

Minutes of the General Meeting 15-November-16

There were 94 Quest members who attended the November General Membership meeting in an almost totally filled auditorium. Our president, Michael Wellner, called the meeting to order and warmly welcomed all the new members.

Introduction of Officers: Michael recognized and thanked each of the other officers, to wit: Vice President - Bob Gottfried, Secretary - Ruth Kovner, and Treasurer Steven Allen.

Introduction of Council members: Next Michael asked each of the Council members to stand and be recognized; all were present but for Wayne Cotter, Liesje ten Houten and Bob Moore who were unable to attend. Present were Phil Gisser, Bob Hartmann, Jane Lubin, Bob Moore, and Jane Pittson-Chianese.

Membership: Michael announced that we now have 242 members. We are approaching the previously agreed cap of 250, and will temporarily put a hold on new members for the balance of this term. Come spring, given the anticipated continued strong demand for Quest, we will likely revisit the membership cap before the term ends.

Long Term Planning Committee: Michael introduced the other members of the LRPC: Steve Allen, Art Spar, Nan McNamara, Carolyn McGuire, Leslie Goldman, Bob Hartmann, and Bob Reiss. As the name implies, this committee is tasked with planning for Quest's future in three years, five years, and even as far into the future as ten years. Helping to perform that analysis, the committee has utilized a SWOT analysis: Noting our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Strengths include:

- A strong core of active participants
- An excellent relationship with CWE/CCNY Community
- Autonomy - we run our own show
- Financial independence

Weaknesses include:

- Overreliance on a small, minority of active members
- Our lack of ethnic and political diversity
- Very little quality control of presentations
- Lack of control of our physical space (We are tenants of CWE/CCNY.)

Opportunities:

- Increased demand as the number of seniors who want what Quest offers continues to grow
- Establishing of a closer relationship with professors at CCNY (guest speakers?)

Establishing relationships with other cultural entities in the city similar to that that we now enjoy with MOMA (This relationship has proven eminently successful.)
Improving the quality of presentations

Threats:

Change of Leadership at City College
Loss of our apace at 25 Broadway
Unmanaged membership growth (getting too big too fast)
Stagnation: (It is important that we get new ideas from new members.)
Overcrowding of the lunchroom and the classrooms

Michael then noted that we have already taken some specific actions to address some existing problems, such as:

The addition of another classroom (15-17) with 66 seats.
The introduction of Noontime Knowledge sessions to help alleviate overcrowding in the lunchroom (this has been very successful).
Use of the Faculty Lounge, opposite the auditorium.
Establishment of a Diversity Committee, chaired by Vivian Oliver and Doreen De Martini.
Establishment of the “Step Up” Program, which has already been successful in attracting new presenters and discussion leaders.

To address the possible threat of a loss of our space, a new committee has been formed to explore possible alternatives; John Sicree will head up this committee.

Treasurer’s Report: Next, Steve delivered a comprehensive financial report, and noted that Quest’s finances continue in excellent shape. Income from membership fees (\$500, or a total of about \$120,000 + annually) closely matches our yearly expenses. As the number of members increase, our revenue goes up (of course), but so do our expenses, the biggest item of which is the rent we pay to CWE. Steve noted that there has been no increase in our membership dues for about 14 years, a period in which inflation was about 30%. If our dues had just kept pace with inflation, the current membership fee would be \$650. Next term, before the end of the year, we will address the issue of whether a dues increase may be needed for the 2017-18 year.

WiFi Access: Michael (and Steve) reported that we are getting closer to have WiFi access for all. Stay tuned for more details at the beginning of next term.

Membership Committee: Michael commended the committee and its co-chairs, Roy Clary and Bobbie Gold, for their excellent work.

Step Up Committee: Michael applauded the work of the Step Up Committee whose objective is to encourage all Quest members to go one step up from their current participation level at Quest. The committee is led by Phil Gisser and includes Caroline

Thompson, Ellen Gottfried and Joan Diamond. Michael noted his belief that “Quest works best when everyone participates.”

Curriculum Committee Report: Caroline Thompson, chair, next described the curriculum changes for the coming spring term. Three courses are being dropped: The Long 19th Century; The Elections course; and Explorations in Architecture. New courses being added are Environmental Issues, Classic Rock Albums (becoming a full class from a workshop), Immigration and the Peoples of America, Bach Cantatas (a workshop), a Memoir Writing Course: The story of you.

A brainstorming group of about 15-20 Questers has convened to discuss the possibility of a new psychology class. It is a work in progress; stay tuned.

Summer Program: Courses featured during the June and July summer session are selected as the best of the classes given that prior year. Have a candidate? Fill out the form and drop it into the silver chip box.

Emergency Response Team: Lila Heilbrunn and Doreen De Martini chair this important team. Michael again emphasized the need for knowing how to evacuate our premises in the case of an emergency; it can be lifesaving. All members must learn the location of the four emergency exit stairways, A, B, C and D. It is essential that all members comply with all rules during our periodic fire drills.

Neatness Counts: Please remember that eating in any classroom is prohibited. Coffee cups must have lids. And in the auditorium only water is allowed. Please – no coffee in the auditorium!.

Q News: Kudos to Carolyn McGuire for the newly designed (and very “newsy”) Q News! But, she reminded everyone that more frequent publication requires more news. If you have a story, a cartoon, a bit of humor, a picture, an event report or a poem, please submit it to Carolyn.

The Caring Committee: This group keeps in touch with members who are ill or who have been out for a while. If you know of such a person please contact Liesje ten Houter, Ellie Chernick, John Sicree or Jane Lubin.

Research Offer: Debra Yaffe has kindly offered her services to help anyone in need of guidance when doing research. She has been a professional research person for 25 years.

After fielding a few questions, the meeting was adjourned at precisely 2:22 P.M. by Michael Wellner.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruth

Ruth Kovner:
Quest Secretary