QUEST COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: March 11, 2025

Council held its monthly meeting at 25 Broadway in Room 7-39. President Donna Ramer called the meeting to order at 2:42 p.m.

Council Members Present: Karen Cullen, Mary Ann Donnelly (via Zoom), Peter Fleischman, Bob Gottfried, Vince Grosso, Nan McNamara, Donna Ramer, Tamara Weinberg, Ilene Winkler, and Judy Winn.

Council Members Absent: Paul Golomb

I. General Administration

- Donna reported that Tamara and Lynn Vairo will represent Quest at this year's Lifelong Learning conference at Emory University in July and provide the Council with a report on what they learned at the conference.

II. Treasurer's Report: Peter Fleischman

- Peter distributed and reviewed his 3-11-25 Treasurer's Report, including updates on tuition payments, Quest's balance sheet, and the year-to-date variance between actual and budgeted income and expense.

- Although tuition collected through March 7, 2025 is somewhat less than budgeted (see Membership below regarding pending members), total income is approximately still over budget due to receiving the last of a member bequest and because of interest income that exceeded expectations.

- The variance between actual and budgeted YTD income and expenses is still significant (to the good). This favorable variance is attributable, in part, to certain expenses coming in under budget, and some significant expenses that haven't yet occurred (the year-end dinner, for example.

- Donna asked how the market is affecting Quest's reserves. Peter said the market was having a minimal impact because the reserves are invested entirely in short-term government bonds that do not fluctuate significantly.

III. Curriculum: Donna Ramer

- Donna reported that the Curriculum committee is reviewing the results of the recently distributed survey to determine member interest in proposed courses and in coordinating and/or presenting in those courses.

- Bob Gottfried added that Joyce Hinote has advised him that the committee expects to have the full slate of courses set by the week of March 17.

- Donna reported that she and Debbie Honorof, vice-chair of the Curriculum committee, are creating and updating online and hard copy “how to” resource materials for coordinators and presenters.

- Donna pointed out that Tamara is running a Power Point workshop next fall. Tamara said she envisions that the workshop will include basic presentation skills plus one-on-one Power Point training.

IV. Membership: Tamara Weinberg

- Tamara reported that Quest currently has 266 active members. She said that two former members have returned, 22 new members joined last fall, and 18 new members joined this spring. Two prospective members are pending and one prospective member is in the interview process.

- Mary Anne added that the committee continues to receive inquiries from people interested in joining Quest.

- Donna reminded Council that every year Quest loses 10-15% of its members, so she did not think the Council needed to address the 270-member cap at this time.

V. Marketing and Communications (M&C): Donna Ramer

- Donna reported that the M&C committee is working on a number of new initiatives, including developing a wait list of prospective members who have gone through the approval process and creating targeted advertising to attract younger members. These initiatives will be discussed with the Membership committee.

- The M&C committee is also focusing on using the 30th anniversary for marketing purposes.

- Bob Gottfried suggested that we ask members to renew their memberships earlier in the year.

- Donna said that the Council needed to vote on the annual member fee for next year. Council then discussed fee-related issues, including whether incentives or disincentives would be a useful tool for encouraging early payment of fees, the economy and members’ tolerance for a fee increase, and Quest’s current and projected financial status.

- Peter advised that this year’s budget was unusual given the higher-than-normal budgeted expenses. He expects Quest will end the fiscal year with a slight surplus and does not think that keeping the annual fee at $550 for next year will be a problem.

- Judy made a motion, seconded by Donna, to maintain the membership fee at $550. After discussion, Council unanimously approved the motion.

- Donna asked the Membership Committee to recommend a deadline for the payment of fees to be discussed at the April Council meeting.

VI. Nominating and Elections Committee (NEC): Tamara Weinberg

- Tamara reported that the seven candidates for open council seats have submitted their bios. NEC chair Karen Levin will have the bios posted on the website and email them to the membership.

- The NEC will write a piece on the upcoming elections for the next QNews.

- Members have until April 1 to submit to the NEC petitions for additional nominations.

- The NEC will hold "Meet the Candidate" lunchtime forums on Monday-Thursday, April 21-24. Each candidate, except Donna, will appear twice. The NEC will hold the elections electronically on Friday-Sunday, April 25-27.

VII. Committee Term Limits: Bob Gottfried and Karen Cullen

- Bob reminded Council that at the February Council meeting, Donna asked for volunteers to draft guidelines based on Council's discussion of term limits and succession planning for the standing committees other than the four committees (Auditing, Curriculum, Membership, and Scheduling) that have term limits set in the bylaws. (Bob noted that there are several bylaws relevant to term limits and succession planning for the other committees, including the bylaw that says the committees are encouraged to rotate chairs every three years and the bylaw that encourages committees to add new members.) He and Karen volunteered, and the following are their two recommendations.

  (1) when appointing chairs, the President and Council should (a) take into consideration the suggestions discussed at the February 2025 Council meeting and the bylaw section that encourages the rotation of committee chairs every three years and (b) balance these considerations with the value and benefits of new chairs/members, the knowledge and experience of existing chairs/members, succession planning, etc., and
  (2) the President or the President's designee should continue to meet with each chair annually to review the chairs' duties, including succession planning.

- Judy suggested that each committee have a substitute chair to cover situations when the chair is sick or traveling, so there is a designated committee member who will be responsible in the chair's absence. Nan said she thought these situations were usually managed internally by the committees and that official designations were not needed. Donna said it depended on the committee.

- Donna said that the Auditing, Curriculum, Scheduling, and Membership committees needed succession planning to comply with the 3-year term limit for chairs set forth in the bylaws, but that for the remaining committees (those without term limits) chair turnover should be considered on a committee-by-committee basis. Donna said that there are two main considerations for keeping a committee chair after three years: (1) if special skills are needed and (2) if no other member of the committee agrees to be chair.

- Donna said she will draft guidelines relating to turnover, succession planning, new members, etc., to guide the President's and Council's decision-making on chair appointments. These guidelines will be reviewed and revised as needed by Council.

- Vince asked what the maximum number of committees a member can join should be. Donna said that Council discussed a cap of three committees but did not move on the recommendation at the time because it was immediately following Quest's return to 25 Broadway from the Covid-19 lockdown. Mary Ann said that making room for new members is one reason to limit the number of committees a member can join. Tamara pointed out that an organization can become dominated by certain members when those members are on too many committees, which can dissuade other members from joining those committees.

- These issues and related issues will be addressed in the guidelines Donna is developing.

The next scheduled Council meeting will be at 25 Broadway on April 8, 2025, at 2:45 p.m.

Donna adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Cullen, Secretary

Documents distributed at meeting: Agenda, Treasurer's Report, Bob Gottfried and Karen Cullen report on suggested guidelines for committee term limits and succession planning.