



Athabasca University
Students' Union

Athabasca University Students' Union

Special Council Meeting Minutes

APPROVED February 16, 2017

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

5:00pm MST

Meeting Called By: Shawna Wasylyshyn, President

Type of Meeting: AUSU Council Meeting

Minutes: Donette Kingyens, Communications and Member Services Coordinator

Participants

Council: President Shawna Wasylyshyn, Vice President External and Student Affairs Julian Teterenko, Vice President Finance and Administration Kim Newsome, Councillor Robin Bleich, Councillor Andrew Gray, Councillor Scott Jacobsen, Councillor Amanda Lipinski, Councillor Brandon Simmons

Staff: Executive Director Sarah Cornett, Communications and Member Services Coordinator Donette Kingyens, The Voice Managing Editor Karl Low

Members: Bonita Arbeau

Absent: Councillor Brandon Simmons (late)

Meeting called to order at 4:57pm MT.

Agenda and Minutes

1.0 Adoption of Agenda All

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council adopt the agenda.

R. Bleich / A. Lipinski

Carried 7/0

2017-01-31 Council Agenda.pdf

Agenda item 3 was moved up to agenda item 2 to allow time for councillor Brandon Simmons to join the meeting as he indicated in advance he may be late.

New Business

2.0 Internally Restricted Funds

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council acknowledges and agrees that the balance of internally restricted funds as of September 30, 2016, was \$24,786.24.

R. Bleich / A. Lipinski

Carried 7/0

Note: In the past, there was not a clear understanding of how internally restricted funds should be handled, which is money set aside for expenditures outside the budget or necessary for multi-year projects. Examples of internally restricted funds are the amount set aside for advocacy (via council motion) regarding the retroactive changes in the Faculty of Health Discipline, as well as the money leftover from the health and dental plan which is set aside for the Health Care Bursary.

AUSU did an analysis, figured out what should really be in the internally restricted account, and adjusted accordingly.

However, the auditors only look at what was in the account year to year and motions in meeting minutes. In the past, council motions used different terminology, such as withdrawing from reserves when it should have been internally restricted funds. The auditors will only be looking at the numbers as of October 1, 2015, the current year's

expenditures, and the council motions for expenditures, which will not balance with the work done to properly identify internally restricted funds.

Our auditors have agreed that if we can provide a council motion to them in a set of minutes before the audit gets to the point of being finalized (which is very soon), we can start 2016/2017 with correct amounts. Otherwise, the auditor instructions will be to put the internally restricted funds back to a high number, which negates the work done to balance it back to Sept 30, 2015.

It was noted that the total net assets are the same, and this motion simply effects what line item the amounts are listed under, whether they are restricted, unrestricted, invested in capital assets, or current earnings.

3.0 AUSU Office Lease

Council discussed the options for the new AUSU Office lease space. A backgrounder was distributed with very basic information regarding three office space options.

2017-01-31 Council Backgrounder.pdf

Background Information:

There were three potential office spaces presented for the AUSU office relocation:

- OPTION 1: #301 Energy Square, 10109 106 St - (\$36,198.78) *
- OPTION 2: #150 Nexus Business Park – (\$34,287.26)
- OPTION 3: #202 – 10335 178 St – (\$18,742.50)

** Option 1 cost reflects payment for only 2 of the 3 parking spaces AUSU has as they have not been getting charged for the third stall and have no reason to think this will not continue.*

The following points were noted:

- The current AUSU Office lease is \$54,447.97.
- The executive director initially supplied a report with some recommended office locations in December. However, executive felt they wanted to get a better understanding of the options to be fully accountable to the membership, so decided to look into more options outside of the original area that was considered.
- Most of the locations that had been listed in the initial report in December are no longer available.
- Although executive tried looking for 'mid-range' option in terms of price, they were unable to find any. The prices for suitable offices remained in the \$30,000 range (or much higher) throughout most of the city, and then significantly dropped off to under \$20,000 once you reach a certain point on the far sides of the city.
- AUSU executives considered a work-from-home option, however, they have tried this in the past, and it did not work well. In addition, with only 2.5 staff members, it would be difficult to arrange coverage for phones and chat if staff worked from home, and the current team works collaboratively with overlapping duties. In order to have a solid, cohesive staff unity, AUSU feels that having staff physically come into work is a priority.
- All options present significant savings for AUSU, although one offers considerably more savings.
- AUSU did consider an offer for free space in Athabasca. However, this option was turned down as Athabasca is a small town over 150 km away from Edmonton and staff would be unable to commute.
- AUSU sought quotes for a three-year lease, as this increased the discounts that landlords were willing to provide, as well as coincides with when the leases for the two Athabasca University office locations expire in case there was a possibility for AUSU to work out office space with AU if they move or change their offices.
- All of the quotes AUSU received were discounted from the list price.

- The office relocation significantly impacts staff so their opinions were sought.
- Staff indicated their preference is option 1, which is a smaller suite in the building the office is currently located in. Staff expressed multiple reasons for this, including:
 - Convenient downtown location with good transit options.
 - Preferred commute as the location was a factor for staff taking the job.
 - Two staff currently carpool with family.
 - Walking distance to post-office, bank, and the AU Edmonton office where staff picks up mail and occasionally has meetings.
 - Onsite maintenance, security, and cleaners.
 - AUSU lawyer and auditor only a few blocks away, convenient for meetings
 - Numerous amenities within walking distance including lunch spots, restaurants, grocery store, drug store, etc.
 - Good office layout with open reception area windows in each office.
 - Heated and secure parking.
 - Good central location with a free on-site conference room for possible future events, such as AUSU Meet & Greets and council retreats.
- Staff expressed significant concern over option 3 for the following reasons:
 - Significantly longer commutes – after testing out the drive numerous times, staff calculated that the commute would add on 5-10 extra hours per week of driving time for 2 of them (depending on rush hour traffic and winter driving conditions). This would impact their lives considerably including lost time for familial and other obligations, needing alternate childcare arrangements, and increased cost for gas and mileage.
 - No nearby amenities within walking distance, including post-office, bank, or any places to get lunch or coffee. Would cost AUSU in mileage for staff travel time for mail drops, meetings, bank runs, etc.
 - Staff felt this location is a less secure area which was a concern as 2 staff regularly are required to work late for committee or council meetings.
 - Staff expressed that a move to the option 3 location would unfortunately cause 2 or possibly all of them to reconsider their employment with AUSU.
- Staff felt option 2 was a compromise.
 - Still a longer commute, but staff agreed it was manageable.
 - Does have a few amenities nearby.
 - Still not within walking distance to post office, bank, etc.
 - Would be a very minor savings over Option 1.
 - The layout is not as ideal, and there are windows only in one office.
 - Less secure location as it is ground floor store-front property facing an alley.
- Option 1 is still within the budget that AUSU had set out, which considered the office move and costs savings for lower rent with an anticipation of an office in the \$35,000 range.
- It was noted in the budget discussions that the full savings will not be realized this fiscal year because the current lease extends to the end of March and there will be some expenses associated with moving.
- AUSU is a non-profit student organization with responsibilities to the membership for how their membership dollars are spent, especially since students cannot opt out of the union fees.
- The AUSU mandate is to put the membership first, so it is important to consider this when choosing between the locations since there is a significant difference in cost. Option 3 would present the best cost savings for the membership.
- It was noted that having a supported and motivated staff it also valuable for the membership as staff runs the day-to-day operations.
- The office does not need to remain downtown to be functional.
- There were a number of other options, but the executives AUSU did their best to investigate and present the best property options.

- It was suggested AUSU move the discussion in camera for council only so that they can further discuss the options.

Motion: BIRT AUSU go in camera

S. Wasylyshyn / J. Teterenko

Carried 7/0

Staff and guests were asked to leave the meeting for the in-camera session at 6:16pm MT.

Motion: BIRT AUSU go out of in-camera

J. Teterenko / S. Jacobsen

Carried 7/0

Staff and guests were re-invited to the meeting at 7:04pm MT.

It was noted that there was a very good discussion, but that council remains fairly divided on the options. Council decided that they would conduct the motion to authorize a property by secret ballot. They also noted that the decision could cause some disruption to AUSU operations.

Councillor Brandon Simmons joined the meeting at 7:15pm MT. Council agreed that Brandon should be included in the vote even though he was not present for the discussion or the first reading of the motion. Brandon indicated he is aware of the options presented.

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council authorize the Executive to move forward with obtaining a lease for #202 – 10335 178 Street.

J. Teterenko / A. Lipinski

Defeated 4/4

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council authorize the Executive to move forward with obtaining a lease for Nexus Business Park.

R. Bleich / S. Jacobsen

Defeated 1/7

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council authorize the Executive to move forward with obtaining a lease for #301 Energy Square.

R. Bleich / A. Lipinski

Defeated 4/4

It was noted that if council is unable to agree on a location, the executive would have to go back to the drawing board to find other lease options. However, time is a factor as our current lease is up at the end of March.

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council authorize the Executive to move forward with obtaining a lease for #202 – 10335 178 Street.

J. Teterenko / R. Bleich

Defeated 4/4

It was discussed that continuing the same motions may be futile if AUSU cannot reach an agreement. The president announced that she was willing to change her vote as it is important for a decision to be made over the time and expense for executive to start the process over again.

Differing opinions were expressed, with some councillors indicating they felt that Energy Square was the best option for the continued operations and functionality of AUSU, and some indicating they think the priority should be the cost savings for the membership.

Motion: BIRT AUSU Council authorize the Executive to move forward with obtaining a lease for #301 Energy Square.

S. Wasylyshyn / S. Jacobsen

Carried 6/2

It was noted that council had a lot of really good discussions. Although it was a very difficult decision to make, council can be confident that they did due diligence to the membership to find a good location for the AUSU office location while still saving the membership dollars.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meetings of Council will be:

Thursday, February 16, 2017, 5:30 pm MST – Public Meeting

Tuesday, March 14, 2017, 5:30 pm MST - Public Meeting (Tentative)

Motion to Adjourn at 8:02pm.