

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
STAFF SENATE

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 21, 1995
Room 102, Phase II, Vet Medicine

Senators Present: Spencer Allen, Joyce Bohr, Billie Cline, Phoebe Crofts, Judy Davis, Betsy Davis-Jones, Marge Dellers, Debra Duncan, Matt Gart, Patti Hall, Cindy Harrison, Tom Hergert, Delbert Jones, Julia King, Richard Lovegrove, Bhaba Misra, Eileen Moccia, Trevia Moses, Valerie Myers, Fred Phillips, Wyatt Sasser, Widget Shannon, Chuck Shorter, Karla Soukup, Tony Sutphin, Padma Verma, and John Wooge.

Alternates and Guests Present: Bev Parkins for JoAnn Craven, Danny Belcher for Wanda Grubb, Matt Martelli for Virginia Viers, Nancy Phillips for John Wooge, Milko Maykowskyj, Doug Martin, guest speaker, Ben Poe, and Netta Smith for Spectrum.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by President Phillips. Phillips introduced the guest speaker, Doug Martin, Human Resources Manager for Personnel Services. Mr. Martin gave us an overview of the new Optional Insurance Plans available for salaried Virginia Tech employees from September 1 through October 31, 1995. He explained that Virginia Tech employees automatically receive life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment benefits at the rate of two-times their salary paid upon death to their designated beneficiary. He cautioned each member to make sure their named beneficiary is accurate and no changes have occurred. Martin then explained the four different options of the plan. One advantage he pointed out is that employees can enroll during the open enrollment period without question of insurability (i.e. no physical examination required). He also pointed out that if requesting coverage for a spouse, you would use your age when calculating the cost. If an employee enrolls in September, their effective date would be November 1, and if they enroll in October, the effective date would be December 1. You will receive confirmation of the option you chose from Personnel Services.

Martin then opened the floor for questions. The question was asked if you can enroll at any time? Martin answered yes, if you can pass the physical. Another question was should you cancel any other accidental death and dismemberment policy you may have? The answer was no. One senator asked if most term insurance increases with age? Martin answered no that you can get some insurance which "lock in" rates at the age you purchase the policy. Senator Wyatt Sasser asked if part-time salaried faculty have a chance to purchase health insurance? Martin said yes and part-time salaried classified staff may also purchase health insurance. However, the individuals pay the premium with no University contribution. Another senator asked if Virginia Tech could legally offer a health insurance plan if wage individuals would agree to pay the premiums. Martin explained that employees would have to make tough decisions concerning their coverage. In most cases, the higher risk people would sign up for the program which would increase the cost to each employee.

President Phillips thanked Doug Martin for his presentation. He commented that Martin has the University employees at heart and thanked him for all his help.

The minutes of the August 17 meeting were then approved with corrections.

Senator Richard Lovegrove reported from the Communications Committee that Ann Spencer has appointed a task force to include four staff and four faculty members to look at the communications structure of the University.

Senator Judy Davis reported from the Elections and Nominations Committee that they will be mailing the fall mail-out by October 30. The mailing, which will be sent to association officers, is requesting names of people who would be interested in serving on a committee or commission. Once the names are received, they will be placed in the Elections and Nominations database for further use in filling vacant positions.

Phillips reported that the McComas Leadership Committee will hold it's first meeting on September 27th.

Senator Marge Dellers gave a brief report from the Policies and Issues Committee. The committee will meet with John Muffo at their regular meeting on September 28.

Senator Bhaba Misra reported there are two policies up for voting at University Council. One is concerning transfer students and the other for a change in the Constitution and By-laws which permits students to chair the Commission on Student Affairs.

Senator Wyatt Sasser reported from the Faculty Senate that in the remarks of the outgoing president, he indicated his concern is that the faculty are not in the loop for policy making, and he felt they should be more actively involved in University decision making. Sasser expressed concern that both Senates are out of the policy making loop and that the Staff Senate should also become involved because staff has an equal part in shared governance.

Phillips commented that it was his understanding that staff does play an important part in shared governance through resolutions through their commissions. He suggested that Dr. Larry Moore address this issue at next month's meeting.

Sasser expressed that shared governance only works when everybody is involved and if Faculty Senate is moving towards a more active role in policy making, then Staff Senate should also.

Phillips commented that the University needs to be reminded that the staff does have a part in the governance system and that each member should actively participate. It was his feeling that you only get out what you put into an organization.

Misra reminded each member that they are voting members on commissions and it's their responsibility to not let resolutions get bogged down in those commissions. He also reminded the members that there is the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs which is chaired by a staff member.

Under Old Business, Phillips brought to the attention of the Senate a letter that was sent out concerning rescinding the user gym fees. He pointed out that the staff and faculty senates are partially responsible for these fees being rescinded.

Phillips then turned the meeting over to Senator Judy Davis who introduced those individuals who were running for the Senate representative to the Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs. They were: Spencer Allen, Joyce Longrie, Matt Martelli, and Nancy Phillips. She asked each nominee to stand and tell something about themselves. Davis then conducted the election. After the committee counted the ballots, Davis announced that Matt Martelli would be the Senate representative to the Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs.

In other new business, Phillips brought to the membership a suggestion from the Executive Committee to hold an open forum yearly for all classified staff to meet with university officials. He emphasized that this would not replace Staff Appreciation Day but would allow classified staff to ask questions about issues that pertain to staff.

Senator Chuck Shorter asked if both Staff Appreciation and the open forum could be added together. Phillips commented that he was not sure that Staff Appreciation Day was the best time because it was suppose to be a day to highlight the achievements and the contributions of the classified staff as a whole.

Senator Sasser said he was not sure that the classified staff would like the suggestion of combining it with Staff Appreciation Day, but did agree that it was important to have top university officials present for an open question and answer forum.

Senator Tom Hergert commented that it was the Executive Committee's thought that staff could get together with the university administration to discuss issues in an open forum.

Shorter asked if the Executive Board could at least have a brief introduction to the group at Staff Appreciation Day. He believed this would help promote Staff Senate and help classified staff understand what Senate is and who are the leaders.

Phillips responded by stating that it was the intention of the committee which put Staff Appreciation Day together to make it a fun day for the employees.

It was decided that Phillips will appoint, in consultation with the Executive Committee, an Ad Hoc committee to look at the possibility of an open forum which would not take the place of Staff Appreciation Day.

Next item of business was discussion of the possible closing of Spring Road. Phillips asked if the closing would have a major impact on classified staff? He indicated that it would directly impact him since he works in the Coliseum. He questioned as to whether or not this is an issue that Senate should address. Could this cause problems with emergency crews and others? Sasser indicated that if Spring Road is closed and traffic is rerouted to Duck Pond Road, there could be serious traffic problems due to limited visibility. He questioned whether or not Duck Pond Road could handle the increased traffic.

There was much discussion about the ability of Duck Pond Road handling the increased traffic.

Senator Cindy Harrison said that she had spoken with Mr. J.B. Sutphin who

indicated that the University is planning to break ground for moving Spring Road in the spring of 1996.

After much discussion, it was decided that each senator and alternate would go back to their association and ask for comments concerning Spring Road and send them to President Phillips. Once comments are received, a letter can be sent to administration letting them know of the impact on classified staff.

Under other business, Senator Tony Sutphin brought to the attention of the Senate a problem of electronic harassment directed towards Virginia Tech employees. He spoke with the University attorney which said that the current harassment policy includes both verbal and written communication. Sutphin cautioned the Senate members that they are responsible for their e-mail messages. He plans to take this issue to the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs concerning weaknesses in the current policy which does not address electronic mail.

Senator Widget Shannon commented on individuals putting offensive pictures on other individuals computers which pop up randomly. She believes this is an issue that should also be addressed when looking at the current policy.

A question was raised about chain mail being covered under the current policy. Phillips commented that chain mail is listed under the current policy and action could be taken against anyone violating that policy.

Moving on to other business, President Phillips asked Senator Wyatt Sasser to come forward for an announcement. Phillips' made the following comments:

"There are times in our lives when opportunities present us with some difficult decisions. I've had to make one of those decisions regarding my career. Unfortunately, as a result of my decision I will no longer be a classified employee, and therefore must resign as president of Staff Senate. I have accepted the position of Corporate Audit Manager with the Virginia Tech Related Corporations and Foundation, effective October 9. I have notified the Executive Committee accordingly, and I've arranged with Wyatt Sasser to resign as President of Staff Senate effective October 1.

It has been a pleasure to serve with you on Senate, and I appreciate the confidence you've placed in me by allowing me to serve as president this year. I regret that I will not be able to continue with you throughout this year, and apologize for the inconvenience that I will cause you. However, Wyatt and I are already working to make this a smooth transition as he will once again take over as president of Staff Senate.

I have come to know Wyatt well over the past year and highly respect this man, his vision, his morals, and his commitment to the classified staff and this university. Give him the same support that you have given me.

And finally, when you agreed to serve as a senator, and possibly as a representative to a council, commission, or committee, you made a commitment to represent the classified staff to the best of your ability. I charge you to do that. Don't be fooled into believing that you can't change things, that you can't improve the quality of the work environment for the classified staff. The only reason you can't is if you don't try.

And don't approach shared governance with an adversary attitude. It's not "us" against "them." Remember that as a partner in shared governance, we are a part of university management. We represent one third

of that governance team. Get to know the committee or commission that you have been appointed or elected to. Develop an understanding of their charge, their purpose. Learn what they can and cannot do within the governance structure and use that knowledge and understanding to work for the betterment of classified staff. Don't be afraid to make concessions along the way. Sometimes, you can gain an advantage later by conceding on a lesser issue today. Shared governance is give and take on everybody's part. We make progress one step at a time.

I've enjoyed working with you, and I'll miss Senate. Thank you."

Sasser commented that Phillips has started some very important things this year that needs to be followed through, and he and Phillips will be working together to make sure these things get done. Sasser looks forward to the challenge, and he and the Executive Committee will work together to make sure that this will be a very productive year. Sasser commented that it has been a pleasure to serve under Phillips and he is thankful for Phillips involvement in the Staff Senate.

President Phillips received a standing ovation from the senate membership.

There being no further business, Staff Senate was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Patti Hall
Staff Senate Secretary