

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

Meeting Minutes

April 25, 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 Carter, John Predmore (Grand Praetor),

Undergraduate Brothers in Attendance

Hunter Viscarello (Consul), Brett Polinsky (Pro Consul), Will Gerhard

Others in Attendance

Jim Whitbread, Premier Cleaning Service

Hank Suominen opened the meeting at 9 a.m.

Minutes from 3/14 meeting were approved. Meeting minutes will now be posted on the website.

2015-16 Headcount, Room & Board Contracts

Hunter reported that there will be 32 brothers living in the house in the Fall Semester, and 28 in the Spring Semester. That includes 6 newly initiated Freshmen. Room pick is today. Hank reminded everyone that we budget for a total of 60 for both semesters, so this is good news. 32 is considered capacity.

The undergrads will be responsible for parking going forward. We will mark the parking lot this summer with a designated space for the chef and dumpster access. Both spaces will be considered tow zones. The undergrads are in favor of numbered parking spots, and are committed to managing the process and violations.

The e-commerce side of the website will be used for all forms related to contracts going forward. Once an undergrad populates his profile, he can register for common area access, room and board full year or by semester, promissory notes, bursar hold agreements, etc. Everyone who is going to live in the house next semester will meet with Hank this afternoon, verify that his profile is accurate, print out his paperwork, and everyone will know what they need to do to get a key on August 29th. Payment can be made by check or Dwolla account. Dwolla was used successfully for Clambake collections.

The agenda for this meeting includes a comparison of our housing rates with University rates. Hank will consider re-running those numbers now that we're filled. He had budgeted for 48, and with 60, the rate may be revisited. He increased the parlor tax to \$225, up from \$150, because we were going to be below budget. Hunter explained that it is difficult to get Freshmen to move in since they don't know the brotherhood that well yet, but they were able to get 6 newly initiated Freshmen to move in. Our registration deadline was April 4th, and the University's deadline was more than a week earlier, which also presents a challenge. This has been a frustrating process that needs to go smoother than it has in the past. A few options were discussed. Hank stated that board fees could also go down with more participants.

Hank asked Hunter if everyone is aware of the room pick procedure and whether or not they are prepared with a pick order. Hunter confirmed that they were prepared. Everyone needs to bring their own computers to update their profiles and Hank suggested they add a picture. Room pick goes by housing points based on officer roles, then pledge class, then grade point average, then alphabetical order. All major officers except for the Consul will be living in the house this coming Fall.

Resident Advisor discussion

This concept was discussed at our last meeting. The last time we had a Resident Advisor was in 1995, and we lost our charter in 1998. This has always been a consideration for House Corp., but we haven't had the right candidate. Hank introduced Mike Carter, who is being considered for the position, and explained that the role was historically filled by a grad student – often, but not always, a Psi Psi. They were Sigma Chi brothers, and their role was to offer support when necessary. They don't have a role in running Chapter affairs, but can mediate if necessary. They cannot be the Chapter Advisor, who reports to the Grand Praetor. They have a direct relationship with House Corp. The changes we implemented this past year – third party property management with no full time presence like when we had with Rich Redhead – left the undergrads to deal with day-to-day issues by themselves. We've seen more property damage than in recent years, and don't know why. Maybe Red's presence discouraged this in the past. Hunter confirmed that things are different without Red, and calls to Jim Whitbread have been more frequent this past semester. Hank reminded everyone that the current environment with fraternities in general puts us at significant risk, and one wrong move can result in serious consequences. Some alums won't participate in House Corp because of personal liability risks. When Red saw something that concerned him, he kept House Corp informed. We've lost that without him.

Hunter expressed that a grad student would not want to live in the day-to-day environment in the house. He suggested a fifth year grad student would be a better choice since they'd know what to expect. We may not have a good place to put an RA where they would be isolated from distractions. Brett suggested that we offer the position to a fifth year senior.

Hank reminded everyone that the reason we're having this discussion is because we may have the right candidate in Mike Carter who meets the criteria we're looking for. If we don't have a similar candidate next year, we may not have an RA.

Bill Beach asked where an RA would live, and Hank wasn't sure. With 32 planning to live in the house this Fall (full capacity) and room picks scheduled for this afternoon, there doesn't appear to be a room available for an RA. Historically they lived in the first floor room with the bathroom.

Meeting Minutes
April 25, 2015

John Predmore commented that at the University of Rochester, the house is owned by the University, and the University dictated that they have an RA, selected by the school, not always a Sigma Chi, and the Chapter has input but doesn't get to make the decision.

Hank stated that the RA would be expected to work with Chapter leadership first in case of an issue, before involving House Corp.

Steve Oliva suggested that we select from the brotherhood for this position, with the understanding that there is a significant responsibility that goes with free room and board, and House Corp reserves the right to revoke the privilege at any time. Age doesn't necessary mean an individual is more responsible. He suggested that maybe we should try this with Mike and see how it works out, as long as Mike knows what he's getting himself into. Should we be unable to find the right candidate next year, we will consider an undergrad as a possible candidate. Selection of the individual would be made by House Corp.

Mike Carter introduced himself: He is originally from Bedford, NH and has been living in New York City for the last 5 years, where he started with NBC, and is now with iHeart media in radio production. He is currently the producer a political talk show, "New Hampshire Today," for WGIR-AM in Manchester. He gets up every day at 4:30 a.m. to produce the show. He came to the clam bake to meet people and doesn't want to live in the house if the undergrads are uncomfortable with the arrangement. Mike expressed that he's not interested in acting as anyone's guardian – he's coming to Syracuse to go to school and has been focused on getting accepted into the Broadcast Journalism program at Syracuse. After visiting the house at Homecoming, the RA idea was presented to him. He wants to meet and interact with the undergrads whether he becomes the RA or not. He understands this is a new concept for the undergrads and understands the resistance.

Bill Beach remembered from his experience as an RA that an RA offers much more than the undergrads might realize. An RA offers both the House Corp and the undergrads an additional resource for handling difficult situations when they arise. Bill expressed that he sees no negatives to having an RA, only positives. It shouldn't affect anything if the undergrads are doing the right things. The RA will have to tolerate the noise, interruptions, and distractions, and be ready to put his foot down when necessary.

Mike Carter expressed that he would like to communicate his intentions with House Corp and his intended manner of dealing with issues that may arise to make sure that they align with their expectations. His primary reason for being in Syracuse is to go to school, not to be an RA. The RA is a potential side benefit of attending Syracuse as a Sigma Chi.

Hunter expressed that everyone would be more comfortable if the RA was a Psi Psi. Steve Oliva commented that there are benefits to welcoming non-Psi Psi's into the Chapter (Steve was a Sig at West Virginia) – they can offer a different perspective. The goal is to do everything we can to preserve what we have at Psi Psi. John Predmore commented that the RA, much like the Consul, knows that if there are issues, he will be called on to fill a role, and also has contacts and resources that others don't have if and when issues do come up.

Hank asked for Will Gerhard's opinion. Will questioned the room choice on the first floor for a grad student, and suggested a room on the third floor would be a better choice. He lives on the third floor now, and it works well for him. Mike didn't feel that living on the first floor would be an issue for him,

and that it's more important that the undergrads are comfortable with Mike living anywhere in the house as an RA.

Hank encouraged everyone to get to know Mike, and suggested that we reconvene outside of this meeting to make a final decision.

Bill Beach suggested a vote so we can proceed. Even if there are contingencies, a decision can then be made.

Brett expressed concern that re-selecting rooms would be very disruptive. Hank said that the room behind the kitchen has always been designated as the RA's room and should be designated as such going forward if we decide we want an RA.

Hank asked about living arrangements for the Spring semester. Hunter said that the two individuals living in the first floor room with the shower would likely move upstairs for the Spring semester, so that room could become available.

Bill Beach asked about converting the office to a single. Hank explained we've had multiple issues with making that room a living space, including the Fire Marshal. Bill asked who would be bumped if it was necessary to find a living space for Mike. Hunter said that the two neophytes who are planning to move into the double on the first floor would be the ones.

Bill Gerbig offered the following motion: "House Corporation will offer Mike Carter a position as RA contingent on a suitable room arrangement. If that is determined to be unpractical, a Board Club arrangement for the Fall Semester will be considered, with reconsideration for residence in the house for the Spring Semester. Hank Suominen and Bill Gerbig will have authority to make the final decision."

Brad Short seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Property Management

After our first year with Premier, this arrangement seems to be working well. The house is cleaner. Jim's crew is doing a good job keeping up. Jim and Hank have worked through the bugs and the process for a service request. All seem to be happy with this arrangement. Gill Grilling is also working well, and the brotherhood is satisfied with the food. There has been some food theft we'll need to deal with – out of house brothers suspected of raiding the pantry. The transition was better than expected, and we intend to continue with this arrangement for next year.

A fire department inspection is scheduled for a week from Thursday. For 3 years straight, no deficiencies have been noted. We're expecting to have issues this time. One problem is our incident log. False alarms are an issue. We've had three fire alarm pulls – one in the Fall (Bria Jones), one this past Tuesday night (a visitor to the house), and one last night. Last night there appeared to be smoke coming from the basement. The house was evacuated, the fire department was called, three firetrucks showed up, and it was found that someone emptied a fire extinguisher in the basement. The same individual did the same thing later on the third floor. This individual was a visitor to the house – a friend of a younger brother of an alumna who graduated last year. He was caught and eventually admitted to everything. The cleanup will be extensive and will likely cost \$1500. (The individual later met with House Corp, gave his contact information, and committed to reimbursing the chapter for the damages and cleanup costs.)

Meeting Minutes
April 25, 2015

This is the first time there have been no covered smoke detectors in the basement upon inspection (by Hank). On Thursday, all fire exits have to be cleared of debris. There is a smoke detector missing in the laundry room, and Jim has to convince the inspectors that the replacement is in process. These are things that make it difficult to pass inspection.

If Bria Jones doesn't pay the \$300 fine, the chapter must reimburse House Corp. Hank said that he sent her a letter along with the NYS statute on false alarms.

Summer Projects

The dishwasher needs to be replaced - best estimates are that it's been here since 1965. Gill is working on that.

Jim and Hank suggested that we need a master key program. The current key box arrangement is difficult. Jim has a proposal from Fradon Lock -- \$438 for master keys for all of the bedrooms. All agreed to proceed. There will be a separate key for the office.

We had several issues this winter with ice dams on the roof and burst pipes. We need to revisit insulation and roofing. Jim explained that the room where the pipe burst will need to be insulated. It's the closet off the back of the triple at the top of the stairs on the second floor (room 204), the one with the flat roof. Maybe a baseboard heater would help. Other de-icing options have been explored and aren't viable solutions. There is not enough snow and ice guard on the roof. Hank thinks we should gut the room, insulate it, strip the roof, ice and water shield, flash cut the wall, and put a new roof on with a rubber membrane, and/or change the pitch somehow. It would have to be done with a lift from the Kappa parking lot. This will be on the summer list.

We also need to seal the parking lot, re-stripe it, and number the spaces. The chapter will decide, manage, and enforce the parking permit process. The dumpster will be striped as a tow zone. There will be designated parking for vendors, house management, and kitchen staff. Jim will call a towing service as required.

There have been issues with damage and theft in the parking lot, and there was a request to close off the public walkway through the parking lot. Due to the easement behind the property, SU has rejected this request in the past. The undergrads need to be aware of the risks of leaving property in their vehicles, and with cameras and lighting in place, there's nothing else we can do to address this. Hank encouraged the undergrads to purchase renters insurance for personal property damage while living in the house.

The usual list of summer repairs will be completed. The list includes the parking lot, roof, slate repair, common areas, basement cleansing, floor stripping and re-sealing. Staples are an issue – the undergrads will likely be charged \$1500 if they aren't removed before patching and painting. The slate floor was discussed – it has been a maintenance issue. Hank will work with Jim to get a floor machine, and look into a different type of floor in a couple of years. The moisture barrier under the floor has been damaged during floor repairs in the past, and Jim is now aware of this issue. We may need to replace the TV. We're down to 2 dining room tables. We need to look into furniture repair and deal with furniture across the board. There is some property damage, and the undergrads will be charged where the damages exceed what we can repair or replace through the furniture fund.

The laundry equipment needs to be sent out for service. The coin operators will be removed. We will dry-lock the floor and walls using the same flooring we have in the hallway behind the foyer. We don't collect much from the coin operators, so laundry will now be free.

Undergraduate Report

Hunter said that Initiation went well. It was conducted at the house, which gets crowded. John Predmore concurred that it went well, although it was crowded. Some of the ritual gear may need replacement. Bill Beach felt that it went smoothly. A lot of the implements, candlesticks, etc., should be replaced. Light boxes are scratched. Bill Beach proposed that the Alumni Association contribute some funds to ritual. Hank asked if someone would volunteer to lead a ritual renewal process. Consider screw eyes in the ceilings, and other things that make set up faster and easier. The house should be set up for initiation to reduce the amount of last minute preparations. John Predmore commented that we can send 8 people to BLTW, and they can attend Ritual Renaissance that will help with preparations. There is a complete timeline that provides everything needed to do to prepare and when to do it. It would help if the undergrads had a Ritual Chair who took the job seriously. Hunter commented that they do have one. Hank commented that we could also reduce damage from last minute preparations, using attachment points instead of staples to hang interview drapes, etc. Bill suggested that this will be a good place to invest some of the money raised by the Alumni Chapter. Hunter expressed that 8 guys will attend BLTW and they will attend the Ritual Renaissance. John Predmore commented that they are switching from Ball State to Bowling Green, so travel should be easier, and registration hasn't been opened yet. Hunter commented that 2 have applied, but it's typical that 2 or 3 apply and only 1 gets in. We're paying for 2 spots, and John agreed to check into this. Typically, Hank gets a call from National saying there are no applications in, and he then reminds the undergrads. Hunter will provide John with the application information – who has applied, and who has been rejected – so he can check into it.

The debt owed to House Corp is down to \$4916. \$2000 of that is from smoke detector violations, and since that will be waived, it's down to \$2916.

Hank asked for an update on the website. Hunter said that the old website was easier to navigate for entering and uploading information. Hank explained that the design of this website is better than the old one, but we need to get used to it. The webmaster is Daniel Jones. He was abroad in the fall, so Dan Jung filled in. There is room for a Consul's message – Hank asked Hunter to enter something and keep it updated. Will Gerhard is the only undergrad who has uploaded a photo so far. Hank explained that although the website has some issues, it will work well for 99% of our needs, but it needs content. He asked the undergrads to take the initiative to do this. The Historian takes pictures, why not put some of those on the website? There is a section that can be turned into a job board, and we can direct people to that with the Saltine Sig. There are numerous benefits to getting comfortable with the website and keeping it up-to-date.

The Saltine Sig is primarily the responsibility of the undergrads to get it mailed on time, although alums have been taking the lead in recent history. It's an easy process. John Predmore commented that public relations is part of any job, and the Fraternity is a great way to learn those skills. He also commented that the contact information in the back of the Magazine of Sigma Chi needs to be updated so alums know how to reach individuals in the undergraduate chapter.

Homecoming is scheduled for October 24th. We need an undergrad to take the lead in planning for this event.

Grand Praetor's Report

John Predmore announced that there are changes to the pledge program, including elimination of I-week, and a new online learning system. The details may be rolled out at Grand Chapter and/or BLTW. John offered to write letters or talk to employers to allow people to attend BLTW. It's a world class leadership development seminar, and it's free. Most employers will agree with this.

National also rolled out an amnesty program to clean up pledge programs. After January 1st, there will be no tolerance of hazing or other pledge program issues. There are new additions to the list of hazing activities that everyone should be familiar with, including designated driver assignments, line ups, any kind of servitude, forced exercise – things we didn't think were hazing as recent as 5 years ago. With the history of this chapter, we need to be on our best behavior – they are still watching. By enrolling, you are saying that you agree to have someone from National work with us. Hunter and Will said that they have participated in the program, which was about an hour long session. After participating in that session, they believe that they are in full compliance and don't believe that there is any further action to be taken. Hank and John suggested that full participation in the amnesty program is a good insurance policy and a good way to get a better understanding of any gray areas before they become an issue. There is no downside to participating.

National has also rolled out a program for prevention of sexual harassment. The colleges and universities are very concerned about this problem, and it has changed in just the last few years. Colgate has lost their charter for 5 years because of a sexual harassment case. They may not have been treated fairly, but they weren't proactive, and it cost them. There is a journey program called "Preventing Sexual Assault." A facilitator will come in for a 3-4 hour session. It would help our defense if there were ever a problem. John offered to help however he can with any of these issues.

The Chapter Advisor role is changing in some places to a Chapter Advisory Board, with a Chapter Advisor as the lead. John is looking for a new Chapter Advisor for Cornell because their current advisor can't visit the chapter often enough. There was discussion about forming a Board of local members, most of whom are already members of the House Corp. board. Common members of both Boards may be an issue. This will be a recurring topic at future meetings.

Grand Chapter this year is in San Diego – a long trip but it's paid for. Hunter said that there is an undergrad from California who is planning to go. John said he received an e-mail stating that no one from the Chapter has registered. The candidate has to register on the website and needs a letter from the Consul stating that the candidate is representing the chapter as our delegate. The application deadline is May 1st.

Alumni Chapter Report

The Alumni Chapter currently has a balance of about \$14,000 that should be spent in the best interests of the Alums who make the contributions. This could include scholarships, ritual gear, any of the training options that John Predmore mentioned, etc. The Executive Board of the Alumni Chapter needs to consider options and reach consensus on expenditures that support the Alumni interest. The undergrads are invited to submit requests for funds with supporting documentation. Composites are an option, digital composite photos on the website, etc.

Meeting Minutes
April 25, 2015

Scholarship

Bill Beach volunteered to get involved in the Scholarship process. He needs to know the process – forms, applications, etc. Hank agreed to send an e-mail to John Bersani and Bill Beach to start the transition. There are funds available from National that we often don't apply for.

New Business – History of Psi Psi

Bill Beach commented that he would like to develop and write a history of the Chapter that would include dates of major events. Bill offered to lead this effort, but will need help and information to put it together. Hank said that there are books of initiates that he can put his hands on that might help. All were in agreement of this initiative. Hank suggested that this is a good topic for the website and the Saltine Sig. John Predmore suggested it could be a pledge project. Hobart is going to have a “phone-a-thon” to try to gather some of this information for their chapter.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.

Respectfully Submitted,

William Gerbig

Secretary