

Gateway Student Journalism Society

Meeting Minutes

March 15 2023

Opening

The regular meeting of the Gateway Student Journalism Society was called to order at 6:06 p.m. via Google Meets by Mitchell PAWLUK.

Present:

AVILA, Rebeca

KERR, Lochlann

TEELING, Katie

PAWLUK, Mitchell

MACATANGAY, Arthur

WILLIAMS, Emily

BAJWA-ZSCHOCKE, Anna

BROOKS, Sam

CRAIG, Lee

Absent:

VILLOSO, Julia

KOSAK, Dan

DAUM, Evan

TYAGI, Aishwarya

Approval of the Agenda:

Moved by BROOKS.

Seconded by WILLIAMS.

There are no votes in opposition.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by WILLIAMS.

Seconded by BAJWA-ZSCHOCKE.

There are no votes in opposition.

Reports to the Board

WILLIAMS presents the Editor-in-Chief report.

WILLIAMS says that it's been a busy time for The Gateway. There was budget coverage, Students' Union elections coverage, and some members of staff went to NASH85. She says that they used their free one hour with the CUP lawyer. It was a great resource, she said, and she hopes they use it again. She said it was for the Alpha Psi hazing article that she wrote with Lily Polenchuk, the News Editor. She updates the board on hiring. She mentions that Lily Polenchuk was hired as News Editor, and Amanda Sparks as the Staff Reporter. She says that two positions have been hired so far, including Katie Teeling as Editor-in-Chief, and Katie O'Connor as next year's Managing Editor. She was the Deputy Arts and Culture editor. She then updates the board on fundraising. She made posts on social media, and The Gateway received a donation of \$5,192.53 shortly after. She says she wants to keep the ball rolling, but they've exceeded their fundraising goal. She also says that her and Emma Jones are hoping to book the back room of Dewey's for an alumni event in April. She's hoping this will be a semi-annual thing, and that there are potential fundraising angles there.

KERR presents the Executive Director report.

KERR says that they made a pop-up for the site to ask readers for donations. He says they received more funding in the past week than in the past couple months. He then says that the readership survey will be launched on Monday. He says that they decided to wait to launch it, because they wanted to make sure more people filled it out. He says he'll be spending the next month organizing financial statements so that his predecessor will adjust better.

MACATANGAY presents the Managing Editor report.

MACATANGAY says that he's been really busy in the last two months. He says that he's hoping to have Katie O'Connor sit on next month's board meeting to gain experience ahead of her starting her time, similar to how he did when he was hired, since she has no experience. He talks about the purity test, which he says he had a lot of help with for the content. There were no illustrations this year, he said, which he was hoping to recruit. Instead, he opted for a photoshoot. He then mentions that one of the volunteers won an award at NASH85, Matthew Konhauser, for an Op-Ed he wrote. He said Elections were super stressful, but Elections Dissection was fun, with panellists Jin He, Jared Larsen, and Emily Briand. He says he'll be holding a transition meeting with Katie O'Connor in the next few weeks, and finishing up his transition report.

KERR presents the Governance Committee report.

KERR says they didn't end up meeting, because they've struggled with finding specific changes for GovCom to look at. He says there are operating policies that he hoped GovCom would look at, that he realized are editorial that he wanted the board to look at first.

PAWLUK presents the HR Committee report.

PAWLUK says that HR has not met since performance evaluations.

TEELING presents the Sexual Violence Task Force Committee report.

TEELING says that they haven't met in a few weeks because of Elections. But, the report is looking like it will be complete by next month, if all goes to plan. The Sexual Violence Task Force Committee is meeting next Thursday, and hopes to have a first draft complete soon.

CRAIG presents the Finance Committee report.

CRAIG says that they held their Finance Committee Meeting ahead of the board meeting. She said they talked about QuickBooks and results from the audit. She said that the Finance Committee wants to have a meeting with TEELING ahead of her becoming EiC, so that she understands what's going on with The Gateway's finances. She wants everything to be as up-to-date as possible. She says that QuickBooks should be reflective of what's going on in the day-to-day of the business.

Unfinished business:

WILLIAMS presents the unpublishing policy.

WILLIAMS says she wrote the draft, but KERR turned it into an operating policy. She passes it off to KERR, since he wrote the most recent draft.

KERR says that in substance, this is the same draft that the board approved. He said he and WILLIAMS felt like this policy should be put right at the beginning of the operating policy, under Operations. It outlines how the policy works - that the EiC gets requests for unpublishing first. The Editorial board can help deliberate, but the EiC gets final say. He says that requests must be made within 4 years of publishing.

BROOKS asked that the policy goes into Additional Materials. WILLIAMS sends the policy into the chat.

BROOKS says that it isn't good procedure to vote to approve the unpublishing policy ahead of discussing the Ombuds Policy, since the unpublishing policy hinges on the Ombuds Policy. He asks that they present the Ombuds Policy, then vote on the motions together.

PAWLUK approves, and asks that KERR presents the Ombuds Policy.

KERR says that the Ombudsperson is referenced in operating policy and bylaw, but there was no written policy anywhere. He said that the broad vision for the Ombuds Policy was that this would be the appeal system for external complaints — people not from The Gateway complaining about The Gateway. They're also able to make recommendations about how The Gateway is deviating from journalistic standards. He says that the term of office for the Ombuds person would be two years at most, which he doesn't think people will stay for anyway. He says that the job posting would need to stay up for 14 days, unless the previous Ombudsperson left the role unexpectedly, which in that case, it would only be open for 7 days. Ideally, the Ombudsperson would be someone with journalistic experience, he says. He says that the Ombudsperson would not make recommendations on non-editorial programming, like advertisements, or managerial or internal-personnel issues. He says that there is also a 4 year limit on complaints. For the appeal process, KERR says that there is a broad scope for how the Ombudsperson handles investigations and complaints, since they don't have enforceable powers. All they have to do is give equal access to information and let everyone know that an appeal investigation has started. He also said that at the end of every investigation, the Ombudsperson has to make a report, which is then posted on the website. He also says there is an annual report that includes recommendations and issues.

BAJWA-ZSCHOCKE asks why they decided on a two year term.

WILLIAMS says that it's nice for continuity to have someone on the board for two years, but more than that would be too big of an ask. She also says that the board usually shuffles around every year.

KERR said that they don't want to go the entire summer without an Ombudsperson, like they normally do when they're reappointing people to the board.

WILLIAMS moves to approve the Unpublishing policy and the Ombuds policy.

BROOKS seconds.

The motion passes unanimously.

For discussion:

WILLIAMS and KERR present the results from the audit.

WILLIAMS says they got the audit results February 16th. She said that the audit was difficult, since it was so time-consuming and expensive. She said that there's considerations to make in future on how useful this audit actually is. She said they had to this year, since The Gateway received Dedicated Fee Unit money from the Students' Union.

KERR said that the audit covered the fiscal year from July 1st, 2021 to June 30, 2022. He said that it covered most of PAWLUK's time as EiC, and two months of WILLIAMS' term. He says that the role of the audit was to review The Gateway's finances. He says this is the true transition year from DFU to non-DFU operations, as PAWLUK's year as EiC was the last to receive DFU money, and now The Gateway is running off of savings. The audit was within \$100 on all line items of the estimates WILLIAMS and KERR made in their budget presentation in July 2022. He says that this fiscal year, an audit is not necessary, but that isn't their decision. KERR said that they offloaded a lot of their assets, and sold a lot of items that were costing The Gateway lots of money, like leases on Apple products. He says that they've been saving as much of their DFU money as possible, when previously, it was spent very quickly. He said that the accounts receivable, or the money that came in, is much lower than years previous. He also said that they made \$20,000 more than they were expecting, as they received a COVID-19 and a magazine publishing grant. KERR said that there were some potential concerns from expenditures. He said there were bad debts that came out in the audit, which they're seeking clarification for because they don't know where it's from. He also said that there were some additional spending for office supplies, but grants were used to buy the supplies, which were mainly furniture from Ikea. He said that they've dipped into the cash quite a bit to pay for rent and staff salaries. KERR talks about investments, which are set to mature this year, when his and WILLIAMS terms are done. KERR then explains the going concern from the audit. He says that approximately 80 per cent of The Gateway's funding came from the Students' Union's student fees. He says that ideally, they'd get their DFU back, or find some other source of revenue. He said that there is also a credit risk, but The Gateway has small debts to many creditors, which reduces this risk. He then says there is a liquidity risk, and that he and WILLIAMS expect that The Gateway will run out of funds in September 2024, which poses a huge risk for the 2022-23 financial year.

CRAIG then talks about long-term investments. She said that the long-term investments don't match what's in the Quickbooks for the GIC.

BROOKS asks that he is gung-ho on approving the financial statements, as it's an accurate representation of The Gateway's current financial situation. But, he asks when they will really talk about what these financial statements mean for The Gateway's future. He wants to make sure there is going to be space to go over what these numbers mean.

KERR says that he and WILLIAMS have made a contingency plan, which he could run down for the board in this meeting, or save it for next meeting.

KERR presents a Long-term Projection Memo for the 2022-24 year.

He says that this memo has been shared publicly with the Students Union, including the general manager Marc Dumouchel. He says that they've really cut down on costs compared to previous years. In 2018, the Gateway had a total annual cost of \$245,162, compared to \$118,000 in the 2022 fiscal year. If costs go as budgeted, KERR says that The Gateway will exhaust all reserves by September 2024, which is a best-case scenario. He said that there have been some challenges, like balancing staff costs with burnout. He says he and WILLIAMS have made three outcomes that are most likely, with the first plan, which is winning the DFU, being the priority. He says there is a lot of set-up to do this summer with the specifics. If they win the DFU, liquidity would still be an issue. But, KERR said the DFU might be able to be advanced, and they'd maintain advertising relationships with the SU and other external sources. The second outcome is a loss within 10 per cent, which would require financing to maintain operations until the 2025 election. One option would be a lease break or rent relief. The last outcome would be a total loss, and The Gateway returning ownership to the SU.

WILLIAMS said she has unofficially volunteered to run the undergraduate campaign, with PAWLUK volunteering to run the graduate campaign. She said there is a lot of support from graduate students, but a graduate student fee would not be a hail mary.

PAWLUK said that graduate student fees are not renewable through plebiscites or referendums every 4 years, so even if they lost a DFU again, they wouldn't lose the graduate fee. He also mentions APIRG, which had a comparable reputational loss to The Gateway. He said that they lost last year, but recently won their DFU back, which is a good sign that students would be more open to paying fees again.

Noting the potential errors on pages 4 and 11, WILLIAMS motions to approve the financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 2022, and directs the auditors of the GSJS to review the noted potential errors.

BROOKS seconds.

The motion passes unanimously.

WILLIAMS presents a date for the Annual General Meeting. She proposed April 25th at 5:00 p.m., which would be after the pitch meeting.

PAWLUK said that the AGM is usually for volunteers who have enough articles to qualify as GSJS members, and for staff to present on their terms. He also mentions that alumni are welcome to come to the social, which is usually after the AGM. He said that it was fun when BROOKS came last year.

WILLIAMS motions to approve the date for the AGM.

CRAIG seconds.

The motion passes unanimously.

Adjournment

WILLIAMS motions to adjourn.

The board unanimously votes to adjourn.

The meeting is adjourned at 7:37 p.m..

Minutes submitted by: Katie Teeing