

Gazette Publications Committee

Minutes of the Gazette Publications Committee Meeting
December 4, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. in the USC board room.

In attendance

Voting members

Paul Benedetti *via Skype*

Nicole MacAdam *via Skype*

Jay Menard

Hirad Zafari

Absent: Jocelyn Wong, Aron Yeomanson

Non-voting members

Iain Boekhoff

Ian Greaves

Isaac Jacobi

Nathan Kanter

Olivia Zollino

Ratification of the chair

Menard volunteered for the position of chair. Moved by Zafari, seconded by Benedetti. All in favour, motion passes.

Editor-in-chief report

Report was circulated and Boekhoff took questions from members. Question from Benedetti regarding analytics. Boekhoff explains some of the numbers, says traffic is up significantly due to major news events these past few months, notes majority of traffic on website comes from Facebook.

Question from Benedetti regarding videos and the traction they're getting. Kanter says they haven't been getting a lot of views and we're working on moving away from talking head videos.

Boekhoff notes value of having professional editorial advice from Mary Doyle, who edits every print edition for not only spelling/grammar, but angles, sources, etc. Suggests ensuring this stays in place for years to come.

Question from Jacobi regarding budget. Boekhoff says multimedia capital fee should be articulated as a Gazette capital fee and for it to accumulate year over year to keep cost on students as minimal as possible. Might not be necessary to collect as much as USC budget was anticipating last year if these changes can be made in writing.

Manager report

Greaves notes print advertising sales have remained steady. Down approximately \$6,000 for the two months (Oct.–Nov.) from last year due to one advertiser who only advertised last year — Western Housing. Taking that single year anomaly out, sales are up \$2,000. Possibility Western Housing even approaches us again in new year when students really start looking. Working on integrating website ads with the new website. The new system allows for more options for online advertising. Working on print and web advertising packages. Also working on magazine ad pricing and sales, something that wasn't done for the first two magazines.

Budget update and planning

Boekhoff says the USC is currently working on drafting the budget for next year but there's nothing to report on currently. By the January meeting, there will be a draft budget for the committee.

Elections policy discussion

Report circulated before meeting. Boekhoff explains some of the background for proposed changes. Says USC human resources department requested review last spring. Current election policy has potential to be unfair to candidates.

Members agree current hierarchical voting system should be replaced with one vote per person — there is too much of a possibility for favouritism with current system of 1 vote for staff, 2 votes for editors and 3 votes for front office. Member notes if USC did that, Gazette would write editorials for days.

Members agree application process will clearly articulate new reporting structure for editor-in-chief to the committee. Also gives the process independent oversight. Menard says he is able to facilitate elections this year and can revisit in future depending how much time it takes to gather applications and oversee election day.

Members agree current no campaigning rules don't make sense. Agree there should be no visual campaigning or grandstanding, but candidates should be allowed to answer questions when they are asked.

Members agree a removal process for the editor-in-chief should be articulated in policy. Note the need for staff to have the ability to contact the committee directly and for the committee to be able to address concerns on a high level, not in day-to-day operations.

Boekhoff will make changes and circulate Google Doc working on updating elections policy. Vote on new policy will take place over email because of time constraints, no later than December 18. Other action items for Boekhoff to draft include solidify reporting structure for editor-in-chief and outlining a process for removal of editor-in-chief.

Front office transition discussion

Boekhoff says this is an important issue. A lot of information is lost in transition between front offices. Inadequate training and preparation for incoming staff lead to potential problems down the line, drop in quality.

Solutions will mainly be up to front office to start and maintain, he says. This could possibly include a comprehensive standard operating procedure guide to how to do each front office role. There used to be one but it's been a number of years since it's happened.

Member asks if financial compensation can be provided to start and maintain these manuals. Boekhoff unsure of how that would work and will look into it.

Menard notes job shadowing for new FO can start soon after elections have ended (March/April) instead of just having the current one day "takeover". Members agree.

Benedetti mentions he can set up a visit for incoming front office to spend a day at the London Free Press newsroom. Could also be a trip to Toronto to see Globe, Star etc.

Boekhoff will provide an update on this and other transition preparation at January meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.