

Opinions

Hobart Student Government in Chaos

By Tim Hollinger '11
Opinions Editor

Quorum members left mid-meeting in disgust. The president, Ross Hicks, dropped the f-bomb as well as temporarily dismissing Robert's Rules of Order. Debate raged and tempers flared. Voting blocks re-emerged as pivotal tools, and Statesmen passionately quoted from the constitution. Tens of thousands of dollars were appropriated. The system was pushed to the breaking point, and the meeting exposed glaring problems in how the Hobart Student Government (HSG) operates. Despite all this, it was likely the most productive meeting in years.

In a historic vote, quorum members decided to allow William Smith students to stay in the room, only as observers, while Hobart students voted on proposals. This decision erased a precedent that had stood for almost two hundred years. In what appeared to be outrage, many Hobart traditionalists and longtime quorum members left the meeting after the vote. I understand the importance of tradition, and it was a major factor in why I chose to come to Hobart; however, we need to be able to distinguish between worthwhile traditions and outdated traditions.

Forcing our fellow female students to get up and leave the room like second class citizens while deans and other staff are allowed to stay as observers is an outdated tradition. I acknowledge that William Smith students could get more done as participants in their own government rather than as viewers of another government, but that doesn't mean Hobart deserves carte blanche to treat William Smith students like a segregated class. This dated process led to time delays, unnecessary commotion, and the ostracization of our fellow students. This latest move represents a leap in inclusiveness and transparency and should be celebrated, not spat on.

With the voting policy revised, the HSG was able to tackle the meat of the meeting. It began with an attack

on the Executive Board (E-board), who was accused of trying to take power away from the quorum. The E-board has certainly made mistakes while attempting to jam legislation through, and has often refrained from discussing proposed changes with everyone in the quorum; however, the learning curve has been steep, and the disorder of the meeting proved that, if anything, the E-board isn't using enough of its power.

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While in session, the men of the quorum should never be permitted to speak or scream over each other, use crude language, or make a mockery of the proceedings. The guidelines of Robert's Rules of Order should always be adhered to. Watching the HSG once again dissolve into petty bickering was painful, and should never again be permitted during proceedings. It is the E-board's responsibility to keep HSG meetings civil and open to all appropriate debate and discussion.

Crude behavior aside, during the course of the meeting a representative from the Inter-Fraternal Council (IFC) presented a proposal requesting that HSG fund non-alcoholic elements of fraternity parties. Even as a member of the community who is not involved in Greek life, I believe this is a great idea. Students should be provided with a safe place to party. It is irresponsible and potentially dangerous for us to pretend that students will not party merely because it is illegal. That being said, the proposal was still rife with problems and needs to be resubmitted.

The IFC originally presented

the proposal to the Budget Allocations Committee (BAC). In a breach of responsibility and faith, a staff member allegedly prematurely revealed the BAC's not-so-favorable results to a member of the IFC. As a result, the IFC scrambled to present the same proposal to HSG, without hearing or understanding why the BAC couldn't provide the funding, and then making the necessary changes. The IFC should receive funding, but they need to provide dates and details (as in themes) of proposed events. This would ensure quorum members that student tax dollars are being used responsibly and that money will be spent only on open parties. The IFC also needs to slash unnecessary costs.

Debate raged over the many issues that faced the quorum. The constitution was repeatedly quoted, championed and trashed in the course of the discussion.

It is clear that there are fundamental flaws in the document. A disclaimer at the beginning of the constitution essentially states that it is to be used as a guideline - in addition, parts of the HSG constitution haven't been enforced in recent years, or ever.

As a result, the rules surrounding voting rights remain hazy. As it is, any enrolled Statesman can vote; however, this allows for voter blocks (groups of students with the same view on an issue) to overwhelm the classic make-up of the government and push legislation through. With controversial proposals looming on HSG's calendar, voter blocks will likely become common, unless the existing rule that only allows returning members to vote is actually enforced.

Despite the chaos of the meeting, much was accomplished - some of the votes may come to be regretted, others celebrated. We did, after all, approve funds for a Girl Talk concert. Still, the money came out of the excess fund, and we'll have to wait and see if it was the best use of student funds.

Fire Regulations?

By TJ Radzwich '09
Herald Contributor

Every year we are warned by RAs and friends that the fire marshal is coming and we should take down our violations so we don't get fined. And every year I've complied—I have taken down my curtains, holiday lights, tapestries and whatever else I thought was considered illegal. This year, however, I wasn't lucky enough to get everything down in time.

I was sitting upstairs in my room in Odell's when I heard a knock at the door. I was the only one in the unit, so I ran downstairs to see who it was, and to my despair, the door

rules regarding fire safety. This is where my problem with fire safety at our school comes in.

Lonnie explained that the fire regulations allowed our school a limited number of holidays when students were allowed to put up lights. This included Christmas and one other holiday, which currently slips my mind. However, about a week later I had a discussion with ResEd about regulations regarding holiday decorations. When I mentioned what Lonnie had told me about only these two "acceptable" holidays, they disagreed. What I was told by ResEd was that hanging lights a week before and a week after any holiday was acceptable. This is also the same thing I was told by my RA every year since I was a freshman. However, listening to what ResEd or the RA tells you about fire safety will not keep you from getting handed a \$500 bill from Lonnie. After four years at HWS, I still have no solid understanding of the fire regulations, and I think the same probably goes for a majority of campus.



TJ Radzwich/Photographer

opened to Lonnie the fire marshal and the head of campus security. They were here to do a random inspection of our unit. Immediately my mind went to everything that was illegal in the house. We had curtains on every window, along with lights and streamers from the holidays. I was very apologetic about the decorations and told them I thought it was still close enough to the holiday. They informed me that it wasn't. I had to take them down. I gladly took everything down and had a nice discussion about the actual

The most frustrating aspect of all of this is hearing that other students were getting outrageous fines when our school does not even have a set of definite rules written anywhere. Until Lonnie and ResEd come up with a concrete set of rules there should be no inspections, or at the very least, students should stop being fined for celebrating the holidays. Lastly, until an easily accessible list is available to students, the fire marshal should stay away from our campus and stop giving students such a hard time.

What About CAB?

Name Withheld
Herald Contributor

It is remarkable that there is a great uproar over the funds allocated by the Budget Allocation Committee (BAC), but I hear not a murmur about what happens to the \$92,000 that goes to Campus Activities Board (CAB) every year. You see, if you had done the math and calculated the Student Activities Fee (SAF) that was published a few weeks ago, you would have noticed something interesting: \$23 is apportioned per student per semester to CAB, making them the second most of any single beneficiary of that fee.

WTF?

I want to know where in the world that money goes and I think that any student who cares about what happens to their money at school would want to know that as well. I believe everyone should be more enraged about this element of the SAF than any other financial issue. While the BAC has barely enough money to give to clubs, CAB indulges

What's more, many of the people who attend the better advertised and generally larger events that are hosted and planned by CAB, come already drunk or high, maybe even both. Moreover, as seen by the incredibly slim participation of CAB events that they are not a hindrance to the alcohol and drug filled parties on campus. CAB events generally end too late to be affective, rarely going past 12 o'clock. CAB does not work!

This raises the question: should the money that presently goes to CAB be rerouted to the BAC? The BAC would be able to give more money to clubs enabling them to host events that have better participation and are more interesting. The activities and events hosted by clubs also reach out to a larger and more diverse audience. They would make the face of the campus look much better, and would enable more people to get involved in campus activities. Our campus would gain popularity and better standing in



itself in mounds of cash - but where does it go? Do you know? I don't! I have been to several CAB events and seen on average 25-50 people, once about 100 people - at bingo night. By the way, did you know that the school could have been sued by the state of New York for violating the gaming laws? Apparently the people at CAB didn't realize that bingo was gambling and that you need a permit to do that. Hmm, yes I see, playing a game for money - how could that be considered gambling?

If there are people that need training it would be the students who run CAB. If there are funds that need to be exposed - it is those used by CAB.

Let us examine for a moment the purpose of CAB. Part of the reason it was created was to deter students from going to parties filled with alcohol and drugs. First of all, that is impossible; there will always be a large portion of people getting drunk and high on this campus.

the college community, as clubs bring in more notable speakers, host larger and better events, and take trips to conferences, games, and other off-campus activities where they would be able to get involved with other colleges. All of this would make HWS a more competitive and better known and respected campus. Plus, if more money is split up, there are more choices for your Friday/Saturday night.

So ask yourselves - do you want your money going primarily to a single organization that spends it in such a way that most people never see the outcome? Or do you want to increase the diversity, the social life, the party scene, and the image of this campus - your home for four years? If the answer is yes then go to student government, the administration, and the deans. Demand that CAB be made responsible for its actions, and that the money it receives unjustly and uselessly be spent in more appropriate and beneficial ways.

Got Suggestions?

By TJ Radzwich '09
Herald Contributor



Have you ever had an idea or suggestion for something on campus and just didn't know who to tell it to? I had a similar problem once and didn't really know what to do about it.

Then I had an idea. There has never really been an open forum for students to voice these concerns and ideas so I figured why not make one. This is where hwsideas.blogspot.com came from. The idea behind this blog is that it will be a forum for discussion of all ideas relating to Hobart and William Smith Colleges. If you have an idea that you think should be implemented on campus then make it be heard. The blog will be open for anyone to suggest anything serious. The Herald staff will sort through the

suggestions, forward them along to the appropriate administrative bodies, and if they're good enough, maybe even publish a few in the paper (anonymously of course). The first idea that was posted on the blog is listed below.

"The Odell's parking lot really needs to get the lines repainted. I can't even count the number of times I've come to park and I simply drove around the lot once, and then had to park across the street in the freshman lot. For the number of people living in Odell's it is absurd that there are so few places to park. The construction of the new pod this past year added 50 residents to the Village at Odell's pond and took away about 20 or so parking spots. The main annoyance here is

that the parking spots we do have are big enough for a small aircraft. In the winter the parking situation gets a bit better because people can't see the lines and because of this they actually fit more cars in. I've taken the time to count the spots in the lot and there are 54 spaces. From experience parking here in the winter I also know that four cars can fit in the space of only three parking spots. So, if the lines were simply repainted the parking lot can add 18 more spots. I don't see why this hasn't been done yet but I would really like to see it happen.

So if you have a similar idea and really would like to see something done about it, check out the site and post your thoughts at: hwsideas.blogspot.com.