

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

A regular brainstorming session of the Advisory Task Force of MAGFest, Inc., a Maryland corporation (the "**Company**"), was held telephonically on February 3rd at 2:11pm EST.

The following members were present telephonically at the meeting: Bunny Smith, Jack Boyd, Joel Attanasio, Mark Murnane, and Tom Hyre

Also present telephonically at the meeting were Eli Courtwright, Josiah Tillett, Nick Marinelli, and Emily Hickman who were present as guests.

1. Eli made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Joel seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
2. Eli summarizes the questions concerning the election that we have to discuss:
 - a. Last time, the election was a non-binding referendum. However, many people felt like this signaled that the BoD wasn't taking the election seriously. Should the BoD promise at the beginning of the election process that it will definitely appoint the winner to the BoD?
 - b. Last time, there was a strict ban on "campaigning". No doing Q&A sessions in Slack, no Youtube campaign videos, etc. The concern was that things might get ugly and counterproductive. Should we continue this ban, or open things up now that we've seen that we had a successful election without any hints of ugliness?
 - c. Who should be eligible to run in the election? In particular, should people who are NOT volunteers in good standing be eligible to run? For example, if someone has been banned from volunteering, should they still be able to run for a seat on the BoD? On the one hand, saying that someone is not eligible to volunteer but is eligible to serve on the BoD seems wrong and counterproductive. On the other hand, allowing the BoD to basically decide who is and isn't allowed to run might be seen by some as undermining the purpose of the election in the first place.
3. Regarding the campaigning question, Jack says that he thinks people should be able to say whatever they want about themselves. Our only concern would be attacking other candidates.
4. Joel says, any restrictions on campaigning will require us to be very clear about what "campaigning" actually means. For example, one of the candidates sent an email last year to all of the regdesk staffers, which wasn't taken well by some people.

- a. To make this situation more confusing, the candidate had specifically asked the Election Committee if this was an okay thing to do and was told that it was... but then a different Election Committee member told people when asked that they weren't aware of this having happened. So having well-defined procedures in advance can prevent this kind of confusion.
 - b. Nick says he agrees in principle, but he wonders how we can actually define this well enough to be clear and then actually enforce restrictions.
 - c. Jack says, maybe the rule is you can only talk about yourself and not others.
 - d. Eli says, this isn't a bad idea, but [The Fairsley Difference](#) is a thing, which is based on an actual Supreme Court case. "Bayer does not dilute the strength of its aspirin. Bayer aspirin is full strength!" (What do you mean, we never mentioned anyone else, how could it be slanderous?)
 - e. Jack wonders if the Election Committee could pre-approve all messaging.
 - f. Nick says, this might create too much work for the Election Committee. However, if we just restrict whatever they do to being on the election committee website, then it's at least easier to enforce.
5. Mark points out that last year one of the departments decided to vote in a block, so they called up all of the candidates and asked, "What are you going to do for us?" Even to the point of asking about what kind of MAGFest money would be spent on projects they wanted.
- a. Joel says maybe we need rules about the voting community and what they're allowed to do. The Election Committee should probably just have the authority to decide these things without us deciding in advance.
6. Eli asks if there's a consensus on what we should recommend. A next step is that Eli will take things to the BoD and someone else can take the action item to reach out to the Election Committee.
- a. Nick says he still feels worried about Slack because it's easy for things to spiral out of control and also it advantages people who are able to be on Slack more. He's not worried about what people put on their own websites, but there should probably be restrictions on emails.
 - b. Josiah agrees with email restrictions being a good idea, since in the past people got emailed by mistake due to their status not being up to date.
 - c. Jack agrees, and wonders if the system could have an opt into emails, perhaps about particular topics.
 - d. Bunny says emailing people for a campaign raises legal issues with GDPR and the upcoming California equivalent, since it's arguably an advertisement. She agrees about the concerns with Slack. She's okay with emails, but there should probably be a per-candidate limit.
 - e. Nick suggests: two places you can campaign:
 - i. The election website.
 - ii. The election could send out a weekly mailer which can include a weekly statement from each candidate - everyone can choose to include or not include a statement in each mailer. Maybe a length restriction?

- f. Jack says, as long as the election committee can choose to NOT approve one of the statements, and there's some kind of length limit.
 - g. Bunny agrees with the length limit, and suggests a word/page limit.
 - h. Jack says, he hopes there won't be back and forth with people responding to each other, since that probably leads to people attacking one another.
 - i. Bunny agrees, but notes that there are positive versions of that, which involve communication about their own departments. She wonders if the election committee has signed up for this kind of weekly policing.
 - j. Joel says, given that the election lasts for a few months, weekly emails seem like too much. We probably don't need more than 2-3 emails throughout.
 - k. Jack asks how long the election asks.
 - l. Eli links to the document and says there are basically 3 phases, so at most one email in each phase seems good enough, and even that might be more than necessary.
7. Eli asks about non-binding referendums.
- a. Bunny says non-binding referendums are always going to be her preference because she's a cautious attorney.
 - b. Jack says he always wants to give whoever wins a chance, and we can always vote them out if they're trolling.
 - c. Eli says, according to our bylaws anyone can be voted out at any time. This applies equally to elected and non-elected members.
 - d. Bunny says that's true, so long as we give 5 days notice and have an actual meeting agenda and have a real meeting, not just a quorum of people who happen to be in one room.
 - e. Joel says, it could be difficult to publish notes/proof/accusations about trolliness. For the same reason why we don't share HR details about people, there's a moral issue at stake. Even if someone has been deliberately disruptive, sharing details of someone's misbehavior with the community might be the wrong thing to do.
 - f. Bunny says, there's definitely witch hunt potential there. If the Board votes someone out and publishes something negative about them, it makes the person being voted out a target, which is not something we want even if they're not right for the Board.
 - g. Eli says he's less worried about this whole issue than he used to be because of all of the BoD sub-committees such as this one. Two years ago, the core BoD members did a lot more work than they do now, because we've succeeded in getting more volunteers involved. So right now, instead of one bad egg making up ~20% of the BoD, it's now more like 5% of the membership of all of these combined groups, and we're still not done creating sub-committees.
8. Joel says, this general question ties into the eligibility issue. If someone stopped being a staffer in good standing during their term, are they still on the Board?
- a. Eli says yes, that's how our bylaws work.
 - b. Joel says, that seems right. Jack agrees.

9. Eli asks Bunny how strongly she feels about non-binding referendums.
 - a. Bunny says, not incredibly strongly, as long as we have faith in the election system.
 - b. Nick says, if a troll gets elected, we have larger issues about how we're running things in general. Eli agrees.
10. Eli brings up eligibility requirements.
 - a. Nick says, there are sometimes people who are allowed to volunteer but not allowed to be a department head, or who are in some other kind of probation.
 - b. Jack says, as we've explained it, those people should be allowed to run, at least as currently written in the existing rules.
 - c. Joel says, he doesn't think former employees should be able to run if they've been paid within the past year year, e.g. Dom shouldn't be able to run.
 - d. Nick says contractors can run, e.g. Colette ran last time.
 - e. Joel says employees shouldn't be considered volunteering while being paid, and hopes that expressing this opinion doesn't make him unpopular. However, he feels that when you're working for MAGFest while being paid to work on MAGFest then that's not the same as volunteering.
 - f. Eli says, expressing that kind of opinion won't make you unpopular! The whole point of the Advisory Task Force is to get together to share this kind of idea, and if everyone agreed all the time then it might be a bad sign.
 - g. Bunny, Jack and Nick all agree strongly.
 - h. Bunny further says there's merit to Joel's point as far as how volunteering is defined by the IRS. For example, it's a regulatory violation if a contractor does paid work and then "volunteers" to do additional work of the same type for free.
 - i. Nick asks, how much of a concern is this? For example, this would exclude Ashley from running if she wanted to, which undercuts the amount of goodwill she's earned.
 - j. Jack agrees.
 - k. Mark says, we'd have to take an active action to deliberately exclude them from the export, since they get included by default from Uber. He also notes that there's already a rule excluding current employees.
 - l. Jack asks if everyone agrees that former employees should always be able to run.
 - m. Bunny says, she'd rather say no to everyone than only say yes to some people.
 - n. Jack disagrees and thinks it's better to give people a chance. In general, he feels that everyone who is able to volunteer in any capacity should be able to run for the election if they want to.
 - o. Mark says, he feels like employee is the wrong place to draw the line about this. We should figure out if there are general categories we want to exclude and then be consistent about those principles.
 - p. Eli says, how about people who have had disciplinary actions taken against them, e.g. someone is removed from a leadership position but is still allowed to

volunteer, or someone is allowed to volunteer but has been specifically excluded from certain departments, etc.

- q. Jack says, that seems like a reasonable place to draw the line.
 - r. Josiah says, maybe “disciplinary action within the past year” is a good way to define it.
 - s. Jack wonders if that will lead to people perceiving things as being corrupt, e.g. they’ll think that someone was excluded, so maybe they can appeal to the Election Committee.
 - t. Joel agrees that an appeals process would be good.
 - u. Bunny says the Advisory Task Force AND the Election Committee as a combined group should be the ones to handle it.
 - v. Tom says, he agrees - that seems implicit in our mandate.
 - w. **Action item for Joel:** communicate this idea to the Election Committee and see if they agree and ask if they want to have a follow-up meeting with us about it.
11. Eli asks if we have consensus on “disciplinary action” being the place where we’re drawing the line on eligibility to run.
- a. Bunny says she objects to former employees being eligible to run until they’ve volunteered enough in their post-employment period to be eligible in the normal way.
 - b. Joel agrees.
 - c. Tom says he doesn’t have a strong opinion either way, but that makes sense to him.
 - d. Jack says he would prefer for former employees to be eligible immediately, but as the only person with this opinion he’s willing to set aside his objection and let this rule be the recommendation of this group.
 - e. Nick says he’s not comfortable with voicing his opinion on this since he’s the Executive Director and he feels like his position makes commenting on this difficult due to his professional relationship with the current and former employees.
12. Eli mentions some things that the Election Committee has asked for, and we create action items for them.
- a. **Action item for Eli:** create a new #election_and_advisory channel in Slack.
 - b. **Action item for Bunny:** provide a current list of all BoD bylaw changes.
 - c. **Action item for Bunny:** find the raw meeting notes from the meeting where Adam was officially voted onto the Board and publish a cleaned up version to the MAGNomicon.
13. Eli summarizes the recommendations which have come out of this discussion:
- a. We recommend that campaigning continue to be kept out of Slack.
 - b. We’re not particularly concerned about what people put elsewhere on the internet, e.g. on campaign websites or Youtube channels.
 - c. We think it’s probably best if candidates don’t send out campaign emails. To the extent that reaching out to the electorate during the phases of the election would be useful, it would be better for the election committee to collect and aggregate

messages from candidates and send them out periodically (at most 2-3 times over the course of the election).

- d. We think the BoD should promise to appoint whoever wins the election rather than advertising it as a non-binding referendum.
 - e. We think eligibility for voting should remain unchanged.
 - f. We think eligibility for running in the election should be changed slightly: in addition to excluding current employees we think that "volunteers in good standing" should exclude active volunteers who have had disciplinary action taken against them, i.e. people who are in some way "on probation".
 - g. As requested, the Election Committee should be provided with a complete list of everyone who is not eligible for this kind of reason, whether it's because they were banned from staffing or because they are not currently "in good standing".
 - h. The Election and Advisory Task Force should be able to jointly handle any appeals in these cases. Since there are no BoD members on the Advisory Task Force or the Election Committee, this maintains a healthy separation of powers, so to speak.
 - i. Regardless of the above, it's our recommendation that time spent staffing while someone is a MAGFest employee doesn't count as "volunteering" since they were being paid to do it. Therefore, a former employee would need to qualify for eligibility after they left their MAGFest employment.
 - j. **Action item:** Eli to share this with the BoD.
 - k. **Action item:** Joel to share this with the Election Committee.
14. Jack asks if Josiah should be part of this group automatically in his role as head of Stops.
- a. Josiah asks, as a member or a permanent invite? He would be honored to serve in either capacity, but would prefer a permanent invite so he can focus on Stops and not be obligated to attend each meeting.
 - b. Everyone agrees that this sounds like a good idea.
 - c. **Action item:** Eli to update our documentation to add the head of Stops as an automatic optional invitee to all Advisory Task Force meeting.
15. Eli brings up the request from the Election Committee about a list of not-eligible people being shared in advance.
- a. This is because we got the following request from the Election Committee in Slack:
 - i. "I second the request for a specific list of people disallowed from staffing, with causes at least in a summary form, in as much detail as allowed. I totally get Dom's (and likely others') opposition to allowing them as candidates, but there's also an argument that allowing their candidacy gets pretty close to the heart of why we got into this process in the first place. I think the committee is going to have to be very thoughtful this time about exactly what our criteria are for eligible candidates, and this will be critical information for us to develop that policy."

- b. Eli says he thinks we shouldn't need to share details in advance, but we can do that as part of any appeals process.
 - c. Bunny says that seems fine - we can definitely share any details as things come up.
 - d. Joel says he'll talk to the Election Committee about this issue as part of his action item to reach out to them.
- 16. Bunny mentions that she is now officially the MAGFest General Counsel. She doesn't believe this poses any kind of conflict of interest, but wanted to keep everyone in the loop.
 - a. Eli says, we currently have 5 pro-bono hours per month, so in theory she could rack up enough billable hours to cross the threshold for having a "significant financial relationship with MAGFest" but in practice that seems unlikely.
 - b. Jack says that seems fine - he only asks that the Advisory Task Force is informed if that ever happens so that he can take a vote about it. He notes that he would vote FOR Bunny to remain in this group if that ever happened, but he would want the vote to be part of the record just on general principle.
 - c. Bunny says that the BoD gets monthly bills, so Eli and Nick will know if/when that ever happens.
- 17. Eli asks when people want to adjourn the meeting and what else anyone wants to discuss, now that we've covered the Election questions.
 - a. Bunny says we should decide what we want to talk about in our next meeting.
 - b. Mark says he'd like to talk about the Safe Committee at some point.
 - c. Bunny says, she'd like us to do a thing at Spring MAGCon, like a meet and greet with the volunteers and ALL of the task forces.
 - d. For our next meeting specifically, Bunny says that in the month of March she'd like to talk about questions of security and Stops if Josiah can put that together by then.
 - e. Jack asks how much time it would take to go over the Stops questions now.
 - f. Josiah says it depends on how much we want to talk about it. We could spend a half hour on the whole thing or spend an hour and a half talking about specific issues, e.g. there were judgment calls he had to make that didn't feel 100% confident about in terms of the procedures being followed, so he'd like a review to standardize how various sorts of issues should be handled.
 - g. Jack suggests we talk about the basics now and then go into the details at the next meeting, if that wouldn't take that long.
 - h. Josiah says, one thing that happened this year which he hadn't seen before was that a department had trouble with underperforming staffers but didn't want to be the ones to fire them, so they asked Stops to come down and be the person to fire them. He did that 4-5 times over the weekend, most of that by Friday night.
 - i. Jack asks if Josiah was comfortable with that - he thinks it's fine if Josiah wants to take that on, but that shouldn't be required for the head of Stops to do in addition to everything else they already do.
 - j. Josiah says it was fine, he didn't mind doing it.

- k. The group entered executive session to talk about some specific examples of this happening.
18. Josiah says he still has a backlog of things to follow up on, mostly consisting of negative shift reviews. The backlog is 10-15 people, but it's not urgent until the next Super.
- a. Bunny asks about eligibility between events. She was told that someone can only be banned from a dept in Labs for past Labs behavior and not e.g. banned from staffing a department in Labs for behavior at Super.
 - b. Josiah says, dept heads should have discretion, e.g. even without bad behavior dept heads should be able to decide who works under them.
 - c. Nick suggests a topic for future discussion: distribution of emotional load. It shouldn't always be the office and Stops making the tough conversations.
 - d. Bunny says, that would be good - in the past she's felt uncomfortable making calls herself because of not knowing if she was empowered to do that, so having docs would be good to set expectations.
 - e. The task force entered executive session to discuss another specific case.
 - f. Nick says, the standards for when someone is allowed to volunteer is much higher than to attend the event.
 - g. Eli agrees and says "this person has a bad attitude and is a bad ambassador to the attendees" is a good enough reason to bar someone from volunteering even absent some kind of explicit misconduct.
 - h. Bunny says that's great, but we should document that, because she had the experience of having that suggestion turned down in the past!
 - i. Tom asks, where does that come from, the mentality that volunteering is a right and not a privilege? He never thought of it that way, but it sounds like that's something that a lot of people think.
 - j. Josiah says, there's a values issue at play and that's where it comes from, about there not being a lot of separation between attendees and volunteers, e.g. volunteers aren't on a pedestal.
 - k. Joel says, in the registration handbook there's a section that reads, "Volunteers are attendees with responsibilities but not privileges."
 - l. Josiah says that's not exactly right, since we DO give people privileges. But what Bunny describes in terms of being undermined also isn't right - department heads should definitely have authority over who gets to work in their departments.
 - m. Joel asks what privileges staffers get.
 - n. Jack says, hotel room! That's huge for a lot of people. There are also minor things like being able to get into the expo hall early, being able to use exits which are normally disallowed, etc.
 - o. Josiah says, most of that isn't explicitly decided, it just comes up because people need it in the moment.
 - p. Tom says yeah, he doesn't see that as privileges, he sees that as being given what you need to do your job. He literally could NOT have volunteered without hotel room and food. The fact that other cons don't provide those things like we do just means they're abusing their volunteers. The MAGFest mentality has

never been, “Here are the privileges you have earned for volunteering” but rather
“”Here is us giving you what you need in order to be able to volunteer effectively.”

- q. Jack says sure, but isn't that still a privilege when you get a hotel room and a non-volunteer doesn't?
 - r. Tom says, philosophically he doesn't think so. It's NOT compensation, we don't want to think of it as something you earn, rather it's us giving you what you need to do your job, and that difference really matters in terms of how we think of it and how we communicate it.
 - s. Joel says he was also talking about it from a semantics view. Some people try to see staffing as a right not a privilege, and that's something we need to communicate.
 - t. Josiah says, regardless of how we classify it, there's some level of things that aren't communicated well, like can you walk in back hallways, and who gets a staff shirt, and we have NOT done a good job clarifying this in the past. This leads to friction and ad-hoc decisions which are not consistent, which then leads to unintentional cliquishness.
 - u. Jack asks, what's the goal here? Like what are we trying to figure out w.r.t perks?
 - v. Josiah says, we're hitting our staffing capacity - we can't keep growing our staff past a certain point, and it would be helpful to define staff perks so that they'll be less arbitrary. He would like to see a group (maybe the Advisory Task Force) to get together to talk about this stuff.
 - w. The task force entered executive session about some more specific issues.
19. Nick explains that we plan on hiring a part-time Security Coordinator which would be responsible for coordinating:
- a. Dorsai
 - b. EMS
 - c. PGC Police
 - d. Safe Committee
 - e. Concert Security (probably)

This workload is more than what our Volunteer Coordinator can probably take on in addition to their other duties, and is more than what we can expect a volunteer to do.

Nick wonders what Dorsai do for security training.

Action item: Josiah to have a casual conversation with Rebar, asking what Dorsai do for security training.

There being no other business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at 5:33pm.