

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

Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2016

Syracuse, NY

Alumni Brothers in Attendance

Hank Suominen (Board President and Treasurer), Bill Gerbig (Board Secretary), Bill Beach (Board Member), Steve Oliva (Board Member), John Trop (Board Member), Mike Carter (Resident Advisor), Bryan Leather, Dick Prenot, John Predmore (Grand Praetor), Bill Munger, Phil Oldham (Board Member)

Undergraduate Brothers in Attendance

Nish Ketchoyian (Consul), Matt Cassidy (Pro Consul), Hunter Viscarello, Coby Beach (Quaestor)

Others in Attendance

Jim Whitbread, Lisa Leonard (Premier Cleaning Service)

Hank Suominen opened the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Annual Meeting of Members of the Alumni Association

The Alumni Association elects a 12-member Board of Directors of the House Corporation, which is 737 Comstock Ave., Inc., the legal entity that conducts its business to own and operate the house for the benefit of the undergraduate chapter. Mike Yates' term has expired. John Trop has agreed to resign to make room for Phil Oldham and Hunter Viscarello, who have expressed interest in serving on the board. Also, Hank Suominen, John Bersani, and Chris Dowd are up for re-election. All but Hunter were nominated for a 3-year term, with Hunter serving a 1-year term. Bill Gerbig motioned to accept all candidates, seconded by Bill Beach, all were in favor.

Thanks to John Trop and Mike Yates. Mike will continue as Treasurer of the Alumni Association, and John will continue as Vice President of the Alumni Association.

With no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20.

Annual Meeting of 737 Comstock Ave.

Hank Suominen opened the meeting at 10:20.

Election of Officers. Hank has served as President and Secretary, John Bersani as Vice President, and Bill Gerbig as Secretary since 2011. John would like to resign his position as Vice President. Phil Oldham was nominated to replace John. All were in favor of renewing Hank's and Bill's terms, and electing Phil as Vice President.

Grand Praetor report.

John Predmore is the Grand Praetor for the Central New York province. He congratulated Psi Psi on another Peterson Award, their third in the last five years.

John has recommended Mark Howard for Chapter Advisor, replacing Ben Tashjian who is living in Albany. Mark is willing to accept the position and has been visiting the Chapter regularly. Mark is a Psi Psi who graduated from Syracuse in 1977. He has been involved with the chapter since 2013, helped with their strategic vision, has attended chapter meetings, visits Syracuse regularly from his home in the Scranton area, and is well respected by the chapter. All approved Mark as our new Chapter Advisor.

The Chapter at Hobart was installed in April. Binghamton University has submitted their application, is looking to be installed within 10-12 months, and will be looking for help from local chapters with their first initiation. They accepted 46 members in their first pledge class.

The Fraternity announced Preparation for Brotherhood at LTW this summer, their new pledge education program. Sigma Alpha Epsilon, the second largest national fraternity (Sigma Chi is #1) decided to eliminate their pledge program last year. Sigma Chi still sees value in pledgship and developed this new program, which is focused on education. They are asking the alumni to be supportive. We have to make this work – without it we may not continue to have a pledge program. The Magister's guide spells everything out – there is a purpose for every activity. Colleges are no longer tolerating "traditional" pledge programs. National wants every pledge to have the same experience. There is online training. There is a more formal role for big brothers – they are expected to guide the pledge and monitor their progress. This should be a win-win for all stakeholders – the chapter, the pledges, the parents, the school, etc. The training is polished and professionally done through Sigma Chi University, a new platform for many forms of training.

House Management

Thanks to Jim and Lisa, and Steve Oliva's crew, the House is once again in great condition for the start of another school year. There is quite a difference between the condition the house has been left at the end of the Spring semester and its condition the following Fall. That needs to improve. We're in the process of rewiring the house, with new electric service this past summer and redistributed power to the second and third floor with new electrical panels. Next summer, all bedrooms will get new wiring. There are not enough outlets and too many power strips in use now. Next summer, all of that will be replaced. We're also upgrading the sprinkler system. The mains were replaced this summer, and next year will extend sprinkler coverage into all bedrooms. This provides protection of the people and property, and there are insurance savings as well. We've taken a loan to cover the costs, over \$50,000

Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2016

this past summer and probably about the same next summer. The next major project will be replacing the exterior façade. We repainted 4 or 5 years ago.

All issues raised by the Property Inspector last semester have been addressed. Although our property and liability insurance is much lower than can be purchased commercially, we can save more by submitting a Risk Management Policy to National. It is due by the end of September – Nish stated that he is aware of it, has a template, and plans to submit on time. Mark Howard offered to help.

Long term needs, beyond siding, are roof and windows. They will be addressed over the next several years. There is a group of brothers from the late 80's who are trying to put together another capital program, led by Kip Sanford and Fred Norfolk. They are inquiring about meaningful projects that would provide a long term benefit. They mentioned restoring the front porch, and are trying to raise \$150,000 for this and other projects. The basement is also an opportunity for improvement.

In general, the house is in good shape and we're in good financial shape, due primarily to a relatively full house. We've been averaging 56 per school year with total capacity of 64.

We had a difficult Spring semester in terms of damage. At the end of the semester, we always clean the house and repair the damage, and keep track of the costs. The chapter received a bill for \$13,000 with a detailed list of excessive repairs that were necessary. We don't charge the chapter for repairs due to normal wear and tear. It seemed that there were few issues for most of the school year, and most of the damage occurred at the end of the Spring semester, including fire pits in the back yard, water damage inside the house, excessive staple removal, broken glass and metal in the yard. It's the role of chapter leadership to address this behavior when it occurs. Maybe the offenders should be charged, rather than the entire chapter, but establishing and managing the fine process is difficult and needs to be handled by the chapter itself. Nish expressed that there is a new group of more responsible individuals in the house now, and much of the problem is caused by those who are about to graduate. Since they won't be returning in the Fall, they don't suffer from the fines. Nish described a new attitude toward this type of behavior and expects significant improvement. Hank explained that under current policy, House Corp takes from room security deposits for room repairs, and any common area damage gets charged to the Chapter. We now collect \$225 per person for common area access fee, and if the house stays in good condition, some of that will be returned to the chapter. The decision is to rebate is made at the end of the school year, but last Spring, the rebates were issued before most of the damage occurred. Going forward, the rebate process will be delayed until all damage can be evaluated. It's Jim's job to communicate status on a regular basis to the House Corp. If Hank doesn't get photos from Jim and Lisa, they're not doing their job. We don't want to resort to social restrictions, but this situation needs to improve. Nish feels that it's going to be much better, and Jim concurs. Hank will add a holdover provision in the 2017-18 school year lease agreement that will extend the move out date to the Thursday after graduation with no service provided, but the contractors will be starting summer improvements the following day, so the house needs to be empty by end of day Thursday. There will be a mechanism to make those who stay accountable for any damages that occur. Current rent is about 10% less than the university rates.

Chapter Update - Nish

24 men were initiated last semester. Out of 27 bids, 25 accepted, and 1 decided to transfer. Many show leadership potential. Nish, Matt, and 4 new brothers attended BLTW, and it was good for the new guys to see how big Sigma Chi is. Other houses had about 150 attend open rush night, Psi Psi had 278. Fall rush will be smaller than Spring. One brother attended Horizon, a potential future Consul or Pro Consul. Every chapter is allowed two applications, and one is accepted. It's a great experience. The head of IFC has told us that Sigma Chi is the model fraternity on campus, and has asked us to help other chapters. Chapter meeting attendance has been strong, 95% or more every weekend. Greek participation on campus is also up.

Derby Days will be moved to the Spring semester this year, expecting greater participation and donations with more Greeks on campus after initiations. Several Psi Psi's visited Galisano Children's Hospital to see a plaque recognizing our chapter outside the triage room, thanks to \$25,000 in contributions from Derby Days. Campus is holding Autothon, like a dance marathon, raising money for Galisano's and Children's Miracle Network. Anything we donate to Autothon is also credited to the donation to Galisano. Brett Polinski is going to try to get a picture from the children's hospital in the Daily Orange. Hank suggested that the undergrads ask alumni to participate. Brett is working on that and expects improvement this academic year. They expect to raise \$30,000 from Derby Days this year, and a portion will go to Galisano. Most chapters nationally donate to John Huntsman Cancer Institute in Utah, which Nish toured when there for Horizon, and a portion of Derby Days proceeds will be donated to that as well. The University has expressed that it doesn't like the competition between sororities, but Nish and Brett are handling that. They would like to expand philanthropy beyond Derby Days, donating leftover food to a homeless shelter, for example. A blood drive has also been scheduled.

New Business - Roll books

Hank: We're missing #1-500. We have #501-1000, and #1001-1500. There are about 5 other roll books that have been signed since. Bill Beach said that he and Paul Norcross took some things from the house when we lost our charter, and will check to see if he has #1-500. Hunter has some, others may still be missing. Hank would like to find all of the books, take them to a book binder and consolidate them into one. Steve Oliva mentioned that he has a tenant who is a book binder. To be revisited at next meeting.

New Business – Alumni Database

Phil Oldham is working on a form to improve the information in our database and try to promote connections. John Trop asked if anyone is working on contact and bio information through the website. Some mentioned that the new website makes it more difficult to post pictures and bios. Hank checked and found that of 73 active brothers, 60 are registered on the website. That should be 100%. To be discussed further at next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2016

Respectfully Submitted,

William Gerbig

Secretary