



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly
Minutes of the February 5, 2020 Meeting
12:15-1:30 PM
Physical Science Building 401

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 12:18pm.
- b. *Members Present:* S. Barry, K. Barth, M. Benda, A. Brooks, J. Cooley, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fortenberry, G. Giambattista, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, A. Howell, E. Ivory, R. Lochner, K. LoParco, K. Mahoney, A. McCabe, J. Michael, R. Miegler, E. Miller, A. Miller, M. Newhart, C. Sanzone, H. Sheldon, K. Supron, L. Taylor, W. Treat, J. Townley, C. Wiggers, J. Withers
- c. *Members Absent:* T. Chams, D. Hiner

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2020 meeting – **approved** with no dissent

III. Business of the Day

- a. Chair Howell noted that former Cornell President Frank H.T. Rhodes passed away on February 3, 2020. On behalf of the EA, he offered his condolences and asked members to keep his family and friends in their thoughts. Memorial contributions can be made to the Frank H.T. Rhodes Memorial Fund.
- b. G. Giambattista announced that Campus-Constituency-Elected Trustee candidate forms will be due by 12:00pm on Friday, February 21, 2020. She asked EA members to spread the word to colleagues as well. Application information is on the Assemblies website under “Elections.”

IV. Open Discussion

- a. K. Barth noted that during the EA Staff Conversations last year, many employees stated they would like to have lunch together but do not have spots to do so. While it is unlikely an employee cafeteria will be built, an idea is to have a monthly lunch forum somewhere on campus, such as an underutilized dining hall. He mentioned this to B. Fortenberry who noted it is something that is possible as there are a variety of sites on campus. This is not something that requires a resolution, but he asked if it is an idea the EA would support pursuing.

V. Business of the Day (Continued)

- a. President Martha Pollack & VP Mary Opperman
 - i. President Pollack gave a few updates at Cornell. Professor of Physics Georg Hoffstaetter achieved a goal over 50 years in the making to develop an energy-conserving particle accelerator that will open pathbreaking forms of research. Alumni Susan Choi '95 received the National Book award for her novel “Trust Exercise.” In addition, Weill Cornell Medicine researchers used AI to look at early-stage embryos. They were able to use an algorithm, dubbed “Stork,” to detect with great precision which embryo will likely be implanted in a woman and lead to a healthy pregnancy.
 - ii. President Pollack also gave an update on Greek Life at Cornell. Her belief is that fraternities are important, providing social outlets to students as well as leadership and philanthropy opportunities. However, there have been a series of bad episodes in the past years, particularly related to hazing, which is not unique to Cornell. Two years ago, she put out a set of policies but the problems continued. In that period, there were six fraternities that have been suspended. In addition, Freshman Antonio Tsialas who disappeared after attending an unauthorized party died

last November and they still do not know how he died. The Greek System took serious steps, such as banning all social activities for the remainder of last semester and imposing strict sanctions and reforms. There has been stricter enforcement of policies, such as having a roving security force. VP Ryan Lombardi is also looking into changing the recruitment process.

- iii. President Pollack also gave an update on sustainability. She suggested inviting VP of Facilities and Campus Services Rick Burgess to present. Cornell was the first university to sign the Kyoto Protocol in 2011, which has a goal for carbon neutrality by 2035. The campus has already reduced emissions by 37% in the past 10 years despite the growth in number of buildings. This was possible due to retrofitting in highly efficient new buildings, and investing in alternative renewable energy sources. Cornell is now working on a major solar project with the SUNY schools. 528 faculty members are also fellows at the Atkinson Center for Sustainability. Professor Bob Howarth was also recently named to the 22-member New York State Climate Action Council, which is a group aimed at figuring out how the state can implement its goal for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Atkinson Center for Sustainability also joined the Sustainability Consortium, a global nonprofit developing greener supply chains. Regarding the Cornell endowment, about 70% of the funds are associated with the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles.
- b. Chair Howell asked committee chairs for updates.
 - i. H. Depew gave an update on behalf of the Executive Committee. In Fall 2019, the EA conducted a poll to staff members asking for their opinions on what the EA's top priorities should be for the year. The top concern was "employee health and wellbeing," which was closely followed by "parking and transportation." She and C. Sanzone worked to bring the data in the report together. Overall, employees reported feeling stress from job demands, external factors, and attrition. Staff reported feeling as if they were being asked to do more with less. In addition, utilization of fitness centers are hampered by proximity, transportation, and available time. Parking issues have also not gone away and are worsening, with staff reporting that parking is costly and the TCAT system unreliable. Staff also want career development and work opportunities, which is impacted by supervisor support. Regarding benefits, responses widely varied. Some staff responded wanting more opportunities to train across campus and for community engagement. The Executive Committee has shared results with all committee chairs for committees to review in the issues and work through them. Committees can also work with campus partners and community members. H. Depew also reported that Chair Howell is working on an upcoming opportunity to honor former CAPS Executive Director Gregory Eells.
 - ii. C. Sanzone gave an update from the Communications, Outreach, and Recognition Committee. The committee has been working to show the staff what the EA does and to raise the visibility of the EA. Her committee this year worked to support and promote the Priorities Poll. In one instance, they printed promotions near time clocks to attempt to get the poll in front of staff members who do not normally sit in front of computer screens all day. The committee has also been trying to be more active in staff events. E. Miller is their volunteer coordinator and has been partnering with Events Manager for HR Cheryl McGraw. They are gearing up for annual tabling events and ordering EA merchandise to give away. C. Sanzone reported seeing an improvement in interaction this year, especially with staff more willing to write to EA members and come up to them. In addition, the committee is also involved in sending out a periodic newsletter and supporting J. Withers' Elections Committee for spring elections. The committee will also award the George Peter Award this spring.
 - iii. M. Benda gave an update from the Employee Education Committee. In the Priorities Poll, education was the #3 most important priority. From the comments, it seemed staff members may not be aware of many benefits, but there are also some supervisory concerns as well. The committee met with representatives from the Community Learning and Service Partnership (CLASP) program who discussed challenges, such as getting volunteers and keeping the program running. CLASP representatives will also be coming to the EA as well. In addition, the

committee met with representatives from the Health & Welfare Benefits Team in the Fall and is looking at ways to promote their programs.

1. President Pollack asked whether people prefer online or face-to-face opportunities.
 2. M. Benda responded that the response is fairly even. A lot of the technical staff may not have time and want online programs, but there are others who want the in-class perspective.
- iv. K. Mahoney gave an update from the Employee Welfare Committee. The committee continued its partnership with Director of Transportation Services Bridgette Brady and looked at supporting the department's initiatives as well as K. Barth's Cornell Circulator initiative. The committee also worked to follow up on some of their more recent engagements regarding pedestrian safety. In addition, they have reached out to Director of HR Analytics Linda Croll Howell to prepare for engagement with her and her office for a staff survey in the coming year. The committee also spent some time speaking with Director of Workforce Wellbeing Michelle Artibee on the CARE fund and how the committee can encourage more support for the fund, as well as increasing awareness of benefits that exist for nicotine.
- v. B. Goodell gave an update from the Employee Benefits Committee. Last meeting, the committee spoke with VP of HR Allan Bishop and Director of Compensation Kim Babuka, who provided information about career movement at Cornell. In addition, Director of Benefit Services and Administration Gordon Barger spoke on the two-year wait for exempt employees. The committee is having an ongoing discussion about bereavement policies.
- vi. J. Withers gave an update from the Elections Committee. In the fall, the EA had nine open seats but is now down to two incidental vacancies. The committee is meeting tomorrow to begin planning for spring elections and to discuss a joint resolution with Chair Howell to recommend a Cornell Tech seat on the EA.
- c. Chair Howell opened the floor to questions for President Pollack and VP Opperman.
- i. H. Depew asked for an update on the social sciences reform project.
 1. President Pollack said the report had two recommendations: transforming the College of Human Ecology to a college of public policy and creating a new school of public policy. Since the release of the report, the Provost has been talking with people across campus and alumni. A decision will be made sometime this semester. There is no solution that everyone will be happy with, but the goals are for a strong social sciences and public policy presence. President Pollack stressed that every area of study will be protected. There is no intention nor plans to cut off any staff. It is not a consolidation effort, but rather to make curricular opportunities more robust for students and better coordinate hiring.
 - ii. A. McCabe noted that the Climate Survey was conducted in 2016 and asked whether there were plans for another survey
 1. VP Opperman noted that they do a survey in conjunction with the EA every five years. There are now conversations surrounding whether the way it has been conducted in the past is the best way. Research is showing that shorter, more focused poll surveys may be a better way to hone in on key issues. They did not find much shift from the 2010 to 2016 data. Her office is looking into it and she acknowledged that the issues of experience under a manager is pivotal to someone's sense of wellbeing and connection. They are trying to focus on giving the skills to managers so they can experience the workforce in a more supportive way.
 - iii. B. Fortenberry asked for the thinking behind shifting eCornell from a private to a Cornell organization and asked whether it would be an available resource to staff members.
 1. President Pollack stated that when she arrived at Cornell, she found eCornell disconnected from the university and its incentives and goals. At the same time, the number of executive education programs across Cornell were at different levels of maturity and doing different things. They brought the effort together and aligned the strategy across campus for coordination. At the moment, priorities are having eCornell continue to do operate in that way, getting in place fund flows to faculty, and opening the Verizon Executive Education

Center in Cornell Tech in a couple of months. However, there will be opportunities to think about employee opportunities.

2. VP Opperman added that they want to look at funding for that. HR has had a longstanding relationship with eCornell and there are models that work. They are excited about opportunities to bring staff development programs through eCornell.
- d. K. Barth: Resolution 3: Support of the Development and Implementation of a Cornell Campus Circulator
- i. K. Barth announced that he introduced the resolution to the GPSA two weeks ago and members were happy with it. It is currently tabled in the GPSA and UA. He asked the Assemblies to gather and provide feedback to him. At around the end of the session, he will collect all the feedback and make edits. At the end of the discussion today, he will make a motion to table the resolution and further collect feedback. He hopes to make an amendment with as many assemblies' language in it as possible. K. Barth noted that this is a long-term project.
 - ii. C. Sanzone expressed thoughts that the resolution was not staff-specific enough, especially knowing about the very acute problems affecting staff members every day.
 1. C. Wiggers noted that this is a staff issue, but also a larger issue for the community. If the language is narrowed to the EA's perspective, it might weaken the overall voice of all the assemblies. At this starting point, he pushed for more generic language that would allow for the flexibility in refinements to address C. Sanzone's concerns later on.
 2. C. Sanzone noted that putting language in the resolution illustrating the staff problem would help. To her, it does not read as if it has enough of staff concerns in mind. In addition, five years seems too long and she questioned why a timeline was put in the resolution. The resolution could instead call for some proposal, plan, or pilot program.
 - iii. K. Barth noted that the current time is the best time to possibly pass this resolution. TCAT is at the end of their RFP for overall transit development plan and the Transportation Department is working on the plan. This resolution is a statement of support conveying that they want this to be a part of the planning.
 - iv. A. Haenlin-Mott stated she had some conversations with Senior Director of Facilities and Campus Services Bridgette Brady and Assistant Director of Transportation Services Reed Huegerich about implementation. She expressed disability and accessibility concerns and wants to include the concerns in the circulator initiative. For example, one area of campus that is not served currently by any transportation system is Garden Avenue around Bailey Hall.
 - v. K. LoParco noted she would like to see the timetable scaled down to three years instead of five years. It is an important issue that needs to be addressed now.
 1. K. Barth responded that the circulator is a massive project that would require the city to change its entire transit place. If the timetable is changed and not in alignment with the people doing the work, it may not be feasible. There is also the question of where funding will come from. K. Barth noted that simply getting the language in front of everyone took him almost two years. This is the first time of trying to request it with an end goal that is reasonable. There is no project plan on how they are going to implement this so the timeline is arbitrary.
 - vi. K. Barth thanked everyone and stated he would continue amending the resolution before the end of the session. He is interested in hearing more ideas and asked for a motion to table the resolution indefinitely.
 1. Motion to table Resolution 3: Support of the Development and Implementation of a Cornell Campus Circulator System
 2. Resolution 3 – seconded
 3. Resolution 3 – tabled indefinitely
- e. Chair Howell noted that the EA is not required to utilize two meetings to pass a resolution. If the EA is unable to vote on a measure at one meeting, it can be placed under Business of the Day in the future. Resolution 3 will be placed under Business of the Day until K. Barth decides to bring it to a vote. He asked EA members to reach out to K. Barth for questions and to offer amendments. EA

members can also put suggestions and comments in Box.

VI. **New Business**

- a. Open Discussion
 - i. B. Fortenberry stated that regarding the employee club, he has spoken with his leadership. They are in full support of providing a venue to have the gathering. It is not something that needs a resolution, but rather an initiative that the EA can say they want to partner with Cornell Dining.
 - 1. E. Miller suggested partnering with the Cornell Recreation Connection (CRC). In addition, she suggested having reserved tables to make the event more inviting.
 - 2. K. Barth asked for anyone interested in being a part of a rotation of volunteers to reach out to him.
 - ii. J. Creque announced she is participating in a bake-off benefit for wildlife rescue in Australia on February 13, 2020 at 12:00-1:30pm. The event will be open to everyone and will be held at the Vet School.
 - iii. E. Miller noted there are a few events coming up with CRC. During the February student break, there will be a lunchtime skating event, lunchtime bowling event, and an evening cornhole tournament. All of the events will feature a donation request for the emergency Employee Care Fund.

VII. **Adjournment**

- a. Chair Howell adjourned the meeting at 1:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran

Clerk of the Assembly