General Assembly Meeting: January 17, 2013

Disclaimer: Meeting minutes are not official until approved by the General Assembly. While every attempt is made to insure accuracy, minutes should not be considered a verbatim account of proceedings.

Agenda:
Opening of the Meeting: Meeting called to order at 2:36pm

1. Fight song and role call
2. Open Forum
3. Approval of Minutes
   a. Vote: Minutes Approved
4. Committee Reports
   a. President’s Report
   b. COCo
      i. Jason Shatz: Point of inquiry - Was any information that I presented incorrect in my SBC presentation?
         1. Syed Ali: Everything was correct.
   c. AAC
      i. Ellen Paik: Point of inquiry - What are the minors that are in the pipeline?
         1. Sam Ebb: Not sure if I can say, but Russian has contacted the students to say they are bringing a minor, and there are a couple others for next time.
      ii. Zach Malter: You should try and look into the study spaces for senior thesis writers.
         1. Sam Ebb: There are group carrels and non-reserved carrels in Sci-Li.
   d. SAC
      i. Ellen Paik: What’s a disruption?
         1. Nicole Updegrove: One example would be when students walk into a board meeting demanding the attention of the Board. However, according to the CNAC’s description, a disruption is anything that occurs in a facility that is not intended for its use.
   e. FiFaC
      i. Sam Ebb: On the music spaces issue, look into the abuse of the reservation of
them.

1. Andrew Trexler: So, scheduling?

ii. Jacob Blumenthal: What do you mean by partitioning of the room?
   1. Andrew Trexler: Ask Adam.

iii. Glenn Cantave: What percentage of the power would the solar panels provide?
   1. Sam Usdan: I don’t know yet, it depends.

iv. Arya Alizadeh: Do you know anything about the eco-friendly parking spots where only fuel efficient cars can park?
   1. Andrew Trexler: This started when we got zipcars. Then people thought that we should expand this to other cars and this encourages people to drive environmentally friendly vehicles.
   2. Arya Alizadeh: Do you get a parking violation?
      a. Andrew Trexler: Yes.

f. OEAC

i. Syed Ali: Is the tutorial for this semester going to happen?
   1. Grant Tanenbaum: It depends because the computer science kids don’t want it because the credit limit is low.

ii. Christian Hosam: For constitutional review, how does the adding of a new subcommittee work?
   1. Mari Jarris: Meet with us individually and it would be helpful if you could come up with the proposal.

f. SBC

i. Chloe Murtagh: Are you meeting tomorrow?
   1. Nicole Brenner: Yes (Amendment)

ii. Syed Ali: Have you talked to SALD and other relevant parties?
   1. Nicole Brenner: SALD does it Monday mornings and I’ll let SALD now.

5. Zoning Resolution Discussion (No vote)

a. Andrew Trexler Introduction: A couple of changes will be happening. All of the zoning changes will be specified in the resolution. We will also be specifying what is meant by “proposed development” and “Washington Street Area”

b. Jacob Blumenthal: The section on acknowledging the WSA’s role as the deliberative body. It’s pretty redundant.
   i. Andrew Trexler: I put that in there because we are giving it to an entity outside of Wesleyan.

c. Arya Alizadeh: Regarding the clause that starts with “Finding,” is that technically something that we found in our research?
i. Andrew Trexler: We will find it during these deliberations.

d. Scott Elias: The zoning requests are to change the parking structure to make it safer. I don’t think that this is in the purview of the WSA. If people want to engage in these social issues, they can do that outside of the WSA. I also do not think that we have conclusive evidence showing that the overwhelming majority of Wes students are against this. The polls are not in accurate and people want more food options. People are against the move of the bookstore. Beta brothers want this development. It is not the responsibility of the WSA to inject its opinion into town politics.

e. Christian Hosam: This could potentially be in the purview of the WSA. The forum and the information proposed there is relevant as are the polls. I think we have to make the decision of whether or not the WSA has a role to interact with elements outside the university.

f. Jason Shatz: Wesleyan has property in the area of Washington Street so the development will affect the university. With regards to the polling methods, one of the problems is sample size. What is a good sample size that will justify the representative factor? In any case, we can’t possibly engage every student or faculty member. We need to publicize the issue and debate it thoroughly and then go canvassing and try to get a voice of opinions.

g. Andrew Trexler: I definitely think that this is within the purview of the WSA because the development will be occurring right on the edge of students and will have a big impact on residential life, even safety. I don’t agree with Scott when he said that the zoning changes are to make it more safe; I think it will make things less safe because there will be more cars going in more direction across a pedestrian crosswalk: less pedestrian safety. On the polling issue, the polls are not cited in the resolution. They are not “scientific,” but they do represent strong evidence that people who have given it some thought are opposed.

h. Sam Ebb: Building off of Andrew’s point, a lot of the opposition of the forum was based on the development as a whole. This is within the purview of the WSA. In response to Jason, that is why the resolution is proposed one week and then voted on the next.

i. Nicole Updegrove: A number of students have gotten involved and gone to meetings on and off Wesleyan campus. Wesleyan has views and those views are so diverse that we can’t possibly represent them all, but the WSA exists to think about what would be best for current and future students. It is also our job to inform Middletown about what is best for current and future students. On another note, Wesleyan is also attempting to sell some program houses on Washington Street which are very important to Wesleyan; re-zoning would further that. This would mean more students living in dorms, which is
not good for the progressive independence housing model or for student culture.

ej. Jake Blumenthal: I think that there is significant evidence in seeing students participate in fora around the community. We also have the authority as trustees of the students to pass this resolution.

k. Scott Elias: Development would be better for admissions, the job market. Where is the line where we should stop? Should we propose resolutions doing things like urging to mayor to raise minimum wage? This is someone’s land that they already purchased and it seems strange for us to submit this mandate and I’m uncomfortable doing this. I think we should have a large forum and actively engage the students.

l. Christian Hosam: I’m against the development. I agree with the what and the why is tripping me up. Should we be trustees? Representatives? We can’t call every student for every issue. I’m concerned about the mandate within the resolution and I feel like we need to make a decision on how we want to operate and how we deal with issues in Middletown. This resolution is symbolic on campus and we need to establish what it represents in Middletown.

m. Ellen Paik: We have all consulted different bubbles that have said different things. The people who I’ve canvassed and my friends have been supportive of the development. We need to figure out what the Wesleyan student opinion is before we present our own opinion because I think everyone is on a different level about where they are with the development. We need more research.

n. Jacob Musinsky: In response, it bothers me that we’ve sent out polls that have shown that there is a small amount of people who are in favor. Also, the people who vote in the polls and going to the fora are the people who are educated and actually care.

o. Kate Cullen: A lot of people have been given different information on what the development actually is. (RE: Chiptole rumor). Therefore, it is harder to boil down the student opinion to one thing. It is necessary to educate on what the development actually is going to be.

i. Andrew Trexler: (Centerplan forum, articles) The development is going to be a square (no bookstore) 2 story building with a parking lot in front. More suburban. Cafe and restaurant and Centerplan offices. There will be national chains. Most of the zoning requests are so that they can make the parking bigger and a drive through.

p. Sam Ebb: In terms of relevance to the community, the faculty have passed a resolution opposing the development as residents and Wesleyan. They considered similar things, and it ended up passing.

q. Nicole Updegrove: We have to consider the perspective of the zoning committee and they are looking for the residents of Middletown and this includes Wesleyan. I view this
as supplying information. I also think that if the same thing happened regarding minimum wage, we have an obligation to pass a resolution too.

r. Andrew Trexler: I’ll send more information. There forum in PAC 001 has an 80 person occupancy and it was overflowing. The proportion to the Diversity University forum is similar. We do have a reason to move.
   i. Sam Usdan: Most of the people at that meeting were Middletown residents
   ii. Andrew Trexler: I would not say most: ⅓ residents, ⅓ students. ⅓ faculty/administrators.

s. Syed Ali: The people who wanted to be heard, were heard. I think we should have faith in the assembly and we have an entire week to engage with the student body before we vote. If we can’t do that, we need to make changes to the assembly.

t. Sam Usdan: Adding to what Kate said about information, because of that not-accurate information, we can’t take the polls at face value. I think that this makes the polls less reliable. I think that the fact that the development is ambiguous makes the negative opinion more pronounced.
   i. Christian Hosam: I definitely agree. I think we can make a decision as an assembly.

u. Scott Elias: I definitely agree with Sam and Christian. At the forum, there were personal remarks made to the representative of Centerplan. We should have a forum this week or an all-campus email. Some people do not know about this debate, and we need to engage students. What happens next? If we pass the resolution, will this allow a development with less safer planning. I think that they are just making the project more safe regarding property. They own the property and can build there.

v. Jake Blumenthal: I feel strongly that there needs to be a strong majority.

w. Motion for a straw poll: Are you in support of the idea of this resolution?
   i. *Minute taker’s note: The results of the straw poll were unable to be counted. The impression of the Chair was a slim majority voting Yes, with a slightly smaller number voting Nay.

x. Jake Blumenthal: I’m less likely to vote for this resolution due to the result of the straw poll.

y. Zach Malter: In response, whenever the resolution passes, it is regarding as the view of the assembly. The political impact would generally be the same, because it is the view of the entire assembly. I think Sam’s point is very valid that the development is ambiguous. The benefits of the development are ambiguous, but the drawbacks are less ambiguous because of the damages to the relationship between Wesleyan and Middletown residents. Those relationships would be harmed regardless and we need to think about what the impact of this resolution would be in the real word. Also, we have to do more
research about the zoning committee. I think polling the student body is important. A lot of the benefits are going to a company that has no relation to Wesleyan.

z. Nicole Brenner: Where could I get more information?
   i. Andrew Trexler: I’ll send an email.

aa. Scott Elias: Could we send out a survey asking the question?
   i. Chloe Murtagh: We’ll consider the logistics.

bb. Arya Alizadeh: I differ with you, Zach on the point that the vote tally is something you could cite. Your vote against this resolution is totally fine and passing the resolution would not be the absolute view of the assembly. Do no think “everyone needs to be in agreement or not.”

c. Andrew Trexler: We’ve talked about this a lot. I was surprised that so many people think that the predominant opinion of the students is positive towards the development. My issue with direct democracy it gives no account to the interest of the voter or the qualification of the voter to speak with authority on the issue. It is important to measure voter interest and authority. I would like to hear from people who have not talked yet.

dd. Nicole Updegrove: Considering the role of the Assembly as a whole:... Think about the other resolutions we’ve passed. We’ve done polls, but there has not been any scientific evidence. We’ve never really known what the entire student opinion is, and we can’t know. They elected us and we need to make a decision. That’s just how it works. If anyone wants to have a forum, do it.

e. Alton Wang: I was against the resolution, but now I’m for because we were elected and we don’t need everyone to agree and the polls may be inconclusive, but we are the representatives of the student body and it’s our responsibility to represent them. It is also important to consider what the residents of Middletown want. It’s a decision that we have to make based on what is best for Wesleyan.

ff. Christian Hosam: How many of you feel that if you voted the wrong way on this resolution, you would lose your spot on the WSA? We live in a much smaller committee and the trustee model is not that robust. If we don’t know what we want together, we can’t say we represent the student body.

gg. Gabriela De Golia (Chair of MidWes): I think that this definitely falls under the purview of the WSA and this affects student life. I think that the people who care about this are against this, are against this in Wesleyan and Middletown. I think that if the student body came out an acknowledged these desires, the majority of the people who are against the development would definitely appreciate it that. As far as I understand, this resolution is voicing an opinion, not a requirement and as residents of Middletown, we have that right.

hh. Nicki Softness: Do we actually expect that if we pass this resolution, they’re going to
abandon their plans? Due to the fact that they are privately owned, I can see a lot of negative consequences. I feel like their main customers are not going to be us if there’s going to be a Starbucks.

i. Andrew Trexler: Centerplan is currently under contract to purchase these properties, but they have not yet bought them. They are going to the Planning and Zoning Commission so that they can start building. This resolution urges the committee to deny the zoning change request. Center plan could back out, but cannot be forced to do so.

ii. Kate Cullen: I am support of the idea, but against the resolution because I do not feel like I am qualified to vote on this, the nature of the issue, etc. Question: I don’t understand the argument that passing this resolution is the will of the Middletown. One of the most convincing arguments to pass this resolution is to display solidarity of the Middletown community.

jj. Scott Elias: I am more concerned with the political machinery that is being used. We are using the delegate model and mixing it with direct democracy. We don’t really know about zoning and I don’t think we are qualified to state if we are for or against the zoning change. The committee is more qualified than us.

kk. Andrew Trexler: Scott, you’re confusing the delegate and trustee models. See my guide on Efficacy as a Member for a description of these two models. Both models are fine and it is your own choice. Either way, the overwhelming evidence is against. To Scott’s point about who’s qualified, we are not saying that the committee can’t make the changes because of zoning purposes, but because it is the view of the WSA, as representatives of the Wesleyan student body.

ll. Sam Ebb: Description of articles and what the zoning would include. The problem is that it sets a precedent of development. We need to think about relationships between us and the committee, just in case Wesleyan proposes any zoning changes.

mm. Jacob Blumenthal: Zoning boards are very political, and zoning and planning has every right to make this decision.

nn. Glenn Cantave: In terms of what you said about representation, the fact of the matter is that we are Wesleyan students and where you live could affect how you feel about the development. I think we should make a pros and cons list about the development and mail it out to the students. If the students care enough, they will read the email and answer the survey.

oo. Gabriela De Golia (Chair of MidWes): Anyone who has commented on this issue has been against it and this speaks more strongly than the claim that we haven’t received an adequate sample size. I’m having a hard time buying that the majority of students are for
this.

i. Scott Elias: Do you know how the zoning committee works?
ii. Gabriela: Not specifically, but they appreciate student input.
iii. Ben: Six member body and six alternates elected (2 years). 4 democrats and 2 republicans.

6. Student Health

7. New Business and Announcements

a. Nicole Brenner: We actually are meeting this week on Monday to give people to adjust and I will be sending out an all campus.

b. Zach Malter: Call for agenda items.
   i. Jason Shatz: R.A. Reform
   ii. Andrew Trexler: In what form?
   iii. Jason Shatz: Discussion and maybe proposing a resolution.

c. Arya Alizadeh: Party is necessary.

d. Jake Blumenthal: The Baltimore Ravens are the superior Super Bowl team

  e. Nicole Updegrove: Research and send what you find on the listserve.

  f. Mari Jarris: There will be meetings with the career center candidates.

  g. Syed Ali:

  h. Do research when you get the agenda. Google, website, Arugs, Wesleying. Student group fair friday, 5pm, Beckham.

  i. Andrew Trexler: The email that came out last Wednesday had the agenda for next week, more research time! Use the listserv.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:15am/pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Bruno Machiavelo ‘16