



# Cornell University

## Employee Assembly

**Cornell Employee Assembly**  
Minutes of the December 4, 2019 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:* A. Howell, K. Mahoney, B. Fortenberry, K. Supron, K. LoParco, H. Depew, D. Hiner, E. Miller, K. Barth, A. Sieverding, A. Haenlin-Mott, R. Lochner, L. Taylor, J. Withers, H. Sheldon, A. Brooks, C. Sanzone, A. Miller, J. Creque, M. Newhart, R. Miegl, S. Barry, J. Townley, G. Giambattista, W. Treat
- c. *Members Absent:* T. Chams, A. McCabe, C. Wiggers, M. Benda, J. Michael, B. Goodell, J. Cooley, E. Ivory, J. Duong

### II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to amend the minutes of the November 20, 2019 meeting to reflect that R. Lochner, A. Haenlin-Mott, and K. Supron were present – **amended** with no dissent
  - i. Motion to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2019 meeting as amended – **approved** with no dissent

### III. Business of the Day

- a. Chair Howell asked EA members to encourage their constituents to get measles vaccinations. Appointments can be made at Cornell Health Occupational Medicine.
  - i. G. Giambattista added that the university has put out notice that in the event of a measles outbreak, everyone has to show documentation of vaccination.
- b. Employee-Elected Trustee Presentation (Dr. Bruce Lewenstein and Michael Esposito)
  - i. Dr. Bruce Lewenstein introduced himself as the Faculty-Elected Trustee and the Chair of the new Committee of Campus-Constituency-Elected Trustees. He noted that K. Supron is the EA-appointed member of the committee. This committee consists of trustees who are currently elected from the campus constituencies. While J. Kruser, the Employee-Elected Trustee, would be on the committee, he is considering running in election next spring. Potential candidates cannot sit on the committee. He explained that Chad Coates left two years into his term and J. Kruser filled in the remaining two years. He proceeded to give an overview of the new committee. Its goal is to recruit candidates and run elections for the Student-Elected Trustees and the Employee-Elected Trustee. While the committee will manage the election process, the day-to-day technical management will be run out of the Office of Assemblies. The Faculty-Elected Trustee election is managed by the Dean of the Faculty office. There is an upcoming election in the spring for the Employee-Elected Trustee position and they are beginning to get information out. The committee's goal is to have this happen organically over time. For the Employee-Elected Trustee position, candidates must be in a non-exempt, exempt, or academic non-professional staff category. In addition, candidates must confirm with their supervisors that employment is expected to continue for the full four year term of the trustee seat and that they will be allowed the time and flexibility to meet obligations, including being off campus at times and attending meetings during the day. The committee is seeking candidates from across the university, including the Ithaca, Geneva, and Cornell Tech campuses.
  - ii. M. Esposito is a former elected trustee who was invited to join the committee. He added on the importance of the role and its integral part to the EA as an ex-officio member. The Employee-Elected Trustee can be a conduit for information that goes forward to the Board of Trustees that they may not hear from administrators.

- iii. B. Lewenstein added that there are four board meetings a year (October, January, March, and May). The January meeting is held in NYC and the others are on campus. There are also subcommittee meetings of the Board that usually meet a day or two before the Board meeting with occasional separate meetings. However, especially for committee meetings, it is not unusual for people to call in. Other activities of the position include being an ex-officio member of the EA, being on call to show up for employee-related activities, and participating in community committee meetings.
  1. Chair Howell expanded that all members on the EA are eligible to run. If selected, the trustee will vacate his or her status on the EA and become an ex-officio member. The experience of the Employee-Elected Trustee is different in that it requires a confidentiality agreement. The trustee would not be able to speak as openly about activities on the Board as activities in the EA.
- iv. B. Lewenstein acknowledged that the Board of Trustees highly respects the input from all campus constituencies. The trustee would have a fiduciary duty and obligation to the university as a whole, and not to the constituency that elected them.
- v. M. Esposito stated that the position can require difficult decisions and highlighted hypothetical scenarios during budget approval processes. There may also be a significant time commitment. There is a lot of reading in preparation for the meetings and the trustee has to be knowledgeable on what is going on at Cornell. The trustee may also be put on dean searches. He has been on two presidential searches, which required flying across the country an entire semester.
- vi. J. Kruser added that the Employee-Elected Trustee can get a different perspective of the university as the trustee sees more of why certain decisions are made the way they are. There is a need to better understand the broader view of the university. He found reassuring upon meeting the Board that members of the Board are not paid by the university, but rather there because of genuine interest in the best outcome for the university. The relationships he has built with the trustees have been of great benefit.
- vii. J. Withers asked if employees from the RTE Faculty (Research Faculty, Teaching Faculty, and Extension Faculty) can run for the position.
  1. B. Lewenstein replied that RTE Faculty can vote in the Faculty-Elected Trustee election but cannot run as candidates.
- viii. B. Lewenstein gave an overview of the process. The Committee was recently established at the October board meeting. Its goal in the future is to begin operating at the beginning of the academic year, set an election schedule, and hold a few information sessions. In the spring, it plans on holding more information sessions, having detailed meetings with information for candidates, hold the election, and deal with any challenges that may occur.
- ix. B. Lewenstein explained that there are two Faculty-Elected Trustee positions, two Student-Elected Trustee positions, and one Employee-Elected Trustee position.
  1. G. Giambattista added that historically, there are four or five candidates running for the employee seat.
  2. A. Haenlin-Mott asked if there has ever been conversations on having two Employee-Elected Trustees.
    - a. B. Lewenstein replied in the affirmative, but the Board decided against it. There are 64 people on the Board, and there have been attempts to shrink the board at various times. There is also precedence for the Board to use their seats to serve other purposes. There was a complex set of challenges in the Student-Elected Trustee election last year and the Board used one of its selected seats so that both candidates essentially won.
    - b. G. Giambattista added that there are two Student-Elected Trustees in alternating years. One student is a graduate and professional student, and the other is an undergraduate. Cornell is unique in that it has full voting members from its constituencies on the Board of Trustees. It is not common, and shared governance is something Cornell has a long history of supporting.

- c. M. Esposito explained that when the Board decided to contract, each of its constituencies gave up half of its seats. It created a 44-member Board and 22-member Trustee Council. However, it did not work and was changed to a 64-member Board again. Extra seats went to the Board's selection and did not return to constituent assemblies.
  - d. J. Kruser added that the numbers may be misleading when looking at the purpose of the roles in providing a perspective to the Board. The Employee-Elected Trustee can bring an unfamiliar perspective to the board as most trustees do not live locally or work at Cornell. These perspectives are then shared upwards. Having an additional Employee-Elected Trustee would only be beneficial if there was an additional value in the perspective a second person would be bringing. He asked members to reach out to him for more information or support.
- c. Nicotine Use Survey Results (D. Hiner)
- i. D. Hiner reported that the Nicotine Use Survey results have been finalized and broken down to students, faculty, and staff. When looking at the aggregate data, not a lot of people in the population smoke. While there were only about 5,000 responses out of 34,000 people who were offered the survey, they can make a blanket statement that people are relatively healthy. However, he noted there is a heightened perception of people smoking across. Most people are not exposed to secondhand smoke or flavored aerosol when going across campus and people generally strongly agree that they are concerned about the consequences of being exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke and vape aerosol. The survey results also showed that if Cornell were to enact a 2-3 year process to establish a tobacco-free campus, it would have overall support. He is uncertain what this means for the UA, and there are still conversations happening with the committee. There will be a resolution put forward, but he is unsure whether it would ask Cornell to enforce the 25 foot rule from buildings, removing cigarette butt near doors, or offering more robust programs through Cornell Health. D. Hiner also showed common words that appeared on the open ended text of the survey. There were about 3,000 comments. He read the online discussion public debate comments, and noted that most people are not necessarily in support for a ban, but would like an enforcement of the 25 foot rule, have designated spots, and increased consideration from smokers when smoking. He stated that roughly 2/3rds of the comments supported enforcement and 1/3 of the comments supported a ban.
  - ii. W. Treat asked for clarification on whether it would be a nicotine ban or tobacco ban as she has heard the two words interchangeably.
    - 1. D. Hiner replied that it would ban both tobacco and nicotine, including e-cigarettes and aerosol vapors.
  - iii. J. Kruser asked about the amount of consideration that has been put into enforcement, such as the enforcement of the 25 foot ban.
    - 1. D. Hiner stated that the committee has not discussed a lot about enforcement. There have been other universities that have instituted a nicotine-free campus and while people continued to smoke on the property, they respected the 25 foot rule more so than previously. In addition, the flip side to removing cigarette butt cans is that you may have people throwing cigarette butts on the floor.
  - iv. H. Depew asked if there would be a sole UA resolution or a joint resolution from the assemblies.
    - 1. D. Hiner stated that right now, it would be a UA resolution. However, he would like to work with other assemblies on a joint resolution if they want to get on board. There is still open debate on drafting the resolution. They also may ask Cornell to conduct a feasibility study.
- d. Elections Committee: Incidental Vacancy (Geneva)
- i. Chair Howell introduced Jessica Townley from Geneva. He added that the seat has not been filled since he has been on the EA.
  - ii. J. Townley stated she feels she is now seasoned in her role at Cornell and has some room to take on other opportunities. She sees the position as an opportunity for her to grow and be the voice for Geneva.

- iii. Chair Howell initiated a vote by placards – J. Townley was elected as the Geneva Campus Representative on the EA with no oppositions.

#### IV. Committee Reports

- a. Communications & Awards Committee
  - i. C. Sanzone stated that she will be reviewing vendor options for EA promotional items. She is looking to finalize the George Peter Award materials. She received feedback from committee members and is looking to disseminate the materials soon. C. Sanzone also relayed that they had some well-performing Facebook posts recently and would like to increase posting volume. She will also be in touch with new EA members to ask them for a photo and biography so that they can introduce them broadly and to constituents.
- b. Elections Committee
  - i. J. Withers stated that the committee does not expect to meet until after January 2020.
- c. Executive Committee
  - i. H. Depew announced that President Martha Pollack and VP Mary Opperman will be coming to the EA on February 5, 2020. During the visit, each committee chair will provide an update on the committee's initiatives and work. She noted that President Pollack has been attuned to what they have been doing, and it is a great opportunity for engagement. For the Priorities Poll, she is working on the written report. She hopes to have that prepared for the next meeting.
- d. Benefits & Policy Committee
  - i. A. Sieverding reported that the committee has not met since the last EA meeting. However, she heard back from Associate VP of HR Allan Bishop stating he would like to attend the committee's next meeting on Tuesday. He will also be bringing some colleagues to address questions the EA has raised on career movement, paid time off requests, and the wait for retirement and non-exempt employees. At the last meeting, there was a question about veterans not getting the day off for Veterans Day. C. Wiggers volunteered to look into the issue. There is also an ongoing question about the bereavement policy not being broad enough. There is a concern that families today are different from how families have been conceived of in the past. The person who raised the issue was given only a short time off for a great aunt who had raised her because she was not her grandmother, sister, or parent. Families may be scattered, and three days for planning and traveling may not be sufficient. They will continue discussions on that at the upcoming meeting.
    - 1. A. Haenlin-Mott asked whether the Veterans Day off discussion looked to have the day off for everyone or just veterans.
      - a. A. Sieverding replied that the question was about veterans only and she is unsure if this would also extend to family members. It was brought up by a veteran who had to take a vacation day during Veterans Day.
    - 2. J. Kruser added that as a veteran, one concern was that many veterans have to take vacation days to participate in community veteran ceremonies.
    - 3. J. Townley added that when she is doing new hires, she always gets asked whether Veterans Day will be a holiday.
- e. Employee Education & Development Committee
  - i. J. Withers reported that the committee did not meet since the last meeting.
- f. Employee Welfare Committee
  - i. K. Mahoney reported that the committee met yesterday and will not be meeting until January 2020. Director of HR Analytics Dr. Linda Croll Howell attended the last meeting and discussed the history of the employee survey and how she will be engaging in the 2021 survey as the HR Analytics lead. She looks forward to working together to discern what staff were conveying in the poll. She also raised in the meeting the committee's interest in adding education-focused questions in the survey. She will be reaching out to M. Benda for further discussions.

## V. **New Business**

### a. Open Discussion

- i. K. Barth gave an update on the UA. He introduced a resolution on the campus circulator at yesterday's UA meeting. The resolution was drafted with the help of the Campus Planning Committee and Transportation Department. The content of the resolution will be presented to the EA next year after discussion. He reported an overall positive response. While many people asked about design decisions, it is something the resolution attempted to avoid. K. Barth stated that there was a Cornell-owned shuttle system back in 2008 that was stopped. It seems the historical view was that it did not meet demand. In addition, the UA Campus Infrastructure Committee will meet today and discuss divestment. The SA is working on a divestment resolution with the help of the GPSA. Because his committee works on sustainability, transportation, infrastructure, and IT, they are trying to figure out how they can address divestment effectively. He explained that in 2015-2016, all assemblies passed resolutions on divestment and the Board of Trustees responded with criteria for the next time this topic was brought up. They are working to meet the criteria, and the Chair of the English Department Dr. Caroline Levine is drafting a divestment memo. At today's Campus Infrastructure Committee meeting, they will further discuss what a potential resolution may look like. All the assemblies have to pass at least a similar version of a divestment resolution for the Board of Trustees to consider it again. He explained that the Board ultimately makes the decision because it has the investment functionality. He reported general support for it.
- ii. K. Barth gave an update on the Sustainable Cornell Council, which is a new compilation of all sustainability activities on campus. He is working on operations and is looking into issues of how Cornell can do things in smarter ways regarding food waste, transportation, and procurement. The Education Committee from the Sustainable Cornell Council is looking to figure out how to change behavior on campus and ensure opportunities for education and change.
- iii. C. Sanzone relayed a question that came up during her conversations with staff members on how "essential staff" is defined. The snow day message that was sent out stated that the campus was closed but that essential staff needed to report to work. However, there is confusion around that definition and within her department as well. She asked whether the EA can ask for clarification. In addition, she is concerned that many staff members are concerned about whether their supervisors want them to go to work or not during dangerous driving situations as seen on snow days. She wonders if they could do more to encourage the university to be more firm and direct to supervisors in these messages.
  1. A. Haenlin-Mott added it would be great to hear perspectives from the dining staff. In a conversation with a custodian, the question came up of whether there are housing options to allow staff to stay on campus after work if the weather is bad.
  2. Chair Howell acknowledged several parallel issues meriting some investigation. He asked for C. Sanzone and A. Haenlin-Mott to work on the issues offline and bring it back up at a later time.
  3. E. Miller added that essential personnel are told they are essential. If EA members do not know if they are in an essential position, they are not essential personnel.

## VI. **Adjournment**

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Catherine Tran*

Clerk of the Assembly