

ASG Graduate House of Representatives

Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2011

1. Call to Order (1:06pm)
2. Roll Call

Representatives Present: Kelly Gondek, Justin Williams, Benjamin Chasin, Liz Hjort, Christian Cabazos, Elizabeth Wellings, Gail Nelson, Linda Wiatrek, Ricardo Videtta, Kevin Burck, Joni Schneider, Christian McArthur.

Representatives Absent: Mary Harris

Others Present: Advisor Dr. Paula Williamson, Senate Parliamentarian Nick Franke, Senator Eric Kinney, Cody DeSalvo, JD Hall

1. Approval of Minutes

Representative Williams moves to approve the minutes, Representative Wellings seconds the motion, and the motion passes unanimously.

1. Guest Speaker
   1. Senate Parliamentarian Nick Franke (1:08pm)

Nick Franke was invited by the House leadership to give a talk about how ASG meetings run and parliamentary procedure. Franke goes over the agenda, its various parts and what should happen during these parts.

Dr. Williamson asks about the process of passing legislation.

Franke explains that a piece of legislation is first put on the agenda as new business and is read before the legislative body. This is to ensure everyone has at least read it once. It is then put on the next meeting’s agenda as old business. Parliamentary procedure says the legislation should be read a second time, but a motion passed by 2/3 of the house can waive the second reading. The author of the bill will then give a speech and answer any questions. After that, the legislation goes into a period of debate and discussion. This is when Representatives can speak about the legislation and/or offer amendments to the legislation. A Representative may then “move the previous question” which is a motion to proceed to voting on the legislation. A Representative may also “call the previous question” which is a vote to see if the House is ready to vote on the legislation. There was also discussion on the process of proposing amendments to legislation.

Representative McArthur pointed out that many of the motions that Franke has talked about can be found on the last page of the binder given to each member by Dr. Williamson at the first meeting.

Dr. Williamson asks about the process once a piece of legislation is passed by the House.

Franke yields to Cody DeSalvo to answer this question. The House Leadership will pass the legislation on to the ASG Executive Branch who will then approve or veto the legislation. If it is vetoed the legislation will be sent back to the House, who may attempt to override the veto. If the legislation is passed, it is then given to the ASG advisor(s) who will then distribute the legislation to the individuals listed in the legislation (usually in the final “Be it enacted/resolved” clause).

1. Public Forum (1:20)

Cody DeSalvo came to speak to the House about the “Election Code Reform Act”. He was one of the individuals responsible for drafting the version that was passed by the Senate last year and what is being presented to the House. He is requesting that the house consider the legislation to be an emergency and to be voted on today. He cites an ASG Supreme Court decision that is expected to be announced on Monday as the reason; changes to the Election Code require approval of both the Senate and the House and without the House passing the changes, what the Senate did last year may be considered unconstitutional. He also asks that the legislation be passed as-is, without any amendments, so that the House and Senate approve the same version. DeSalvo then outlines several points in the proposed version he believes is important including updating the document to consider electronic voting and outlining category levels of violations and the penalties.

Representative Wellings says she has noticed a number of spelling and grammatical errors throughout the proposed version.

DeSalvo apologizes for it and say that is his fault. From his experience in ASG last year, the ASG Advisor often cleans up those kinds of issues before the final version of the legislation and documents are made public.

Representative McArthur points out that one of the tasks of the Governing Documents Committee is to find those errors in the ‘live” documents and fix them.

Several Representatives asked why the election code needs revising.

DeSalvo explains that the document is antiquated as it was originally written in the 80s and has received only revisions in the years since. This lead to a Supreme Court ruling last year in regards to electronic devices and online voting which was appealed to and overridden by the Dean of Students. In her response, Dr. Arellano said the document should be rewritten to handle a variety of issues in it.

Representative Cabazos asked about a part of the document outlining fines.

DeSalvo corrects her that those are monetary limits on campaign spending and not fines.

As the discussion came to a close Nick Franke points out that parliamentary procedure and the Senate’s Rules of Procedure, which the Graduate House’s version closely resembles, usually gives public forum speakers a 2 minute time limit which can be increased by approval of the House.

Dr. Williamson says that over the years, because of the small size of the House, parliamentary procedure is not held to its strictest formal standards. She thanks Franke for informing the House how the procedure usually operates in the Senate and says this is an issue the House can decide in terms of its meeting practices.

1. Reports
   1. Secretary’s Report (1:35pm)

Secretary McArthur wants to go through some announcements since he’ll be leaving shortly.

He thanked Representatives Nelson, Gondek, and Wellings for joining him at the Graduate College Information Fair a couple weeks prior. At the fair a disabled student approached them discussing an issue of University maintenance vehicle sometimes blocking or parking in handicapped space and not providing an alternative. He attempted to contact the Director of Disability Services to find that she is on leave. The issue has been forwarded to the interim Director and is being looked at.

He had also raised concerns about the departure time of the final bus to Austin and San Antonio. It leaves the LBJ Student Center at 9:35pm, 15 minutes following the scheduled end of the last class of the day. He had seen students during the week having to run across campus to catch the last bus. He discussed the issue with John Root, Director of Auxiliary Services, and Paul Hamilton, Manager of Shuttle Services. A couple years ago a survey had been taken of students and they preferred the current departure time. Representative Gondek also mentioned that she believed that last year the departure time was initially 9:30pm and had been moved to 9:35pm.

Secretary McArthur reminded everyone that the deadline for graduation applications is October 7 for those who want to graduate in December.

The ASG Governing Documents Committee met once during the week and has started examining the Constitution to clean up language and figure out what issues need to be resolved. It is scheduled to meet twice in the following week to continue their work.

The ASG Joint Legislative Finance Committee will be meeting Sept 30, at 11am in the ASG Office in LBJ. They will go over the ASG Budget proposal by President DeGarmo and submit their approval or suggested changes to the Senate.

* 1. Senate Activity Report

Secretary McArthur discusses events going on in the Senate in the past two weeks:

* Former Grad House Rep, Trey Hatt, who is now working for the City of San Marcos, spoke to the Senate to solicit their help in getting feedback from students about the city’s master plan. Mr. Hatt had given cards with information to Secretary McArthur to pass out in the House meeting that contains details on how to submit feedback.
* President DeGarmo announced that candidates for the open position for Vice-President for University Advancement will be visiting in October. There will be open door sessions for students to talk with the candidates.
* President DeGarmo said that a video update on ASG activities had been made and will be placed on the ASG website.
* Vice-President Roemer announced that State Representative Issacs will be speaking to the Senate at an upcoming meeting.
* Senator Kurt Fulkerson is working on a project to have copies of the ASG Archives stored in the Alkek Library. Currently past legislation and other ASG records may or may not be online and available in the Advisor’s office. This would put a copy of those records in the library where students have more access to them.
* Senator French is discussing with the University about moving the grading system to a “plus/minus” system. He also said to expect a student referendum about concealed carry. Finally, he has an idea about having FAQs about ASG videotaped with Senators and Reps answering them and putting that on the ASG website.
* Senator Smith is discussing with Chartwells about offering free-range meat and dairy in the dining halls.
* Senator Riceonen is working on two parking related ideas. One is to have a grace period for students who get a parking ticket the same day as they purchase a parking permit; he’d like the ticket to be waived in this case. He is also looking into the possibility of converting the residential parking lot next to the Supple Science building into a commuter lot.
* The Senate recently passed two pieces of legislation to create Executive level liaison positions for the Faculty Senate and the Round Rock Higher Education Center students.

Secretary McArthur then excused himself to take his Graduate Comprehensive Exam. Representative Wellings takes over with taking meeting minutes.

* 1. House Leader’s Report (1:47pm)

House Leader Videtta thanks for the help with the welcome letter to Graduate Students. He is getting responses already. He reminds everyone to invite people to our meetings. Someone pointed out that the letter did not mention the Graduate House meeting time or location. JD Hall made reference to the difficulty he had in finding the meeting. It was suggested that another e-mail be sent to the Graduate student body with specific information.

1. New Business
   1. H.B.F. 2011-2012/1 “Election Code Reform Act”

The bill was read by Representative Wellings.

Representative Wellings makes a motion for the bill to be placed as emergency status, seconded by Representative Chasin, and the motion passes.

Discussion followed mostly about the emergency nature of the bill. It is now being heard in the ASG Supreme Court and a decision will be announced on Monday (September 26). Since the Senate has already passed the bill as read, it is unconstitutional until the House passed the same bill exactly. There was discussion bout grammar and clarity issues which can be later amended or corrected before being send to the administration to be enacted.

After this discussion, Representative Wellings moves to vote on the bill, Representative Schneider seconds, and the motion passes.

**HBF 2011-2012/1, “Election Code Reform Act”, passes 10-0.**

House Leader Videtta will sign the bill and forward it to Nathan McDaniel, President DeGarmo’s Chief of Staff, who will forward it to the ASG administration. House Leader Videtta will also e-mail Vice President Roemer to inform her of the passage of the bill.

Nice Franke suggests that “Orders of the Day” be added to the agenda in the future so that emergency measures can be voted on at the beginning of meetings.

* 1. H.B.F. 2011-2012/2 “Code of Ethics Reimplementation Act”

Representative Gondek read the bill.

1. Old Business
   1. Welcome letter from the Graduate House

This was already discussed, but Representative Wellings added that the Representatives from Fine Arts have printed a poster with information for constituents about contact information. She will forward it to Dr. Williamson to see if marketing will approve it so that the posters will be consistent through ASG and the Graduate College.

* 1. Lighting concern

Dr. Williamson notes that the lighting issue (from the LBJ Mall to the Comanche Street Bridge) is “in the works”. Representative Gondek will follow up with a letter to facilities.

1. Questions

Representative Gondek wonders if labeling for “disabled” can be changed similarly to the School of Social Work: “differently-abled”. Ramps are being used by the able-bodied and she would like the House to be part of an awareness campaign. Dr. Williamson suggests starting a dialog with the Office of Disability Services on the language on signage around campus and access issues.

Representative Chasin asks why graduate students cannot be given designations for Summa/Magna or Cum Laude. Dr. Williamson notes that graduate students are no longer hooded since many graduate degrees are not “terminal” but go on to PhD programs. Alpha Chi is the only national honor society which recognizes a 4.0 graduate student. Dr. Williamson recommends that Representative Chasin follow up with Dr. Ron Brown to find out the history on the change and rationale behind it. Representative Chasin thought it would be fitting that designations be placed on diplomas.

Mary Harris, from Health Professions, will be stepping down from her position as Graduate House Representative. Her position need to be filled. A visitor, JD Hall, is willing to be nominated. He attended the meeting to get a feel for what we do and be in touch with Dr. Williamson about the process.

Dr. Willoughby and Dr. Williamson will both be out of town for the next scheduled meeting. The room will be reserved and House Leader Videtta will get materials from Dr. Williamson’s office for the next meeting. He will also be responsible for any copying that may need to be done.

The group thanked Senate Parliamentarian Franke for attending the meeting and staying until the end.

1. Announcements
2. Adjournment (2:52pm)

Representative Nelson moves to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Representative Gondek, and the motion is passed.