. But in this day and age, with what's been in the news, it's a risky business we're in, and it's wise to have somebody a little removed. If he doesn't fit in, we can step in and remove him, but Mike thinks it's the right thing to do.

Steve Oliva stated that change is difficult, and "we understand that." Maybe an undergraduate senior could fill this role. Maybe we should try it to see the effects of having one to find out. Maybe we'll lose some brothers who would otherwise live in. We need to consider what's going on in the world. If it's not working and guys don't want to live in the house for whatever reason, we'd have to reconsider it.

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Steve would be in favor of designating a senior for this role, but will go along with what everyone else says.

Hank suggested that Bill Gerbig reach out to Mike, ask him to come to clambake so we can meet him, see how the introduction goes, and we can make a decision at clambake. Bill agreed.

Bill Beach offered comments from the perspective of someone who held that role and watched others who hold the position before him. The RA was not at odds with the undergrads. They worked as a group, they enjoyed each other, and they cooperated with each other. Bill doesn't anticipate that it would be anything different than that.

Hank agreed with Bill. The RA's that he recalled were grad students; they were guys who blended in well, and there were times when it was great to have them available, whether they served as mediators, a calming influence, or someone who just made you think twice before making a bad decision. They were not all Psi Psi's, but some were. When we last considered this, we were looking at candidates who were non-Sigs, which is a negative.

Bill Beach expressed that he doesn't see any negatives.

Bill Gerbig agreed to set up the introduction for the clambake. Hank suggested that we make sure that plenty of the undergrads meet Mike. It's worthy for Brett and Hunter and others make the effort to meet him and get a personal understanding of who he is and what he stands for. Bill Gerbig expressed Mike's offer to visit the Chapter before the clambake and attend a chapter meeting. Hank encouraged that. We're going to interview him and hopefully reach the conclusion that he's someone we want to bring on board. It will be an extensive interview process that includes the opportunity to meet with the chapter one-on-one.

Housing Commitments

Bill Gerbig asked Hank to clarify the housing commitment process. Hank explained that any sophomores need to file a housing waiver with the University if they want to move into the house as sophomores. He's sent reminders but hasn't heard from anyone who has done that. There will be a registration process online. Room picks will be conducted the afternoon of the clambake – that's when they actually have to commit. We'd like to know sooner, but it's hard to get commitment earlier. If they haven't filed a waiver, they're committed to live in the dorms. Anyone living in an apartment also needs to sign leases by now. Bill Gerbig suggested an earlier commitment date to help with issues of not filling the house in recent years. Hank explained that there hasn't been good cooperation in using the online registration, which states an April 1st deadline. Anyone who doesn't meet the April 1st deadline pays an additional \$50 fee. Going forward there will be a discount for filing early, and maybe more of a penalty for filing late. Brett expressed there have been issues with the website. Hank expressed that we will go back to paying by check to keep it simple.

Scholarship Fund

Scholarships: Hank didn't have an update from John Bersani and asked if anyone wanted to volunteer to help with this going forward. Bill Beach offered to help. Hank promised to send an e-mail to John and

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Bill, John knows the process and the contacts, and has created some application forms. Normally we announce those at clambake. Mike Yates reminded everyone that the Alumni Association contributed \$625 for each of the 4 scholarships last year and suggested we repeat that. All were in agreement. Bill Beach asked for a list of the scholarships available to send to the undergraduates. Hank said we can post links to the new forms on the website. The funds we typically award are discretionary. We decide the criteria, screen the applicants, and make the final awards. But over and above that, the Sigma Chi Foundation has a host of other scholarships, and only about 60% get applied for.

Clambake

Clambake 2015 is scheduled for April 25th, with no sporting events that weekend. More administration tasks will be addressed, like room pick. Indications are that attendance should be good. Hank will work out the menu with Chef John. Brad asked if the undergrads had a party planned for the weekend, as they have in the past. Brett said Mayfest weekend is the same date, and asked about timing for the weekend. Hank explained that it starts with a House Corp meeting from around 9-11, lunch off the grill from 11:30 to 3, and general socializing the rest of the day. Brett explained that Mayfest is the last weekend before finals with free food and beverages in Walnut Park. Hank asked for good interaction between the alums and the undergrads for a good portion of the day, and Brett didn't see any issues with that request

Capital Campaign

We need to make one more round of solicitations on the pledges that were made years ago. We no longer want to consider the pledges an anticipated asset. We based some of our spending on the pledges, and since they've dried up, we won't be able to proceed with some planned projects. Brad asked if Doug Sedgwick has made any progress. Hank agreed to contact Doug to find out. Maybe he'll take one more run at it over the summer and wrap it up in August. Hank also agreed to circulate the list to the board, and if there are names that any board members are comfortable contacting, to go ahead. Brad recalled that comments were made at past events where pledge awareness may have been an issue, and maybe a final mailing is still worthwhile. Hank agreed to ask Stuart Howe to send out one final round of reminders along with a final appeal via phone calls.

Mike Yates announced that Stuart Howe has been sold. Hank has spoken to them, and all of the people we've been working with will be retained in Ithaca, at least in the short term, and the change would be transparent to us.

Summer 2015 Reunion Weekend

Hank proposed a reunion weekend at the house. Maybe a round of golf, dinner at the house, card games, etc. If anyone is interested in advancing the cause, we could post something on the web site, and with enough interest we should pursue it. Bill Beach suggested putting something out so people are aware of it, and Mike Yates suggested selecting the date early so people can make plan around the date.

Homecoming 2015

Hank noted that this might be our 40th year at 737, with the years we weren't occupying the house taken into account. We need someone to take the lead on organizing it this year's Homecoming, (a.k.a. Orange Central) event. Hank was basing this on a date of 1965 with a document signed by Frank Conlon. Bill Beach remembered the move from 720 Comstock to 737 in Fall of 1969, so this may not be our 40th anniversary. Regardless, we need better effort and coordination for Homecoming to make it an even that alums want to come back for and to boost attendance. Bill Beach suggested that one alum take charge for added focus. Hank suggested that person tag team with a member of the Chapter. All agreed, but no one volunteered or was designated to lead the effort. There will be further discussion on this at future meetings.

Undergraduate Old and New Business

Brett Polinsky announced that the Chapter is conducting a fundraiser for a Senior whose Mother is very ill. They will be selling rush shirts online for \$20. They are asking for support from alumni. Hank suggested he post something on the website, and if a mailing is desired, he offered to work with Brett to get something sent out.

Hank asked Brett for feedback on how our Jim, our House Manager is performing. We want to make sure he's doing what the undergrads need from him, and that we all, undergrads, House Corp., and Jim have an understanding of the expectations. Brett said that there has been improvement and Jim has responded promptly to phone calls. The roof leakage issue is under control. Hank reiterated that the undergrads need to use the service request process when they need something fixed.

Hank asked about the weekend meal situation that was discussed at our last meeting, and Brett wasn't sure if that had been resolved yet. John, our chef, is trying to get a better handle on the weekend meal process.

Hank told Brett that he would send a reminder to the Chapter to make sure they the pre-register by April 1st if they want to live in the house next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 10 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

William Gerbig

Secretary