



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly Minutes of the May 20, 2020 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM Zoom

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.
- b. *Members Present:* S. Barry, K. Barth, A. Brooks, M. Benda, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fortenberry, G. Giambattista, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Hiner, A. Howell, R. Lochner, K. LoParco, K. Mahoney, V. McAuley, J. Michael, R. Miegler, E. Miller, A. Miller, M. Newhart, C. Sanzone, H. Sheldon, K. Supron, L. Taylor, J. Townley, C. Tran, W. Treat, J. Withers
- c. *Members Absent:* T. Chams, J. Cooley, E. Ivory, A. McCabe, C. Wiggers

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2020—**approved** with no dissent

III. Business of the Day

- a. K. Barth made a motion to add EA RX 10: Recognition of Cornell University's Senior Leadership and their bold and decisive initial response to the COVID-10 Pandemic to Business of the Day.
 - i. Motion to amend the agenda—**passed** with no dissent.
- b. RX 7: BPC Resolution Bereavement Policy
 - i. B. Goodell noted that he amended the resolution on line 43 to change "maximum" to "minimum."
 - ii. K. LoParco motioned to end debate and moved to **call the question**.
 - iii. Voting on resolution—RX 7 **passed** with a vote of 21-0.
- c. RX 9: Inclement Weather
 - i. C. Sanzone introduced the resolution as a response to the university's handling of the snowstorm that hit Ithaca and surrounding areas on February 6-7, 2020. The resolution documents what happened and establishes the impact to employee welfare. It then moves into a call to improve the policy and decision-making criteria and communications. The resolution begins with background information from various annual reports. 62% of Cornell staff live outside Ithaca and 40% have a regular commute of 20 minutes or more. TCAT is a critical part of Cornell operations, and Cornell is critical to TCAT as 70% of its ridership is associated with the university. Roughly 16-18% of staff use TCAT to commute to work. Policy 8.2 governs the way the university handles inclement weather situations and Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) is the office responsible for its administration. C. Sanzone noted that the university's documentation of inclement weather outlines a very narrow scope in the decision-making process regarding the operating status of the university due to a snow event. The university looks at the campus itself, including considerations on how quickly and easily the snow can be removed. However, staff are coming in from outside Ithaca and the impact of inclement weather requires a broader scope, including considerations of regional conditions and

ensuring that people can travel to and from campus safely. The resolution also establishes the timeline for the February 2020 storm as it was percolating and acknowledged there were many briefings, alerts, and travel advisories. The resolution also references regional peer institutions, including Ithaca College and TC3. Both institutions provide a schedule for operating status decisions and takes into account shift start times for staff. TC3's policy also includes limited hours for dining service. Both institutions made earlier operating status decisions than Cornell during the February 2020 storm. C. Sanzone also pointed out line 88 of the resolution, which highlighted a trend of spiking page viewers for CUinfo Campus Alerts during the February 2020 storm. Much of the confusion at that time surrounded a lack of communication. The resolution conveys that the EA disapproves of how the situation was handled as it left some of the most vulnerable parts of the staff community impacted. The resolution also outlines a list of requests for Cornell to do several things differently when weighing weather-related operating status changes. The resolution asks Cornell to:

1. Ensure all staff, students, faculty and visitors can navigate campus safely when the university is open.
 2. Consider travel conditions to and from campus and take into account regional indicators and the status of bus transit and widespread school closings.
 3. Provide proactive communication to staff when a winter storm is being tracked.
 4. Adhere to a schedule for operating status decisions, aligned with shift start times, to give commuters ample notice and help avoid necessary risks.
 5. To the extent possible, align with the operating status of the Cornell Child Care Center. They had issues where the university closed midday and people were advised to not travel. However, the Cornell Child Care Center closed and those who had kids there had to travel to get them.
 6. Raise employee awareness of inclement weather protocols including familiarizing employees with various campus operating statuses, publish more detailed decision-making criteria, clarify what it means to be classified as "essential" in this context, and require supervisors to establish emergency work plans with their employees.
 7. Incorporate remote work options into its inclement weather policy and communications.
 8. Strengthen communications with TCAT and coordinate transportation planning in the event bus service is suspended or our operating status changes.
 9. Provide room and board for essential staff who are required to report to work in inclement weather before their work shift or if stranded on campus due to bus service interruption or dangerous road conditions.
 10. Consider implementing a weather and safety leave policy for employees.
 11. Look to Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) to work with campus partners on a review of weather policy and procedures to consider their impacts on employees.
- The resolution then asks the department to make recommendations and submit a report to the EA before October 15, 2020.
- ii. B. Goodell suggested two technical amendments on line 85 and 143 to read "transit provider"—resolution **amended** by unanimous consent.
 - iii. B. Goodell questioned why the word "condemns" was used on line 112 instead of "disproves."
 1. C. Sanzone noted her intent to convey a very strong disapproval.
 2. J. Withers added the word may have come from resolutions in the GPSA or SA.

3. C. Sanzone stated that those assemblies used that language as well.
- iv. R. Lochner suggested a technical amendment on line 157 to include the Office of Emergency Management. The Office of Emergency Management and EHS are two separate entities now—resolution amended by unanimous consent.
- v. B. Goodell motioned to call the question.
- vi. Voting on resolution—RX 9 passed with a vote of 23-0.
- d. RX 10: Recognition of Cornell University’s Senior Leadership and the bold and decisive initial response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - i. K. Barth introduced the resolution written to the administration for its superior job in its initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted the administration for being quick to respond, sending everyone home in March, making communications compassionate and transparent, and preparing for the transition to virtual instruction, among other actions. K. Barth noted that the Employee Welfare Committee discussed and reviewed the resolution. The committee decided to give President Martha Pollack and Vice President Marry Opperman a shout out beginning line 36 to commend their commitments to the safety and welfare of staff. In the Resolved clause beginning line 41, the resolution lists all senior leadership they considered as the President’s cabinet. An additional feedback from the committee was to ensure that other groups were also formally recognized and listed. This was done in the Resolved clause beginning line 56. K. Barth clarified that this resolution specifically defines the “initial” response.
 - ii. B. Fortenberry motioned to end debate and call the question.
 - iii. Voting on resolution—RX 10 passed with a vote of 21-0-1.
- e. EA Summer work: Next steps
 - i. Chair Howell noted that as discussed last meeting, he would like the EA to continue having a presence and continue the leadership role it has established throughout the crisis. At this time, they do not know the status of the campus reopening and the public health situation is still progressing. Chair Howell outlined two options. The first option would be to not add extra meetings to the calendar and have meetings scheduled at the call of the Executive Committee, which will try to give as much notice as possible. The second option will be to put meetings on the calendar and cancel them if there is nothing to work on.
 - ii. B. Fortenberry voiced support for the EA to continue work.
 - iii. K. Mahoney supported having meetings scheduled throughout the summer and cancelled when there is nothing on the agenda.
 1. J. Creque, B. Goodell, M. Benda, E. Miller, L. Taylor, J. Withers, J. Townley, S. Barry expressed agreement.
 - iv. Chair Howell stated they will work with the Office of Assemblies to schedule meetings at regular two-week intervals throughout the summer and cancel them if nothing occurs. However, he noted that meetings may be moved around if there are staff forums.
- f. Retiree Appointment
 - i. Chair Howell thanked H. Sheldon for his service.
 - ii. H. Sheldon expressed gratitude and enjoyment for his time on the EA.
 - iii. Chair Howell announced that Virginia “Ginny” McAuley is the new Retiree Appointee joining the EA.
 - iv. V. McAuley introduced herself and shared that her retirement was earlier this January. She worked in the Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering for 35 years.

She expressed excitement at staying involved with the community and is currently back on campus assisting in making surgical masks.

- v. Chair Howell made a motion to approve the appointment— V. McAuley’s appointment to the EA was **approved** with a vote of 21-0.

IV. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee
 - i. H. Depew stated that her and C. Sanzone are working to compile and tag all the questions from all the COVID-19 forums. They hope to share a report with everyone and senior leadership. Some people have indicated they may want to revisit some of the questions, and it will be helpful to know what areas the concerns are clustered around. The committee is also working on transitioning.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee
 - i. C. Sanzone stated the committee may have enough content to put out another newsletter possibly at the end of the month or early June. She suggested they could highlight the resolutions that have just been passed. The committee is meeting next week.
 - ii. H. Sheldon suggested announcing that the EA will be staying in session over the summer if another newsletter is published.
- c. Education Committee
 - i. M. Benda noted the committee has no updates.
- d. Welfare Committee
 - i. K. Mahoney stated the committee had a meeting this week. There was a lot of concern and discussion about the CARE Fund, and how it will be impacted in the short term as domestic violence reports have been increasing. However, the CARE Fund is very strapped. While there has only been one COVID-related request, they are anticipating more. K. Mahoney and C. Sanzone discussed developing a proposal to share with the Faculty Senate that could serve as a template for units to take to their Deans or Vice Presidents to possibly help raise the balance. The committee also continued discussion around some of the resolutions. A committee member is advancing a resolution to acknowledge Weill Cornell to be brought forward in the summer. The Transportation Department has also extended relaxing the parking regulations until May 31, 2020. They are currently evaluating enhancing pedestrian bases for the fall, which would allow for partial street closures that would accommodate social distancing in some areas. K. Mahoney added there was also a concern that the weekly wellness updates are not making their way to staff. The Wellness Office is relying on liaisons to push those updates out but is getting inconsistent feedback on whether staff are receiving them or not. The office asked for assistance in encouraging distribution if it is not happening. C. Sanzone is looking at ways to tie the updates into social media posts.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee
 - i. B. Goodell stated the committee has not met. At the last meeting, members discussed inviting Assistant Director of HRIS Amy Parmley to give a presentation, and he is waiting on a response from her.
- f. Elections Committee
 - i. J. Withers announced that the Membership Task Force has recruited its second non-EA member. The task force is now fully staffed and is meeting weekly.

V. New Business

a. Open Discussion

- i. Chair Howell stated that he continues to receive positive feedback about the COVID-19 forums.
- ii. Chair Howell relayed that he received a request from Director of Employee Experience Linda Croll Howell asking people to submit videos to welcome new hires who have missed out on much of the normal in-person orientation and campus community developments.
 1. E. Miller added that they are also accepting photos.
- iii. K. LoParco asked if anyone has information about how the university is handling people returning to campus in the Fall if there are plans to do so.
 1. Chair Howell mentioned that the reactivation committees may have updates.
 2. R. Lochner stated an update should be coming soon
 3. A. Miller added certain areas of research will be coming back.
 4. B. Goodell noted that as of tomorrow, his office will be fully staffed. They will work to prepare the buildings ready for people to come in as early as next week for essential research.
 5. E. Miller added she works in the research division in Weill Hall. Their custodial staff is full-time as of today and much of the building has already been disinfected.
 6. M. Benda stated that the hospital in the Vet College has been open full-time.
 7. V. McAuley stated that CALS has been approving essential research. However, people still have to practice social distancing and utilize personal protective equipment. People must also be sanitized on their way into the lab and on their way out.
- iv. K. Mahoney asked about the status of the CJC recommendations.
 1. J. Michael replied that the vote in the UA was to take the CJC recommendations and the OSA draft to University Counsel for synthesis and revisions. It would then go out for public comment.
 2. Chair Howell added there was an amendment added to ask the final proposal be brought back to the UA for review.

VI. Adjournment

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran
Clerk of the Assembly