

Five College Learning in Retirement

Minutes of the Council Meeting (CORRECTED 8/13/09 BY D. ROSENTHAL PER MEETING ON THAT DATE)

June 11, 2009

Next Council Meeting on: date to be determined

The council of 5CLIR met on Thursday, June 11, 2009, at the Five College offices on Spring Street in Amherst.

Present: Lise Armstrong, Jeff Caplan, Peter Ferber, Mary Franks, Gail Gaustad, Chuck Gillies, Wil Hastings, Katharine Hazen, Carol Jolly, Sheila Klem, Charlie Klem, Joan Laird, Philippe Meyer, Callie Orszak, Pete Reitt, Dottie Rosenthal, Leo Sartori, Eleanor Shattuck, Bev Von Kries, Bill Williams, Sara Wright

Larry Ambs, incoming Vice President, was unable to attend, but sent a report from his Communications Committee, which is included. The camera person, Mary, from Amherst Community Television, was present to film the Council for our upcoming public relations DVD.

President Leo Sartori called the meeting to order at 2:30. The May minutes were accepted as disseminated by e-mail. The Agenda was corrected, as the September meeting will take place on 9/17, and there will be a summer meeting either in July or August.

President's Report: Leo reported that two LIR members are not doing well: Leslie Nyman who nevertheless continues in good spirits, and has been visited by several LIR members. Shlomit Cheyette is also very ill, in the Linda Manor nursing home.

Leo announced the Council election results: John Armstrong, Arnold Friedman and Michael Wolff will take office at the next Council meeting, as will new Treasurer Bill Williams and new Secretary Dottie Rosenthal. Leo recognized outgoing Past President Mary Franks, whose "wisdom and advice" he has appreciated. He also thanked outgoing Treasurer Charlie Klem and Secretary Kathy Hazen. He recognized the three retiring members of Council: Eleanor Shattuck, Wil Hastings, and Pete Reitt.

Leo noted that the Summer Programs are underway. As the bus was undersubscribed, the trip to the Garden in the Woods was carpooled, and an attempt is being made to keep the Mystic River trip alive too.

He reported that several members including Mary, Sara and Leo himself, took part in the WFCR fundraiser.

Nina Scott's article on the April Anniversary brunches appeared in the Hampshire Life edition of the Gazette last weekend.

Vice-President's report: Sara Wright pointed out that she will be canvassing the Council to choose between July and August for a meeting date. She asked for corrections and additions to the recently disseminated LIR Calendar.

Committee Reports:

Curriculum Committee: Joan Laird circulated copies of her written report and noted that there are many issues around the lottery. 82% of the seminar slots are filled; this is comparable to past numbers. A page of statistics was distributed.

Finance Committee: Treasurer Charlie Klem circulated his three-page financial report as of 5/31/2009 and it is sent as a separate attachment with the minutes. Treasurer's written report follows:

The results of 11 months ending May 31 continue to indicate that the entire year's outcome will be between breakeven and the budget loss of \$2000;

The Finance Committee will bring the Grants' Policy; this is to be distributed prior to the meeting.

Charlie Klem

Public Relations: Jeff Caplan noted that cameraperson Mary from ACTV is here recording "Leo's swan song," for the LIR DVD. Mary was also at the power point workshop on Tuesday. LIR will join ACTV for \$100/year; Jeff notes they have a good parking lot we might use.

Summer Programs: Carol Jolly noted that although the GArden in the Woods trip bus had to be cancelled, fourteen people attended via carpool. The Mystic Trip is probably not going to run unless by car pool, and the river cruise plans had to change as the museum scheduled for the afternoon has closed. There has been a good response to the other outings however, and she reminded the Council that the all-member pot-luck picnic is scheduled for September 9 (rain date 9/10) at the Gaustads'.

Meetings/Membership: Sheila Klem reported that we have 22 new members of which six are trial members. The M/M committee will meet on July 14 for a further update, and we will "aggressively pursue" them to induce them to come to the picnic in September. We also plan to hold a midwinter new members activity.

Tech Committee: Philippe reported that the computer presentation earlier this week was "fantastic" including 'how to use a Blog and Facebook.' All the details are in his written report, which sends members to links on the website. He stressed that there is a lot of help available for members. Written report follows:

- 1) Presentations workshop: Superbly organized by Jim Harvey and magnificently presented by Margaret Manson and Sandy Sladen the workshop was attended by close to 40 members, including our soon-to-be president. The theme was “what you need to remember and focus on when preparing a presentation... and how PowerPoint can help you organize your thoughts”.

- 2) Meeting with Larry Ambs: Larry gave the Tech Committee a broad description of his mission and where the members of the committee could possibly help him. Peter Reitt will liaise between Larry ad hoc committee and the Tech Committee. Among possible missions for the Tech Committee: --Improve, through education and information, the computer literacy of “late adopters” in the membership – Include in the planned questionnaire questions which would complement Larry’s research

--Develop some simple tests to validate/invalidate the assumptions concerning the current computer literacy (illiteracy) of the membership.

The chair of the Tech Committee repeated his conviction that as important as “greenness” and “economies” are, the real benefit will reside in a better and more complete service to the membership as well as in eliminating some of the more labor intensive processes currently forced on the Office Manager.

- 3) Website: within the limits of our resources the intent is to make our website one of the focal points of the organization’s life. Among recent updates:
 - a. The calendar: while it physically resides in a much different place in cyberspace, it has been linked by Hy to our website so that changes are available in real time to all the membership.
 - b. Great Decisions: in near real time two of the presentations as well as pictures of the audience have been posted to the website
 - c. Members Helping Members: Short descriptions of the program and a link to the MHM website have been set up by Jeff and Hy. Speaking of MHM I have also committed that the Tech Committee will volunteer on the MHM site to provide, as well as it can, Tech Assistance where and when needed.
 - d. Presentation Workshop: The brilliant presentation (in PowerPoint obviously) as well as basic PowerPoint tips have been posted on the website.

I would hope that the members of the council will first go and check the website and then spread the word to the whole membership! Philippe Meyer

Special Programs: Gail Gaustad, chair; no report at this time.

Office Manager: Callie's report follows:

Sorting seminar lists and summer programs lists; inputting registrations; requesting refunds; keeping busy. Sara Wright and Laura Cranshaw did a great job during the five working days that I was gone. Callie Kendall Orszak

Communications Ad Hoc Committee: Larry Ambs, chair, report follows: (Committee members include Sandy Belden, Joan Hastings, Pete Reitt, Joan Laird, Mary Franks, Sheila Klem, Peter Ferber)

I will not be at the next Council Meeting to report on this, so any that want to comment may:

Minutes of our first meeting: I reviewed the charge to the committee from Council: To discuss and propose communication strategies for 5CLIR by the middle of the Fall semester. I pointed out that the members of this committee are also members of all the 5CLIR standing committees and that they should communicate our deliberations with their respective committees.

I suggested that we consider both short term communication needs (due to the council deadline) and long term needs of 5CLIR.

Before opening the floor for discussion, I asked that we consider the following: 1- Councils concern for cost and greening the organization. 2- In addition to snail mail, email and the web are with us and their use will grow. 3- How should we approach the total membership; What are their needs and capabilities? 4- How about outside the organization membership. We need to communicate with a greater audience to let people know what we are and to attract new members. Also we need to communicate with our parent organization, 5CLIR Inc and with the 5 colleges and university which provide us with assistance.

A good discussion ensued and I will try to highlight some of the thoughts and comments.

- *We need to consider the less technically literate in the membership. Some don't like the web or email approach.*
- *It is not evil to have paper. If we email, then the members may print themselves, thus not saving paper.*
- *We have moved to a strategy that is greener and cheaper at the last preview. We should not retreat from this.*
- *Let us develop a strategy to change. The short preparation period for the trial was not adequately considered by council.*

- *The Seminar Catalog has long term value and is a good PR mechanism. Maybe it should be enhanced. As to cost, can we have advertising in it to reduce costs to the membership.*
- *Should there be either an Op-in or Op-out approach to mailings vs. web/email.*
- *We need to communicate more information to our membership.*
- *Should the content of the Newsletter be expanded?*
- *Maybe Members Helping Members could be used to improve our membership capabilities.*
- *The Technology Committee will be distributing a questionnaire in the Fall. What can we use this for?*

I hope I have not missed too many of the highlights.

In going ahead, I indicated that I would attempt to collect by our next meeting, the types and range of communication used by 5CLIR. Catalogs, Newsletter, etc. I would like to also determine the costs.

From the committee, I need the following in the near future:

When in the Fall we can resume meeting? After the Sept 9 Picnic?

What specific items do you want to see on the agenda?

What communication items should we consider?

What information do we need for our deliberations?

What information do we need about our membership?

Membership Mailing currently (Let me know of omissions)

- 1- *Monthly Newsletter (9)* 2- *Membership list (2)* 3- *Seminar Catalog (2)*
 4- *Special Programs Catalog (2)* 5- *Summer/Winter Catalogs (2)*
 6- *Seminar Confirmation (2)* 7- *Annual Ballot (1)* 8- *Annual Report (1)*

Larry Ambs phone: 413-256-8324 ambs@ecs.umass.edu

Peter Ferber spoke about the possibility of making the catalog a glossy issue and putting it into the libraries.

Sheila Klem brought up the Tech committee's pending survey, underscoring its importance for other committees, and Philippe noted that time is short as they don't meet again until fall.

Old Business:

Members-Helping-Members program: Peter Ferber, chair, noted that there were ten helping responses to the first plea. The committee is putting a brochure together, and a grant application, perhaps even refrigerator magnets, and wants the Council's approval for this. The deadline is July 20 and a certain percentage of matching funds for the grant

are needed. Discussion followed. Peter moved that LIR move forward for the purpose of increasing awareness of the program for members. The written report:

Our first month of service brought one request for medical transportation, one request for ongoing transportation to fall seminars, one request for a reader and one request for midday visits to free a spouse to run errands. Our first request for medical transportation elicited 10 responses from our volunteers. Our volunteers now number 35. Peter Ferber had a smooth month as coordinator for the first month, and Jeff Caplan has taken over for June.

Highland Valley Elder Services has issued its Request For Proposals (RFP), and we have begun to research and develop a grant application. Information sessions are scheduled for June 12 and 19th. Grant must be submitted by July 20. We plan to ask for seed money to increase awareness of our availability and familiarize 5CLIR's membership with how to access the service. We will consult with Nancy Goff as to whether we should frame the application as a pilot project for Five Colleges, Inc, which may wish to employ the model in other parts of their domain.

It has been suggested that MHM should also provide tech support among its services strengthening our members' computer literacy and capability. We like the suggestion, but must defer to the Tech Committee as to whether this is practicable. If so then we will issue a call for tech savvy volunteers. Peter Ferber

Re the matching funds: Jeff Caplan explained that we have put in many hours of work on this that might qualify for in-kind contribution. More discussion. Peter's motion was put to the vote and passed, -only one person was opposed.

In response to a query, Peter informed the council that all calls are recorded, and kept track of in a log. There have been only three requests for help so far, and they expect to average four or five calls a month.

New Business:

1. Re Nominations to Council Membership: Sara took the chair temporarily so that Leo could excuse himself from the discussion, (as to whether members could be nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting, which Leo tried to do but was prevented, or whether nominations can only come through the seminars, which is Chuck Gillies' stance. Both position papers are included at the end of these minutes.)

Leo said that he is not trying to change our system; the seminars would continue to be the main source of nominations for Council membership. Leo cited articles 6 and 9 of our Bylaws, and Chapter 12 of Roberts' Rules of Order, noting that we should encourage our members to take part in the governance of our organization, and not put obstacles in their way.

Chuck appealed to the Council to refer the issue to an ad hoc committee. Extensive discussion followed, some people felt that the membership should be polled on this, and that Council should not be dealing with it, especially at this transitional moment. Dottie

Rosenthal noted that the Bylaws were written to be as concise as possible, and the strength of the Nominating committee is that it works from the bottom up, not the top down. Everyone nominated should provide the answers to certain questions in their Bio for the slate, e.g. how long they have been a member, what seminars have they taken. The Nominating Committee should set the criteria.

Charlie Klem moved to table this discussion, as the changeover in council membership is imminent, and this motion passed unanimously.

2. re: Grant Policy:

See attached Policy. Charlie Klem moved that we accept the procedure as distributed. Noted that we have to go through Five College. Our policy is loaded with inconsistencies—for instance, can only standing committees come to the Council? Sara noted that it is important for the officers and the Finance committee to know what is proper procedure, and documentation should be available. The motion to accept the procedure was re-read, voted, and the procedure was rejected. Although rejected, the Grant outline (3 pages) and Flow chart (one page) accompany the minutes for future reference.

Callie read an invitation to contribute to Lorna Petersen's retirement gift.

President's Closing Remarks:

Leo noted that this is his last meeting as President. He has enjoyed his term of office because of the cooperation of the people around this table. He passed two copies of Robert's Rules of Order, and the gavel, to incoming President Sara Wright.

Sara remarked that she has learned a lot as Vice President. She admires Leo for his "unflappability," and his great concern for others, viz. the Members-Helping-Members program. She presented Leo with a book on Sherlock Holmes and a gift certificate, a bookmark made by Callie, and a card, expressing thanks from all of us.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Hazen
Recording Secretary

The Financial Report (3 pages) is sent as a separate attachment, and Leo's and Chuck's position papers re Nominations procedure follow:

1. Leo's Statement in favor of Nominations from the Floor

You may recall that Chuck G and I had a disagreement at the last annual meeting when I tried to nominate someone from the floor for a seat on Council. Chuck objected that nominations from the floor are not allowed. Not wanting to waste the time of the entire assembly while we debated the issue, I withdrew the nomination, to the embarrassment of the person I had tried to nominate. I should like to revisit the issue now.

Let me say at the outset that this is not a major issue. The notion that I am proposing a major change in our organizational structure is preposterous. Nomination by seminars has always been the standard procedure in LIR and, regardless of what we decide, it will continue to be the standard procedure. There is absolutely no reason to anticipate that if my view prevails we will be hit with a barrage of nominations from the floor. It is more likely that another twenty years will elapse before anyone tries to make one. For that matter, I don't remember the last time anyone made a nomination from the floor for president or treasurer, which has always been allowed. In every organization to which I have ever belonged, nominations from the floor are permitted for every office and are rarely, if ever, employed. But the opportunity to do so exists, and most people think that is a positive feature.

What do our Bylaws say? Article VI states: "Nominations to Council are invited from each peer-led seminar held during the current membership year." Nothing about nominations from the floor: it doesn't say they are allowed and it doesn't say they are forbidden. Chuck has argued that because the subsequent section, on election of major officers, mentions nominations from the floor, the absence of similar language regarding Council elections implies that the drafters intended to bar nominations from the floor. That may or may not be true; we can go only by what is written down.

Article IX of the Bylaws states that "the current edition of Robert's Rules governs 5CLIR in all cases to which they are applicable and not inconsistent with these Bylaws." In other words, if some topic is not covered in the bylaws we should follow Robert's Rules. Chapter 12 of Robert's Rules (2d ed) discusses the nominating procedure. It states clearly that when nominations are made by a nominating committee, the assembly has the opportunity to present additional nominations from the floor. No second is needed; a member may even nominate himself or herself. RR does not explicitly address the possibility that nominations may be made by a group other than a nominating committee. I would argue, however, that when a seminar chooses a nominee it is acting as a de facto nominating committee even though it does not carry the name. Therefore, according to RR, nominations from the floor must be allowed. Wil Hastings, our resident parliamentary expert, informs me that he agrees "105%" with this interpretation.

If my argument is valid, no amendment is needed to establish that nominations from the floor are permitted. I would like to have Council endorse this position. Anyone is of course free to propose an amendment that would bar such a nomination.

Legalistic questions aside, I want to affirm my strong conviction that an organization such as ours should encourage its members to participate in its governance, not put obstacles in their way. Say a member was absent when his seminar chose its nominee—perhaps he or she was ill or out of town. What is wrong with giving that member another chance to be nominated? Would it really undermine the sanctity of the seminar system if, once in a blue moon, such a nomination took place?

In correspondence with me, Chuck has argued that the seminars "vet" prospective candidates and thus prevent a totally unqualified person from being nominated and, through some fluke, elected. I find this argument unpersuasive. In all

the years I have been a member of LIR I recall no instance in which a prospective candidate's qualifications were ever discussed in a seminar; it would be awkward, to say the least, to do so in the presence of the person in question. People are generally delighted when anyone shows an interest in running, and nomination is almost automatic. But if a "weirdo" were ever nominated, either by a seminar or from the floor, I would not panic. I have sufficient faith that our membership would be wise enough to reject such a candidacy. Incidentally, the person I tried to nominate has been a member of the curriculum committee and Great Decisions, has participated in many seminars and would have been an entirely legitimate candidate

I oppose any proposal to appoint a task force to study this problem. The last thing we need is yet another task force. If Council agrees with me, it should be able to resolve the issue with a simple resolution. If it does not, I will simply drop the matter.

Leo Sartori, June 11, 2009

2. Chuck Gillies' Statement Against Allowing Nominations from the Floor at Annual Meeting:

I'd like to thank Leo for letting me know that there was going to be this discussion and inviting me to the meeting.

My understanding is that Leo would like for Council to go on record as supporting the "nominations from the floor" option for Council elections just as we have done for several years for Officer Elections. I believe this would be a wrong decision and I also think it a mistake to have it decided by a simple Council vote.

I agree with Leo that there have been weaknesses in the current practice, but they should be corrected instead of making a drastic change in our basic organizational structure. It is my belief that this issue is fundamentally linked to the commitment stated in our new By-Laws [Article II, "Object"] to "the core of the 5CLIR program consists of peer led seminars"

I recommend that this issue be examined by a small task force which, given time and proper notice, can study the background, clarify the issues and determine what is best for the organization. It should recommend improvements in the election process and/or amendments to the By-Laws if change in current practice is desired.

The reason I believe this is so important is the link with the "peer led seminar issue" mentioned at the beginning. Years ago we needed to make significant effort to overcome a built in resistance to any kind of change or growth in this organization. Many of us steadfastly supported change, but always with efforts to not antagonize members who thought differently and with two basic commitments: (1) that change would be thoughtful and gradual and (2) that we would maintain our core commitment to the peer-led seminars. Since the only real protection for this commitment is the voting process I find this commitment threatened, instead of strengthened as some of us thought was done in the new Bylaws.

I think we have plenty of time to sort this out before the next Annual Meeting, and arguing today about past or current practice and interpretations of By-Laws or Robert's Rules will be unproductive until Council has had a chance to think fully about the issues and examine alternatives.

I am not sure how we are proceeding today but if we are arguing the issue I have some "technical, legalistic" arguments against the notion that the By-Laws permit nominations from the floor for Council nominees:

(1) Practice for twenty years has been exclusive nominations from seminars. [see memo of April 15, 2009 from the Nominating Committee, which like the Bylaws notes two distinct ways of nominating, for Officers and to Council, with "nominations from the floor listed for Officers and omitted for Council];

(2) The recent Bylaws Review Committee had no intention of changing past practice [see: 5CLIR Bylaw and Election Guide, Yellow Page, Article VI, "makes no substantive changes in the election procedures ..."];

I have some other points, but only, if necessary:

(3) I have great difficulty accepting that a Robert's Rules interpretation or a simple Council vote can change current practice (what I think Robert's Rules calls custom), when supported by a reasonable reading of the Bylaws. The Bylaws must be read in total and there are two sections dealing with nominations, one with the "floor nomination" clause and one without – a reasonable conclusion is that the drafters intended it to NOT be included!

(4) Officer elections are essentially Communist-style elections. When we removed several years ago the requirement that the Nominating Committee produce two nominees for President, etc. we wanted to preserve some semblance of democracy and put in the requirement for floor nominations. We did not put in the negative for Council nominations because no one thought it necessary, that it was clear that nominations came from seminars, exclusively.

*- Chuck Gillies
June 11, 2009*