

This is Matt Lavine '97. This is a raw, unofficial, approximate, and in no way perfect partial transcript of the public meeting held on June 15. At various times the buffering was interrupted, or I was unable to hear clearly. Where material appears in quotation marks, I believe I've quoted the person verbatim, but this should NOT be attributed to the speaker in any other forum without some other kind of verification. Everything else is my paraphrase, with all the unintentional editorial judgment that implies. This document is provided strictly on an FYI basis and is subject to change and deletion without notice.

Caveat lector.

THE VIDEO OF THE MEETING IS NOW AVAILABLE at
<http://client.stretchinternet.com/client/kenyonadmin.portal#> under the "ON DEMAND" tab.
PLEASE REFER DIRECTLY TO THAT rather than relying on this.

Georgia Nugent (GN): "We want to be respectful of people's time here"

Thank you for coming; "we're here to discuss a decision that has been made"

this is part of "A series of efforts we have been making to inform the community"
--also two messages, meetings with PACT and the faculty, plus the next one w/Mark

First, what exactly is it that we're discussing:

"Kenyon's decision to enter into a contract with Sodexo"

"would affect 8 of our current managerial personnel"

"would affect the 23 members of the skilled trades union" who "would then negotiate with Sodexo" -- "That's the matter at hand."

Barry Schwartz (BS):

At this point, the facts "have now been provided to you"

I didn't join Kenyon as a Trustee; I came here as a student in 1969

800 men, no women, no social sciences, shaky finances

"I came to know the distinctiveness of KC, the magic of KC, the friendship and rigor which mark a Kenyon education, and the intimacy which is what Kenyon is all about. Kenyon changed my life; it changed the life of many others"

Joined the board in 2000, became chair last year—I've got almost 50 years here. [sic]

Today, things are different—coed, social sciences are in now, we're financially sound, but "we are not flush." We do more with less. Today we outsource things that we didn't used to.

The friendship and rigor and intimacy haven't changed, though.

"The admin. choice to outsource ... is a good one. It's a fiscally responsible choice. It is potentially enhancing to our mission here." makes it more accessible to those who otherwise couldn't afford. It "was done sensitive to the needs of our loyal, devoted workforce." We could have saved more money if "sensitivity to the workforce was not paid, and in fact it was."

Kenyon has limited resources. Kenyon has unlimited needs. Choices have to be made... "the administration spends an inordinate amount of time preparing a budget that is then reviewed and discussed with the board..." As a result we have a first rate program, diverse student body, wonderful teachers. "The college could have made other choices. It could have raised tuition It could have reduced the workforce. It could have ignored" the facilities problems. "To its great credit," the administration chose not to do that—Board of Trustees regards this as fiscally sound.

GN: Open for questions.

From twitter>> Who is Kenyon's rep that is responsible for overseeing Sodexo?

GN>> Mark Kohlman.

Microphone>> You say that eight on the staff "have agreed" to join Sodexo; that's not true because we weren't asked. We were simply told. You (GN) weren't at that meeting. I want people to know we weren't asked; it was sprung on us. [Applause]

GN>> "My understanding was that there were negotiations that followed with those individual employees" to make it "a smooth and attractive" transition.

Microphone>> Is there anything the union can do to make you reconsider, and if not why not.

GN>> Others have asked. Why not just a consultant, etc. The answer is that what we are attempting to do is to provide access for the college to large systems of data management that we simply don't have the capacity for at Kenyon. Were we to try to find a way to do that internally... that would simply be an ongoing process of expenditures of \$100,000s annually. An individual effort on-campus is no longer adequate.

BS>> Nothing to add.

Microphone>> Bob Smith, union president. In the statement, the College mentioned that there was careful consideration given to this. "Careful consideration and Sodexo... how do those [get reconciled?]..." Everyone can see that there's problems there. Also, where are the \$500K in savings coming from? You said at the faculty meeting you didn't know where it came from.

GN>> I didn't say that. I expressed in writing that savings will come from greater purchasing

power, from less use of contractors. The details are what I don't know as well as Mark Kohlman does. I'm not negotiating every detail of the contract.

As for consideration and Sodexo, let me respond with some less readily disseminated information. Sodexo has 800 university partners. Many have been with Sodexo for many years—Denison for 40. They report to us that retention is 98.5% with colleges. The average length of their contract is >10 years. I've been talking with presidents of other colleges, and asking about their staff members' satisfaction. Every president I've asked "are your staff members happy with Sodexo" has said yes. We had ARAMark for 25 years; many people would say that was a good relationship. They remember the ARAMark manager fondly. There are the same accusations made about ARAMark; this is what happens with large corporations; they get allegations made.

Matt Lavine, via twitter>> Has a contract already been signed? What would be involved in withdrawing? Is this for any other reason a done deal?

BS>> "The economic terms and conditions have been negotiated. There's some language which is being resolved." The contract will be concluded over the next week.

Union secretary>> Why wasn't the whole Board of Trustees involved? This is a major [thing]

BS>>> It's not fiscally sound to have a free-ranging discussion about this. [[??—buffering]]

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GN>> We are a college with limited resources and unlimited needs. We are heavily tuition-dependent. 75 cents on the dollar comes from tuition. We don't think it's reasonable or possible to keep raising tuition. Another source of resources are gifts. As you all know, we just completed a tremendously successful capital campaign. We don't see this as being an economy in which supporters of the college are going to be able to give much more. Consequently, we need to look at ways to lower our own internal costs. In fact, that has been going on. There have been many creative cost-cutting solutions resulting in millions of savings. This is not a strong economy; we're going to have to continue to economize. "We are trying to do that without losing our people. We believe this is a solution that follows that principle"

Union treasurer>> Concerning job security, how much control will the college have? Can we be transferred? Will you be able to protect our human rights, labor rights?

GN>> We do not tolerate labor violations or mistreatment of our workers. We hire Sodexo, not the other way around. We determine the terms. Some union members said before that we weren't a fair workplace, but now you want to remain with us because we are? I'm talking to

other colleges about their satisfaction with Sodexo and getting positive responses. If that doesn't happen here, Sodexo will have violated their contract and we won't stand for that.

UT>> So they'd be out of their contract?

GN>> Yes.

UT>> With the other 23 of us, would we go with them?

GN>> No.

UT>> That's good to hear.

GN>> One of the things we believe may be an advantage is that of promoting employees into managerial positions. Some of our employees might welcome the opportunity to be promoted—you can't get that with a small employer like Kenyon. This might provide opportunities.

Maintenance employee>> We were told that this WILL be affecting the maintenance union in 2 years. What does "comparable" mean [in terms of certain benefits]? Will we still get our current sick time, vacation time, will our accumulated sick time be honored?

GN>> We believe that the benefits are comparable. It is not the case that we are intending to, how can I say this, your existing contract continues for two years. At the end of that period it will be up to your union [[[buffering]]]... and the college to determine what [[[buffering]]] best next step is. That's something that [[[buffering]]] a hypothetical at this point. What we do know [[[buffering]]] is that whenever a contract is renegotiated, we will want to be offering workers fair and appropriate treatment and compensation.

Maintenance employee>> What we've been told isn't comparable. Specifically, retirement, insurance, GLCA, are those going to remain the same and intact?

GN>> For current employees, GLCA remains intact. [prompted] Sodexo pays in a smaller amount than Kenyon does. [prompted] 3% towards pension.

Dennis Painter>> I've been here 20 years as maintenance union rep. I have dealt with Sodexo now and in the past 18 years. All the things you hear how nice things are isn't true. For example, their insurance is extremely high. Only about 20% of the workforce can afford coverage. Their pension will never compare to what these guys have now. I speak for the workers that you didn't talk to, that would rather have a better life than what sodexo provides. The union is opposed because we believe this is a chopping up of the Kenyon community. Some of these guys have been here for 40 years. We have differences of opinion, but who doesn't in a workforce? We resist because it's detrimental to Kenyon AND to our workforce. We

talk to workers, not management about Sodexo. I don't mean to be disrespectful but I see this as damage control with not enough information to the community. We weren't given a choice. We were given a proposal, which we rejected, and were told "too bad, we've made our decision." That's not a negotiation. We're being discharged without cause. Our current agreement says that subcontracting would be limited and we wouldn't lose our jobs. We regard this as being discharged. Sodexo's track record—how can you allow a for profit company with a bad reputation and say you're saving money and justify it.

BS>> May I ask you a question? Where's the "elsewhere"?

DP>> Wright State. My understanding of Kenyon is that there is compassion here, or there was, that this is a community, and that there is a belief that corporate policies shouldn't exist here. How do you divorce yourself from your immediate family?

GN>> I believe you're misrepresenting certain things. Look at outsourced dining services: through three companies, we have employees that have been here 30 years. I think your assumptions aren't borne out.

DP>> So you've done it.. Do you have to continue to do it? These guys are feeling abandoned, discharged. I don't think it's fair to the college or community—I've been doing this 35 years---most employers come to the union and say we have economic problems and we need to correct them. This didn't happen. We got a slip of paper saying your employment is over in August. That's not caring about your employees. Management is part of the issue.

BS>> We only have until 12:30.

DP>> Sorry, but someone needs to say these things. Thanks for the people who support these guys. [[Applause.]]

Custodial worker>> My girl just graduated high school and is going to college. What do I tell her? Does she go 2 years, 4 years?

GN>> The GLCA tuition benefit is something we're going to have to think hard about in the future. I can't tell you now. It will be very much on our minds as we go forward.

Jacob Smith via twitter: >> Why will this contract be completed before next week's forum?

BS>> I may have gotten ahead of the date but I believe that the contract is imminent.

GN>> Part of the forum with Mark is about providing answers about specific terms.

Twitter>> Is there a way to negotiate GLCA benefits going forward?

GN>> That's what I was alluding to just now.

Jenny Beck>> I'm a GLCA tuition student. This is supposed to be about information—I get the sense you don't have it all, or you're not giving it out. With this going through, is there any way that we can have transparency on what we'll get vs. what we have now? Can we get that out there?

GN>> Yes. We can be explicit about that, a table.

Joe Hall, UE 712>> Given the overwhelming objection from the community, are you going to continue on? Is this a done deal?

GN>> This is a decision of the administration. "They're not made by alumni and the entire Kenyon community. There are some managerial decisions that are made by the management." As I said in the forum, consider what kind of employer Kenyon HAS been. The benefits provided since I came here. Week off at Christmas, the child care center, the staff rep. That's not a history where we penalize our employees.

Jenn Maxwell>> All this talk of fiscal responsibility. Kenyon is a community; these are people. We haven't spoken about that fact. We are upset because it's us. We need to acknowledge that.

GN>> I do acknowledge that, thank you. I've been trying to say that you won't cease to be members of the community. Look at the Deli, the VM folks. They don't get a paycheck from Kenyon. Are they not part of the community? To assume that because there's a different entity on the paycheck is going to do away with the members of our community, I don't share that assumption.

Anthro faculty member>> Thanks for doing this, but there's a distinction we need to make here. These workers might still be part of the Gambier community, but not maybe the Kenyon community, which comes from being on the same team. One element of community is shared sacrifice. Why weren't other people asked to make this sacrifice, instead of just maintenance [applause] \$4000 raise across the board for faculty—I can use the money, but now I feel guilty about it when our maintenance colleagues are going to be outsourced. If the financial exigencies are this severe, it would have been nice if the faculty had been asked to make some sacrifice, as we always have. Cutting people off but keeping them employed by others, we start paring away the community. In the future, Kenyon might just be the faculty and the administration, and I think that's a terrible message of exclusion. [[applause]]

GN>> Thanks. ...for about 10 years, Kenyon salaries were consistently falling behind. We were losing faculty to competitors. [[at this point, I had to move to a noisier place and could not type and listen at the same time--sorry]]

BS >> lengthy response, inaudible

Custodial worker>> Are you going to be here more often in the future to oversee this new company?

GN>> I'm here all the time.

Custodial worker>>We're not here to get rich. We're doing this because we care. We're dedicated, but we're going to lose that.

GN>> I appreciate your comments. That's what's special about Kenyon. But I don't share the assumption that this will go away with Sodexo. I'll investigate Wright State. But I think this is a reasonable employment situation for our workers.

Maint. office staff>> You said no jobs were being lost, and that we were hiring Sodexo. Kenyon is terminating us. Sodexo is hiring us. How can you control what they do?

GN>> A contract is the way you do that. We've written provisions into the contract.

Maint. office staff>> Can we see that contract?

GN>> I have to get legal counsel on that. I don't know that they can be made public.

It's about time to conclude.

???>> Will all union members receive a severance package from the College?

GN>> I don't know. That will be negotiated with the union.

Dr. Urban, anthro>> No use asking Presidents of colleges about how satisfied their maintenance workers are. Chartwell, ARA, ESCO—Sodexo's competitors—these multinational companies and their misdeeds are relevant. But even they're better than Sodexo in terms of human rights violations. IF we grant the need for outsourcing, why Sodexo? There are other companies, maybe local or US, or even multinational, this could be done better by others. Why would we want to associate ourselves with a company like this? [[applause]]

GN> You've provided some information previously about all this. We've been in contact with Sodexo to inquire about these things. We'll share the results.

Urban>> Not everyone outsources all this stuff, either, and those that do don't always pick Sodexo. [[applause]]

GN>>Thank you all for coming. It's our intention to continue to provide information online as we get answers to some of these questions.

