

MINUTES¹

USG Senate Meeting

Thursday, September 2nd, 2010

Meeting called to order at 7:16 pm. Meeting held in SAC Ballroom B.

Agenda item 1.0: Attendance

The roll was called:

Senator Allen Abraham	Present
Senator Tahir Ahmad	Present
Senator Ory Baum	Present
Senator Samuel Cushner	Present
Senator Spenser Cushing	Present
Senator Christian Giraldo	Present
Senator Sidrah Khan	Present
Senator Mahyar Kashan	Present
Senator Thomas Kirnbauer	Present
Senator Yan Leyfman	Present
Senator Deborah Machalow	Present
Senator Kirin Mahmud	Present
Senator Shivani Rampersad	Present
Senator Masood Rustemi	Present
Senator Najee Simmons	Present
Senator Michael Spinelli	Present

¹ Typically, minutes should only contain the essentials of a meeting. This includes the meeting time and location, a list of those who attended, as well as a record of all motions made and their outcome. Debate or even a summary of debate is usually not included. I include it here at the request of the Chair. Mistakes and omissions are likely, so Senators are encouraged to e-mail the Secretary with corrections, so that the record reflects what was actually said at the meeting.

Senator Priya Sohi Present

Senator Russell Williams Present

Quorum established.

Agenda item 2.0: Announcements

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the USG Senate will not occur on Thursday, September 9th, 2010, due to the holiday. The Chair will inform Senators as to the date and location of the next meeting.

The Chair passed on a request by the USG Administrative Director for all Senators to check their card access to the USG suite.

Agenda item 3.0: Approval of the Minutes (of August 27th, 2010 meeting)

- Senator Machalow moved to amend the minutes to strike “Meeting held at SAC 304.” and replace with “Meeting held in SAC 304.”
 - Decision: Approved without objection.
- Senator Machalow moved to amend the minutes to strike “that the Senate vote on the PPT” (sixth bullet point of Agenda item 3.0) and replace with “that the Senate vote to elect the PPT”.
 - Decision: Approved without objection.
- Senator Baum moved to amend the minutes to strike “Ahmand” (seventh bullet point) and replace with “Ahmad.”
 - Decision: Approved without objection.
- Debate followed on the main motion on approving the minutes:
 - Senator Kashan expressed that Senators absent from the August 27th meeting had “no say” in what was done.
 - Senator Ahmad expressed that the PPT is the Senate’s representative and that the “entire Senate” should decide on the appointment, not 9 out of 18 or 19 Senators. The Senator further expressed that he had “no intention to run again” and that “everyone should have their say.”
 - Senator Machalow expressed that, should it be necessary, that the Senator was not opposed to resigning her position to allow a new PPT election.
- On the motion to approve the minutes: 1 was in favor, 16 opposed, with 1 abstention. The motion failed.

Agenda item 4.0: FSA Board of Directors Election

- Senator Kashan nominated Senator Mahmud.
- Senator Ahmad nominated Vice President of Communications Mazza.
- Senator Machalow nominated Senator Krishan (declined the nomination.)
- Senator Sohi moved to close nominations. Decision: Approved without objection.

- Speeches followed by the nominees.
- Senator Mahmud:
 - Senator Mahmud recounted her experience to the Senate, including Commuter Student Association (CSA) President for three years, USG Senator for four years, Student Ambassador, and the FSA Marketing Committee.
 - Senator Mahmud stated that she loves SBU and would “love to represent you.” She further stated that it would be an opportunity to represent, especially commuters, who are usually underrepresented.
 - No questions followed Senator Mahmud’s statement.
- VP Mazza:
 - Vice President of Communications Mazza expressed that he was “interested in being on FSA Board for a while.” That the “F” and “S” of FSA (faculty and students) should play a more pivotal role in the organization, instead of allowing FSA to serve as the means by which the Administration runs everything on campus.
 - VP Mazza stated that “fraud was going on”, that the FSA was “lying to students”, particularly with regards to a \$400 fee for the mandatory meal plan and a \$25 fee for the optional apartment meal plan. VP Mazza further stated that there was “little transparency” and no minutes were taken at Board of Directors meetings.
 - Question by Senator Spinelli: “Will you raise these issues (if elected)”?
 - Response to Q: I will go over there and be a “pain in the ass.” VP Mazza further stated that it was an interesting time for FSA and that the best approach to reforming it would be to be a part of it.
- Senator Kashan moved that the Senate elect the FSA candidate, and for the vote to be conducted by secret ballot. The motion was seconded.²
 - Senator Mahmud: 7
 - VP Mazza: 11
 - VP Mazza was elected to the FSA Board of Directors.

Agenda item 5.0: 2010 Promote Weekend Life Act

- VP Mazza introduced the act.³
- Senator Machalow moved to amend by striking “transferred to the USG SAB” in Section 4 and replacing with “reverted to the Undergraduate Student Government.”
 - Debate followed on the amendment:
 - Point of Information: ALIRRT Act called for the subsidization of 500 LIRR tickets to Penn Station and 300 LIRR tickets to Jamaica Station each month.

² Under Article V, D. of the USG Senate By-laws, a ballot vote “shall be done if called for by a Senator and seconded by another.”

³ The act was brought to the Senate floor under Article IV, Section 1, C., 3. of the USG Constitution, which states: “A student or undergraduate entity, may call for a special bill to be brought to the floor of the Senate by presentation to the Chair of the Senate of a petition containing the signatures of not less than 1% of the total membership of the Undergraduate Student Government.” 164 signatures were obtained.

- Senator Cushing: The reclaimed money should go to the USG for programming in general. The Budget Committee should decide where the funds ultimately go, be it to SAB, other clubs, etc.
 - Senator Giraldo: SAB tries to address all students. Campus clubs cater to smaller communities. Funds should be directly given to SAB.
 - Senator Ahmed: Senate decides on the Budget Committee's ideas.
 - Senator Kashan: Agrees with Senator Ahmad. The Senate will have to come back to this discussion anyway if the matter is referred to the Budget committee.
 - Senator Machalow: What would SAB do with the funds immediately? The opportunity should be given for USG clubs to apply for the funds, as they may have great ideas for programming. Smaller clubs and organizations might have great ideas for weekend life/programs.
 - Senator Cushing: It would be a hasty to make a decision right now. Efficiency sometimes backfires. We might need the money down the road.
 - Senator Sohi: Representing the view of commuter students, the funds should go to something that benefits the entire campus. I might be willing to drive ~40 minutes to attend a large campus-wide event, but it would be difficult to do so because two small clubs might have a weekend activity.
- Senator Khan moved to end debate. Decision: 12 in favor, 6 against, 0 abstentions. The motion passed.⁴
- The question was called on the approval of Senator Machalow's amendment.
 - Decision: 7 in favor, 10 against, 1 abstention. The motion failed.
- Senator Abraham moved to amend Section 4, by striking the period at the end of the sentence and adding "only for weekend and programming activities."
 - On the motion to amend, there were 17 in favor, 1 against, and no abstentions. The motion passed.
- Senator Ahmad moved to adopt the 2010 Promote Weekend Life Act, as amended. Debate ensued:
 - Vice President - Clubs and Organizations Chen: I used ALIRRT to purchase cheaper tickets home. Most students buy tickets to go home, not to attend events in the city.
 - Senator Baum: We should promote life on campus, not encourage people to leave campus.
 - Senator Sohi: Agrees with VP Chen. Not everyone uses ALIRRT program. Campus as a whole would benefit by weekend programming.
 - Vice President – Communications Mazza: ALIRRT horribly unfair to commuters and used entirely by residents to go back home to the city. Why not also subsidize gas and plane tickets for commuters?

⁴ A motion to end debate must be approved by 2/3 of the Senators voting. Since 18 Senators voted on the motion, a minimum of 12 is needed to pass the motion.

- Senator Simmons made a point of information regarding the current status of ALIRRT this month.
 - The Chair responded that tickets were not sold this month under his instructions. The ALIRRT program needed \$65,000 to function but was only allocated \$20,000 for this year. The Chair felt that it would be inappropriate to continue sales until the Senate made a decision on either axing the program or giving it full funding.
- Senator Machalow: Why do we care what students use it [ALIRRT program] for? ALIRRT makes students happy and it is not the government’s business for what purpose students use the tickets. Just as not everyone benefits for ALIRRT, not everyone will get to do everything and not everyone will benefit from a large weekend activity.
- On the main motion, to adopt the 2010 Promote Weekend Life Act, as amended, the vote was taken by roll call:

○ Senator Allen Abraham	Y
○ Senator Tahir Ahmad	Y
○ Senator Ory Baum	Y
○ Senator Samuel Cushner	Y
○ Senator Spenser Cushing	Y
○ Senator Christian Giraldo	Y
○ Senator Sidrah Khan	Y
○ Senator Mahyar Kashan	Y
○ Senator Thomas Kirnbauer	Y
○ Senator Yan Leyfman	Y
○ Senator Deborah Machalow	N
○ Senator Kirin Mahmud	Y
○ Senator Shivani Rampersad	Y
○ Senator Masood Rustemi	Y
○ Senator Najee Simmons	N
○ Senator Michael Spinelli	N
○ Senator Priya Sohi	Y
○ Senator Russell Williams	N
- Decision: 14 in favor, 4 against, and 0 abstentions, the motion to adopt the 2010 Promote Weekend Life Act was agreed to.

Agenda item 6.0: 2010 Wealth of Knowledge Act

- Director Colton presented the act.
 - The act would open up the source code for the online club management system as “open source” software. This would vastly increase the number of people who contribute to it, leading to likely improvements in quality of software and its future maintenance.

- Question by Senator Spinelli: “What is the sense in making something we paid for open source?”
 - Response: Altruistic approach and philosophy of providing a useful service that we have to others. Moreover, it would bring additional benefits to us as well.
- Senator Ahmad moved to adopt the 2010 Wealth of Knowledge Act.
 - Senator Cushing moved to amend, by replacing “its” in item 5 of Section 2 with “the University’s”. The amendment was approved without objection.
 - On the motion to adopt the 2010 Wealth of Knowledge Act, 18 voted in favor, none opposed and no abstentions, and the act was adopted.

Agenda item 7.0: 2010 Emergency Powers Act

- VP Mazza presented the act (on behalf of Matt, who could not attend.)
- Senator Machalow moved to approve the 2010 Emergency Powers Act.
 - Decision: 18 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions. Act was adopted.

Agenda item 8.0: Senate Resolution Condemning the Prohibition of Lectures Directing Theses

- Senator Machalow presented the resolution.
- Senator Machalow moved to adopt the “Senate Resolution Condemning the Prohibition of Lecturers Directing Theses.”
 - Decision: 18 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions. The resolution was adopted.

Agenda item 9.0: Open Agenda

- Following the rejection of the minutes, the Chair called for nominations for the position of PPT.
 - Senator Sohi nominated Senator Mahmud.
 - Senator Abraham nominated Senator Machalow.
 - Senator Baum nominated Senator Kashan (declined.)
- Senator Cushing raised a Point of Order: The position of PPT was already filled by Senator Machalow.
 - The Senate stood at ease while the Parliamentarian searched Robert’s Rules of Order for a rule or precedent that would address the rare situation of rejecting the minutes.
 - The Parliamentarian advised the Chair that, whereas the Minutes of a meeting are the undisputable record of what took place at said meeting, and that if the Senate chose to reject the minutes, the effect of such a rejection would be to nullify any business conducted during said meeting, as no approved and unambiguous record of what occurred could be ascertained.
 - The Parliamentarian further advised the Chair that, in unusual cases such as this, it would be safest for the Chair to make a ruling and for that ruling to be appealed, so that

the Senate as a whole could make the determination on how to proceed, as is right and proper in a democratic framework.

- The Chair implicitly endorsed the Parliamentarian's advice (thus rejecting Senator Cushing's point of order,) by calling for "further nominations." Senator Cushing appealed from the decision of the Chair.
 - On the appeal, 13 voted to sustain (agree with) the Chair's ruling, 4 voted against the Chair's decision, and 1 abstained. The appeal was unsuccessful.
- There were no further nominations.
- The Chair invited the candidates, Senator Machalow and Senator Mahmud, to offer brief statements in support of their nominations and to address any questions.
 - Senator Machalow recounted her experiences and legislative achievements as a USG Senator during the last term of the Senate. Senator Machalow expressed her enthusiasm for the position and her plan to work 10 hours / week in the USG Office.
 - Senator Mahmud stated that this was her fourth year in the Senate, and has seen it grow and improve itself.
 - Senator Ahmad moved that the Senate elect its President Pro-Tempore (PPT), and for that election to be conducted by secret ballot. The motion was seconded.
 - First vote:
 - Senator Machalow: 9
 - Senator Mahmud: 9
 - The Chair stated that the position of PPT was the Senate's representative, particularly to the Executive Council, and that he would prefer it if the Senate were to make its own decision on PPT. He further stated that should the ballots be tied again, however, that the Chair would break the tie.
 - Second vote:
 - Senator Machalow: 9
 - Senator Mahmud: 10 (Including the Chair's vote.)
 - Senator Mahmud was elected as the Senate's President Pro-Tempore (PPT).
- Senator Ahmad presented a "Resolution against Hurricane Earl"
 - Senator Kashan asked Senator Ahmad "what urged you" to come up with this resolution?
 - Senator Kashan moved that the resolution be adopted.
 - Decision: 13 in favor, 5 against, no abstentions. The resolution was adopted.
- Announcements from the Gallery:
 - VP Chen announced that she will be conducting USG Student Leader Fall Training on October 2nd, and asked Senators to participate and assist in the training.
- With no further business and no one seeking the floor, the Chair announced that the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 pm.