Minutes of the AMS Governance Committee

(Minutes for November 8th, 2021 Meeting at 4pm | AMS Nest Room: 3529)

Attendance

Present: Kamil Kanji (Chair), Sheldon (Archivist and Clerk of Council), Saad Shoaib (VP External), Katherine Feng, Romina Hajizadeh, Alina Bhimji (Vice-Chair), Cole Evans (President), Rebecca Liu

Regrets: Rebecca Liu

Guests: Oscar Yu (CEO)

Recording Secretary: Alina Bhimji (Vice-Chair)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 pm.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Approval of the Agenda

Moved: Katherine    Seconded: Saad

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT the agenda be adopted.”
Agenda Items

1. Introductions

2. Approval of Minutes

Moved: Saad  Seconded: Katherine

“BE IT RESOLVED the Governance Committee meeting minutes of November 1 are approved”

3. Elections Items from the Chief Electoral Officer

a. Oscar: communications officer - suspend code and have one candidate.

Saad: they report to peer support who reports to SSM?

Sheldon: they become ineligible for elections

Katherine: role?

Oscar: manage social media, manage documents, communicating with voters, people who run as candidates, voting member of the committee

Saad: should be fine especially since they are a volunteer. When until?

Oscar: they don’t plan to leave the position.

Cole: if they’re a volunteer it should be fine.

Sheldon: it does violate code article 1 s.9a

Cole: they don’t actually report directly to the SSM.

Sheldon: if they report to anyone in this section then it is a conflict
b. Oscar: never had a contract, but elections committee wants to have a contract. [see unofficial document]
It says UBC will not be allowed to conduct elections for the 2 UBC BoG reps and 18 senate reps. UBC responsible for nominations, AMS elections responsible for everything else. Timelines based on UBC’s Act. Considering changes for who can run for BoG and who can vote for senate reps. Basically summarizing what has been done in the past even though there has been no contract.

Saad: good document which needs a few edits.

Sheldon: affiliates cannot vote.

Saad: GovComm needs more time to review the contract

Cole: Talk to Sheldon and Keith to draft the contract and bring it back to GovComm.

Sheldon: what do UBC people say about this contract?

Oscar: UBC Senate Iverson can discuss the contract and agrees with the constituency. UBC does want to sign a contract.

Sheldon: this issue has come up in the past few years and gone to council.

Oscar: best sorted before January.

Action item: discuss w Sheldon and Keith and then Jessica.

C. pronouns on ballots
Oscar: nothing in code that says they are required or not allowed.

Saad: how does it work

Oscar: name and pronoun in brackets.

D. signatures decrease to 25
Oscar: concern about increasing joke candidates. It didn’t increase. This change breaks down barriers and makes elections more accessible for candidates.
Saad: the thing with signatures is that it acts as a ‘screening’ to get candidates to engage with people.

Katherine: why did they make it 50 signatures before?

Sheldon: because of joke candidates. It was 20 before. Joke-making club nominated 20 joke candidates. Complaints led to raising the number.

Cole: why can’t we just ban joke candidates? People need to run under an actual name.

Kamil: sometimes joke candidates are used to protest.

Cole: if we like joke candidates then they should be able to run.

Saad: a joke candidate could be anything, not just any person or thing. There is a reason 50 signatures was established and it has a clear rationale for discouraging joke candidates and acts as a preliminary screening for engaging with people.

Romina: do the signatures get checked?

Saad: yes

Cole: joke candidates still run even with the 50 signature limit. The signature thing is more of a barrier. In support of lowering the signature count.

Saad: not in favour.

Romina: it can be good for first years and people who haven’t been on campus who want to be a candidate.

Saad: if it takes an hour to get 25 you can just get 50 in two hours.

Cole: transition to online signatures also makes it easier to gather signatures so the limit doesn’t really matter.

Kamil: if you’re committed to being a joke candidate you will get the signatures regardless.
BE IT RESOLVED Governance Committee asks the Archivist and Clerk of Council to draft a code change that reflects a decrease in the number of signatures required to nominate a student's candidacy in an AMS election, that is to come to the next Governance Committee meeting.

In Favour: Kamil, Romina, Alina
Opposed: Saad, Katherine
Motion passes

E. changing nomination form to digital.
Oscar: submit to Chief Electoral Officer. Paper forms still available in office.

Sheldon: consult with Joanne.

Approve for Sheldon to draft digital (after consultation with Joanne).

F. Oscar: increase poster limit to 10. Sheldon advocates for this. Prefer to ban posters for sustainability reasons. However want to increase voting turnout. Since banning posters voter turnout is very low. This change brings back posters but limits it to 10 and specifies what kind of paper to be used. Not in support of posters but it’s an option.

Cole: no real data to suggest that posters correlate with decreased voter turnout. Suggest posters not left up to the candidates but can be designated places for posters and can be printed by elections committee. Less chaos and complaints. Allow students to see but reduces free-for-all. Prefer to keep the ban on posters in this new type of election environment. Can reconsider after this election with more data on turnout.

Romina: likes posters but don’t love the idea of leaving it to candidates. Equity issues about affording sustainable paper, creates a barrier for some candidates. Centralized in one area is efficient. Thinks voter turnout will probably increase this year because it’s in person so we should wait till next year.

Saad: 15 posters can cost around $100. If we want to introduce posters we should increase candidate budgets -- set at $375 right now. Not disagreeing with it but the budget should be increased accordingly.
Katherine: posters do increase the awareness of an election. More people can see them and more places to put them. Good idea to introduce posters. Agree with Romina candidates should be reimbursed. Would be good for elections committee to print them.

Oscar: committee could print and pay for them - idea.

Kamil: agree with the equity concerns. Should be funded by the committee because it can advantage or disadvantage some candidates. Designated poster spot might not prevent tearing down posters.

Oscar: part of postering is finding a spot to put them.

Romina: a few designated spots could be good for the limit of posters.

Saad: why don’t we just make AMS elections posters to raise awareness about AMS elections. It’s already in code, in the budget and doesn’t fall on candidates.

Romina: maybe it’s just fun for candidates.

Katherine: AMS elections posters grab less attention than actual candidates’ posters.

Sheldon: AMS election poster can include candidates’ posters.

Saad: in favour of posters as long as budget limit is accounted for.

Kamil: designated poster areas?

Saad: put them next to security cameras to prevent tampering.

Cole: that can just be an issue for elections committee. Governance really just needs to see if we should allow posters.

Katherine: can also put posters on the TV in Nest. sustainability.

Approve for Sheldon to draft that GovComm in favour of poster limit as long as budget is accounted for. Elections committee can decide rules.

G. remove pre-approval of campaign material
Oscar: needs to be submitted but not approved. If a candidate uses them they understand it can break the rules.

Saad: not a good change because first-time candidates will not understand the rules and break them unintentionally.

Oscar: pre-approval takes time for candidates.

Saad: elections officer and team works enough to pre-approve materials.

Cole: approval process not only creates stress for elections committee but also creates waiting time for candidates. Usually issues identified by elections com are logo or dates, etc. Elections com has their eyes on enough things that if someone puts something out that is in violation of rules, elections com will surely know and administer discipline.

Kamil: pre-approval limits that and makes it less likely to happen.

Cole: if you’re running for an election you need to understand the rules and if you break them discipline will be administered. If you do something against the rules there is consequences and everyone knows that. 99% of the time campaign material doesn’t break the rules. Pre-approval doesn’t seem like that big of an issue.

Saad: hypothesize that there will be an increase in infractions this year.

Romina: pre-approving is less work than dealing with infractions?

Oscar: the rules will be super clear this year. Infractions in the past have never been too detrimental. Only been rejected because of minor things like date and logo.

Katherine: why do we have the approval in the first place?
If someone is putting material out, with AMS elections logo, if they have a detail wrong it can be an issue for people voting especially when associated with official AMS election.

Sheldon: don’t see why it came in. We say the burden is on the Chief electoral officer to prevent offensive material, not candidates to not put out offensive material. Is it in the candidate handbook? [Oscar: yes]
Saad: facing the consequences of material that breaks the rules? When you have someone who really wants to get involved and makes a mistake, then they get a strict punishment for a mistake.

Oscar: don’t plan to be strict.

Saad: other people on the committee might. New people will face consequences that could be easily avoided with pre-approval.

Katherine: for new people, repercussions for making mistakes can discourage them.

Oscar: the handbook will have explicit examples of what can be included.

Kamil: you never know what could be missed so pre-approval is still useful.

GovComm not in favour of removing pre-approval of campaign material.

H.
Sheldon: we can’t do #6 because it’s in by-laws. Has to be submitted to VPAUA.

Katherine: verifying signatures?

Oscar: yes

Cole: when CEO verifies that it’s a good petition, it can just go to pres but VPAUA doesn’t really need to see it.

Sheldon to draft and bring back to committee.

4. Governance Review
Next meeting

Next Meeting

The next meeting is Monday, Nov. 15 @ 4 pm

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm.