

**MINUTES  
OF  
THE ADVISORY TASK FORCE  
AND  
THE FUTURES TASK FORCE  
OF  
MAGFest, Inc.**

The Advisory Task Force and the Futures Task Force of MAGFest, Inc. held a joint brainstorming session on May 8th at 7:19pm EST.

Otto the cockatiel kicked off the meeting by being literally the first one visible onscreen. I don't know if cockatiels eat worms, and thus I'm not sure if an "early bird gets the worm" reference would be appropriate.

The following Advisory members were present telephonically at the meeting: Bunny Smith, Jason Williams, and Allison Ruby.

The following Futures members were present telephonically at the meeting: Jack Boyd, Tim Macneil, Alex Yu, Shea Alexander, and Brian Putt.

Also present telephonically at the meeting were Eli Courtwright, Joel Attanasio, and Otter the dog, who were present as guests.

1. Bunny explains that Carrie won't be coming to this meeting because she has no power.
  - a. Eli says to tell Carrie that he considers her to be very empowered. Eli then immediately says, "Maybe don't actually tell her that, since she presumably means it literally and I don't want to make light of her power being out."
  - b. Bunny says, "Too late, I already sent it!"
2. Jack says, "...but I can respect some of the hate towards it. I can."
  - a. Eli wasn't paying attention and decided not to ask what led into that, since it makes a better line for the minutes if I include it with no context.
3. Bunny notes that Ruby has a case of bird-on-head.
  - a. Eli points out that Otto has a case of human-under-foot.
4. Bunny suggests that we plan MAGCon flow first and then work on questions. We already have three questions we know we're asking, so figuring out the way we're going to present them should probably be figured out first. After that, we can come up with more questions until we run out of time.
  - a. Otter burps in response. We've not recorded Otter's reactions in the past, since traditionally the behavior of birds is known as a source of augury and the behavior of dogs is not.

- b. Eli asks whether we should, but suggests that we only consider bird-augury, because “there’s a reason they don’t call it dogury.” (Eli’s wife Julie was the original source of that sentence.)
  - c. Bunny suggests that a good starting point is to ask, “Where do we think we are in the strategic planning process? Both overall and then also in terms of what each task force is doing.”
  - d. Jack agrees and asks, how much time do we have for our panel at Spring MAGCon?
  - e. Brian explains that we have 45 minutes to present (each committee individually plus presenting about the strategic plan), and then a 1 hour breakout session.
  - f. Alex suggests that because no one wants to sit through an introduction that takes 20 minutes, the 45 minute breakdown should probably be 10/10/25 in terms of intro/intro/strategic-plan.
  - g. Bunny notes that most of the people present will at least know about Advisory, because Spring MAGCon is where we usually get our most engaged volunteers.
  - h. Jack wonders whether that’ll be true this year, since a lot of people literally have nowhere to go and nothing else to do. Plus, this year is an entirely online experience, so we might have a much larger and more varied attendance.
  - i. Bunny suggests that we can make slides with our most relevant information (names, committee purpose, examples of what we’re doing), and rush through the intro part. We want time to accommodate questions about the strategic plan, since people will probably want to ask a bunch of basic stuff about what it is. She asks whether someone can volunteer from each group to put together ~3 slides each with that kind of introduction.
  - j. Brian volunteers for Futures.
  - k. Ruby volunteers for Advisory.
  - l. Alex suggests that we put together a shared slide.
  - m. Ruby suggests that she and Brian sync up after the meeting to do this.
  - n. Otto chirps happily in apparent agreement.
  - o. Jack says that it’s okay to go over three slides if the only thing on most of the slides is just pictures of the task force members.
5. Bunny suggests overarching topics for the strategic plan presentation: “What is a strategic plan?” and “What is the utility of a strategic plan to the organization?” She asks whether there’s a shared Google drive with all committees.
- a. Jack says no, but there should be.
  - b. At least three different people simultaneously create a shared drive because they each assume that no one else was going to do it. The group then realizes that this happened.
  - c. Alex says, “This is parallelization at its finest.”
6. Bunny starts off saying what she thinks a strategic plan means. “The company and our events have a set of goals they are reaching towards. Having a strategic plan makes it easier to direct our actions and funding so that it’s focused towards those goals.”

- a. Jason's take is that our strategic planning process creates a document that the organization can refer to while making challenging decisions. It keeps us focused on the organization's spirit and mission and helps us communicate why we're doing what we're doing.
- b. Ruby says that the big picture version is, "Where are we now and where do we want to go?"
- c. Otto chirps very excitedly.
- d. Alex says, MAGFest has always been by, with, and for volunteers, and we want to understand those values and how to stay true to them, so that we can continue catering to them in the future, but even better.
- e. Eli notes that when we put together our Core Values document, one of the first steps was asking volunteers "What makes MAGFest special?" The sentiments he's hearing now are similar.
- f. Bunny says, in a big way this is also about how we say no to things in a principled way. Or in some cases saying "yes but not right now" in a principled way. Like if we wanted to buy a MAGBoat so that we can launch a MAGCruise, then having a strategic plan allows us to adjudicate where that lies in our priority list relative to other short, medium, and long-term goals.
- g. Alex suggests that it should be a MAGYaucht.
- h. Eli agrees with Bunny's sentiment and gives an example: last year in the runup to Super, a local Barcode in the city of Baltimore asked us for some assistance. Eli felt at the time that the leadership wasn't really in a position to articulate to the office how this would fit into our short, medium, and long-term plans for the organization. Having a strategic plan would make it easier to make this kind of call in the future.
- i. Bunny says that putting all of this together, it sounds like we have enough to condense into a slide or two for the presentation at Spring MAGCon.
- j. Ruby says that she'd also like to see something about transparency in the slides, because we've been working to be more transparent at the top levels of the organization, so our presentation should mention and reflect that.
- k. Bunny suggests that along those lines, we should probably say how we're going to integrate volunteers into the planning process.
- l. Ruby asks, does it make sense to show something like a tree graph of our process? For example, showing that we plan on talking to Division Heads, Department Heads, front-line volunteers, etc.
- m. Bunny answers, probably yes, and we can link to some of the nonprofit resources that we started with as well.
- n. Ruby says that she learns well from examples, so we could say something like, "Here's an example of how we used this framework to make a decision." Or perhaps in this case, "Here's how we will do that once our strategic plan exists."
- o. Alex suggests that we should also try to communicate how accessible we are and how many different ways the volunteer community can get in touch with us. There are different channels: Slack, email, phone, Discord, etc. We want

volunteers to be able to reach out to any of us through any of those channels. And we're also going to be reaching out to them as part of this process as well.

- p. Brian asks, do we want to list how we are transparent? Like, how will this information be available to people?
  - q. Ruby suggests that even if we don't have shareable documents by the time we present, we can at least walk people through how we've expanded so far, from Board to Advisory to Futures, and then say how we plan to reach out further going forward.
  - r. Jack agrees and suggests that we can also say, "Here's a link to [SPIN](#), we're basically using this process."
  - s. Bunny says, "I'm an attorney, so I'm always in favor of 'cite your sources'."
  - t. Jason says, the key to transparency is always about walking people through how you made the decision.
  - u. Eli replies, linking to the meeting minutes can be an expanded version of showing how we made decisions, for anyone who wants to read through dozens of pages of discussion and also a lot of bird jokes.
  - v. Jack agrees - it seems good to have both a short summary to present and also having the longer record for people who want to dive in.
7. Bunny says that she'd like to eventually do "focus groups" with different groups (Department Heads, random volunteers, etc), and letting people know that they'll eventually have the opportunity to be involved in that way can make them more supportive of the process.
- a. Alex suggests that we give people at MAGCon something they can immediately fill out that says, "I would like to be on the short list of people you contact about this."
  - b. Brian suggests a Google Form, though he says that might be too targeted to be the best solution.
  - c. Alex says that sometimes we need to have a discussion, and Slack is great for that. But it's also easy for a Slack channel to turn into a complaint-fest, so we'd probably need moderation.
  - d. Bunny agrees - she's definitely seen that happen before. And we definitely want feedback from the people who would be leaving those complaints, but Slack is a poor medium for having those discussions, compared to meetings and focus groups where we can have real conversations.
  - e. Jack also agrees and says that his main concern is that opening a Slack channel to everyone will make it harder to do our surveys and meetings and focus groups in our planned waves. For example, we want to talk to Division Heads, then Department heads, then general volunteers. But if people are having discussions about the questions and their answers in Slack before most of those people have actually been contacted, then that creates pre-existing notions in people's minds before we actually ask them.

- f. Nugget asks, do we want to create public summaries of what our takeaways were from each group as we go onto subsequent groups? Like “here were the themes we took away from talking to div heads?”
  - g. Bunny says, this will probably be easier with the earlier groups, since the people in leadership positions will have more of a high-level point of view on various topics. Thus, it’ll be easier to take away general opinions on the state of things. Whereas low-level volunteers will have valuable opinions, but it’ll be more specific and granular and less likely to be about the overall state of the organization.
  - h. Eli quotes Pablo Picasso: “When art critics get together they talk about Form and Structure and Meaning. When artists get together they talk about where you can buy cheap turpentine.”
  - i. Ruby says, we should make sure to tell people that we’ll have different ways to submit feedback: Slack and email and meetings, etc.
  - j. Nugget says that he would still like to see a designated Slack channel where people can share feedback specifically about our Spring MAGCon presentation.
8. Brian asks, who is actually putting together the slides for the strategic plan portion of our 45-minute presentation?
- a. Bunny nominates Alex.
  - b. Brian seconds.
  - c. Jack says that he can work with Alex if that would help.
  - d. The motion passes and the work is assigned to Alex. (Editor’s note: I’m not 100% sure that Alex agreed to this, but he didn’t object.)
9. Bunny says, it sounds like we have our MAGCon presentation, unless anyone disagrees. The people working on the strategic plan portion can go through the raw notes as a reference so they don’t have to remember what everyone said. So the best thing for us to do next in this meeting is probably to pick out questions we want to ask in the 1-hour breakout session. She suggests that we want at least 5 questions and we want them in numbered order so that we can do the most important ones first. Her top pick is, “How important is it to you that Super is 24 hours?”
- a. Ruby says, there could be good discussion around that question.
  - b. Eli suggests that if we wanted to make sure a bunch of people come to the breakout session, we could “tease” that question in our 45-minute presentation. A lot of people would probably show up to discuss it, because people have very strong opinions about Super being a 24-hour event.
  - c. Alex asks, do we want top 10 questions?
  - d. Eli says, 10 questions for a 1 hour session is 6 minutes per question, so there’s no way we’d ever rush through them that fast.
  - e. Ruby says that she’d rather have only 5 questions, but then have follow-ups or sub-questions. We’ll be more likely to get more discussion out of people, and that’ll make it more of a conversation.
  - f. Otto chirps happily.

- g. Eli notes that we only really hear Otto right after Ruby finishes speaking, since Ruby is leaving her microphone muted at other times. And Otto seems pretty happy tonight. Which means that basically there's a bunch of "Ruby says something, and then Otto agrees" which will appear in the minutes.
  - h. Jason agrees with Otto, who had just agreed with Ruby, which by the transitive property means that Jason agrees with Ruby. If we're not getting a lot of responses on one of our top 5 questions, we have a couple of bullet points about things we say to solicit more answers.
  - i. Tim says, in wording these questions, can we specify when we're talking about Super and not MAGFest the organization, without making it too wordy?
  - j. Bunny says yes, but most of the questions probably aren't limited to Super.
  - k. Bunny lists the questions we currently have highlighted, which we then order as a group:
    - i. What sets Super MAGFest apart from other events in your opinion?
    - ii. What 1 thing if removed from MAGFest would cause you to stop volunteering?
    - iii. How important is it to you that Super is 24 hours?
    - iv. Do you think MAGFest should have more focus on the community outside of events?
    - v. When/If you invite your friends and family to a Magfest event that haven't attended, how do you describe it to them?
  - l. Bunny suggests that we should come up with sub-questions.
  - m. Ruby suggests, for the "how do you describe it to friends/family" question, one of us could step in to do that ourselves to prompt discussion. She also adds a sub-question: "what do they say when you describe MAGFest to them? Do they say it sounds awesome or do they think it sounds weird?"
  - n. Bunny suggests, for the "outside of events" question, Tim could describe some of the partnerships that he's worked on.
  - o. Tim agrees.
10. Jack asks, will anyone be the primary presenter for the main intro?
- a. Alex asks, who's interested in talking?
  - b. Bunny nominates herself as a default presenter because "I like the sound of my own voice". (Editor's note: Bunny said this in the most deadpan tone I've possibly ever heard from her.)
  - c. Brian asks, do we know what presentation software we're using?
  - d. Eli says that he believes it's Zoom, but he's had a lot of meetings recently and the details all kind of run together. Time is a flat circle and who can say what even is real anymore.
  - e. Bunny assigns Nugget the action item to figure out what presentation software is used.
11. Brian asks, when do we want the slides ready for review? Does the end of day on Tuesday work?

- a. Ruby says that works. (Editor's note: she actually shook two thumbs up at the camera a lot, but I didn't write down whether there was still a bird sitting on her head when she did that.) She then asks, is everyone okay with her adding a lot of clipart?
  - b. Jack says yes, and maybe Ruby can suggest more clipart for the strategic plan slides.
- 12. Bunny says, "I think we've come to the end of our usefulness here."
  - a. Eli says, that's the most threatening way that Bunny has ever ended a meeting! That's what a supervillain says before she murders you!
- 13. There being no other business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at 8:43pm.