

Gateway Student Journalism Society

Meeting Minutes

June 19, 2024

Present

Leah Hennig

Lee Craig

Sam Brooks

Omar Habibzai

Katie Teeling (Chair)

Levi Flaman

Anna Rudge

Dylana Twitney (Secretary)

Lily Polenchuk

Absent

Nathan Thiessen (Treasurer)

1. Call to Order

At 7:05 TEELING called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of the Agenda

CRAIG motions to approve the agenda, BROOKS seconded. The motion passes.

3. Approval of the Minutes

BROOK moves to approve minutes, POLENCHUK seconded. The motion passes.

4. Special Orders

a. Selection of New Officers

i. Alumni representative

BROOKS nominates himself. BROOKS leaves the meeting for discussion. TEELING said only one person applied in the month the application was open. FLAMAN says the Board should not keep it open for longer as it's unlikely the people who expressed interest to apply within that time. TEELING says she reached out to several people. CRAIG agrees they should not extend the application. POLENCHUK agrees. TEELING reads out BROOKS nominations. BROOKS previously held the position of Community representative, but meets the eligibility for Alumni representative as he was a volunteer during his undergraduate time at The Gateway. He wants to open the Community representative position up to increase the voices on the Board. POLENCHUK says BROOKS has been very dedicated to The Gateway and supports his

nomination for Alumni Representative. CRAIG says he is an excellent candidate. TEELING also says BROOKS is dedicated. POLENCHUK motions to vote, FLAMAN seconds this. The motion passes unanimously. The motion will take effect at the conclusion of the meeting.

ii. Undergraduate Student-at-Large Representative

According to Teeling, there was only one application for Undergraduate Representative even though multiple students expressed interest. TEELING reads out the applicant's answers. FLAMAN does not have any concerns. TEELING says they seem well rounded. BROOKS agrees they seem like a good candidate. CRAIG says they seem like a good candidate. POLENCHUK agrees and thinks they would bring a good perspective. HENNIG motions to approve the application, RUDGE seconds. The motion passed unanimously. The candidate nominated is Unees Hassain.

iii. Graduate Student-at-Large Representative

Five applicants applied, TEELING says. TEELING reads out the questions for all five candidates. HENNIG finds candidate #5 underwhelming. BROOKS thinks candidates #4 and #5 were underwhelming. POLENCHUK agrees. POLENCHUK thinks candidate #2 was the standout, and candidate #3 didn't give very strong answers. POLENCHUK and TEELING agree that candidates #1 and #2 were the best options. HABIBZAI agrees. RUDGE agrees. BROOKS appreciates how candidate #3 has been on campus for a long amount of time. BROOKS argues that adding an outsider perspective is a positive. POLENCHUK says she would normally agree but would've appreciated it if they focused on different aspects of The Gateway in their answers. BROOKS wonders if it adds insight into what readers want. CRAIG thinks candidate #3 tried to show a connection to The Gateway but agrees candidate #1 and #2 are the best options. FLAMAN motions to vote, HENNIG seconds. The candidate nominated was Zeyanna Rami.

5. Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

a. Editor-in-Chief

The Gateway has hired deputy editors and begun conducting editorial meetings. New staff member Arts & Culture editor Brooklyn Hollinger is starting on Monday. POLENCHUK says she is aiming to publish quarterly prints for the 2024-25 school year. She is in talks with a printing press and has begun developing a layout. Next week Charles Russnell, investigative journalist, is giving a workshop on FOIPING. She has met with the Canadian University Press (CUP) Prairie representatives about how *The Gateway* has not gotten value out of their CUP membership. *The Gateway* has signed a

deal with Metro Cinema for monthly movies. She is working on a contract with SUBPhoto and a partnership with the Golden Bears & Pandas. She is meeting with Nigel from the UASU to find grants. She was finally able to access *The Gateway's* bank account. She is looking to open an account with CIBC but will not switch away from BMO until after the audit is complete. *The Gateway* has received a lot of volunteer signups.

b. Executive Director

HABIBZAI is working on the budget and advertising. He is receiving replies to emails he sent out to potential advertisers. He has collected outstanding payments from 2023-24. He created a presentation for the proposed bank switch and *The Gateway* has settled on CIBC. HABIBZAI made his first ad sale a few weeks ago. He is talking with other organizations for ad sales. HABIBZAI and POLENCHUK have proposed a contract with SUBPhoto for headshots of employees in exchange for ad space.

c. Managing Editor

TWITTEY noted that May was a busy month for *The Gateway* staff. The monthly view count for May 2024 was higher than May 2023. An editorial by opinion editor HENING got a lot of attention on X. TWITTEY says a lot of people saw *The Gateway's* coverage of the Palestine Solidarity Encampment and she thinks it was fairly comprehensive. She is working on starting the deputy volunteers working on features. Whoever's feature is done in editing first will go in the upcoming print edition. TWITTEY has applied for media accreditation to cover the Edmonton Folk Fest. For the June board report, TWITTEY decided to exclude the data from 2021 and 2022 due to discrepancies and inaccuracies in the available data.

d. Finance Committee

TEELING says POLENCHUK and HABIBZAI connected the bank account to QuickBooks. One account still owes for ads, Transcend Coffee. They're waiting to see if Transcend declares bankruptcy and if so they will collect then. POLENCHUK says they want to do the audit before the school year. They will transition from BMO to CIBC when TEELING returns to Edmonton and the audit is done. FLAMAN asks why the current liability is negative \$500, which it shouldn't be. POLENCHUK says she will ask the accountant why this is the case.

6. For approval: Budget 2024-25

HENNIG motions to present the budget, RUDGE seconds. POLENCHUK and HABIBZAI present. HABIBZAI says in 2023-24 *The Gateway* projected \$5,000 in ad sales and the final number came out to \$7,5200. This year they are aiming to sell \$10,000 worth of ads, which he says he cannot completely guarantee. In 2024-25 *The Gateway* is anticipating receiving approximately \$188,000 in DFU funds. This is factoring in the average 5 per cent opt out rate. This figure was selected based on the advice of UASU General Manager Marc Dumouchel. In 2023-24, *The Gateway* projected receiving \$2000 in fundraising income. The final number totalled \$225.14. \$225.14 is the projected number for 2024-25. HABIBZAI says they anticipate retaining the same amount of donors. Investment revenue for 2023-24 was projected at \$591.43.

The final number totalled \$15,681.21. These investments were with BMO so there is no projected number for 2024-25. Currently HABIBZAI says they are unsure how much to invest with CIBC. Grants for 2023-24 were projected at \$7,000. The final number totalled \$9,981.31. The projected total for 2024-25 is \$4,000. With winning the DFU vote HABIBZAI says they will be better funded and for this reason do not expect to receive the same amount of grants.

FLAMAN takes issue with the word “goal” in reference to ad sales, as it should be a forecast of expected ad sales. POLENCHUK says there is actually the possibility of selling more than \$10,000, up to \$17,000, as *The Gateway* is publishing 4 print editions this upcoming year. They felt \$10,000 was more achievable. As the difference between \$10,000 and \$17,000 is large, FLAMAN suggests selecting a projected number between the two estimates.

FLAMAN asks how they came up with the number for the DFU fees and if they did any calculations on their own. POLENCHUK said she sat down with the general manager of the UASU Marc Dumouchel and went through possibilities with him, coming to the conclusion that with an expected 5 per cent opt-out, they would collect \$188,000. FLAMAN asks if it is better to err on the side of caution. POLENCHUK says they could anticipate a 10 per cent opt out. HABIBZAI says 5 per cent opt out is the average historically.

FLAMAN asks if this is the historical opt-out percentage for *The Gateway* or for other fees. If it is for the other fees then this anticipated opt-out may not be accurate for *The Gateway*. Before the DFU campaign, TEELING says Dumouchel advised them to anticipate 15 per cent as that was the average opt out rate amongst all students. Clearly now Dumouchel thinks it will be 5 per cent, TEELING says. BROOKS says the board is picking apart the DFU line item too much. BROOKS thinks the estimate is reasonable as it was chosen on the advice of the UASU. TEELING agrees and says they can't know exactly what to expect. POLENCHUK says she and HABIBZAI are comfortable with anticipating a 5 per cent opt out rate. FLAMAN suggests anticipating an opt-out rate of 10 per cent. POLENCHUK and HABIBZAI agree.

CRAIG notes the budget's large surplus, which she says some students may see as profit. She says the need a solid plan on how to use the DFU money. FLAMAN agrees. TEELING asks if it would make sense to develop a 5 year strategic plan on how to use the funding. POLENCHUK suggests that could be the job of a 5 year committee. FLAMAN mentions that in *The Gateway's* operating policies it is written that *The Gateway* have a \$5000 buffer year to year. FLAMAN suggests adding a line that says *The Gateway* will have a buffer of \$5000 but no more than xyz. TEELING says that's a good point. POLENCHUK says her biggest concern is that if *The Gateway* were to lose funding again it would have to cut down on staff. BROOKS says it is reasonable to budget for a large surplus as *The Gateway* has not been in this situation for awhile. At the end of the year *The Gateway* can look into reinvesting that money into the society. He also suggests increasing a number of the line items in the expenses section.

HABIBZAI says projected staff salaries are projected to be \$83,848.60. The Executive Director receives a commission for ad sales and HABIBZAI says they weren't sure how to incorporate this number. BROOKS recommends that commission should be a new line item.

Projected CPP costs were \$3,360.39, final were \$3,074.31, and the projected is \$3381.74. They are projecting for a 10 per cent increase. EI was projected at \$1,850, final was \$1,644.95, and is projected at \$1,809.45. WCB was projected at \$760.76 for 2023-24, final was \$694.43, and the projected for 2024-25 is \$653.78. Volunteer and staff appreciation was projected at \$350 for 2023-24, final was \$215.15, and is projected again for \$350. FLAMAN recommends increasing the amount budgeted for employee/volunteer appreciation. BROOKS suggests purchasing new cameras. POLENCHUK asks what would be a good number for employee/volunteer appreciation. FLAMAN suggests \$1000.

POLENCHUK goes over the operational costs. For 2023-24, computer software costs were projected to be \$3,180, final was at \$2,984.63, and the estimated for 2024-25 is \$3,283.09. This projection is assuming they keep the same subscriptions but doesn't account for upgrading computer equipment. Projected office supplies costs for 2023-24 were \$250, the final was \$298.74, and the projected for 2024-25 is \$2,000. In 2023-24 *The Gateway* had to buy a new safe to replace the stolen safe. In 2024-25 they're hoping to buy a new camera. Projected costs for outreach and marketing, executive director budget in 2023-24 was \$650. The final cost was \$250.69. The projected cost for 2024-25 is \$650. Society and membership fees were projected for \$226 in 2023-24, final cost was \$226, and the projected cost for 2024-25 is \$226. This cost was for membering to CUP. Projected cost for the print edition in 2023-24 was \$2,500, final costs was \$3,504.75, and the projected cost for 2024-25 is \$3,450. The final exceeded the projected cost in 2023-24 as this cost only accounted for the fall print, not the winter print. POLENCHUK said *The Gateway* will switch from a newspaper style to a tabloid style for the prints. Rent and custodial services were projected at \$11,364 for 2023-24, final was \$10,596, and the projected for 2024-25 is \$11,655.

Flaman agrees that *The Gateway* should purchase more camera equipment but says that should be categorized as a capital expenditure as it is an investment that will last several years.

TEELING suggests increasing the budget for outreach and marketing and separating the lines for outreach and marketing and the executive director. POLENCHUK suggests she and HABIBZAI create a new section for capital expenditures. She and HABIBZAI would take time to do this and bring it back to the board. BROOKS says it seems like the budget requires some changes.

BROOKS motions for HABIBZAI and POLENCHUK to revisit the budget and table it until the next meeting. TEELING says the motion is a good idea but that \$50,000 is a large amount of money to redistribute. She suggests starting the moves on a five year plan. POLENCHUK asks if there is a number she and HABIBZAI should aim to redistribute.

FLAMAN says in *The Gateway's* bylaws it is required for the budget to be approved by June 30. He suggests HABIBZAI and POLENCHUK tweak the budget and put it to an e-vote. TEELING says that is not enough time to responsibly tweak the budget. TEELING suggests that POLENCHUK and HABIBZAI create a base plan for the five year strategic plan. POLENCHUK agrees with BROOKS. She says she and HABIBZAI need tangible instructions for how to proceed.

BROOKS notes that *The Gateway's* savings enabled them to continue operating during the years without DFU funding. He says it is reasonable as a non-profit to have a war chest. FLAMAN says he notices the Emergency Fund Line is blank. He suggests they dedicate the amount of 25 per cent of last years expenses to put in the emergency fund. This number amounts to \$34,000. CRAIG asks the other board members what they think about the emergency fund.

FLAMAN suggests reimplementing *The Gateway* readership scholarships. He suggests also adding a line item for special projects.

BROOKS reminds the board he has motioned for HABIBZAI and POLENCHUK to revisit the budget. BROOKS asks the board if they are comfortable with HABIBZAI and POLENCHUK using this meetings minutes for feedback. TEELING suggests the board emails suggestions about the budget to HABIBZAI and POLENCHUK. BROOKS amends his motion to say that POLENCHUK and HABIBZAI will solicit feedback from the board members and present a new budget at the next regular board meeting. FLAMAN seconds. POLENCHUK asks the board to focus on advice about the emergency fund and how to allocate the remaining balance. TEELING sets a deadline for feedback of July 10. The motion passes.

7. Adjournment

Motioned to adjourn at 9:33.