

Minutes
Commission on Appraisal meeting
January 19–22, in Orlando, FL

FRIDAY MORNING

Centering

Check-in

Minutes of last meeting

They were approved with no corrections.

Decision-making procedure (how we make decisions on the Commission)

The only rule or guideline we have at the moment is a brief sentence in the Handbook, on page 5, about how we aim for consensus, but vote in financial matters or elections.

There are some concerns about consensus; in particular, the ability of one person to block the whole group. In the last report, mostly, we all agreed, and anything that was disagreed strongly by even one person was dropped, except with the recommendations, where a few things that some people would have preferred to omit, were left in.

We discussed the idea of “degrees of agreement”: enthusiastic, supportive, accepting, neutral, no, as an alternative to either traditional voting or pure consensus. If anyone is in the No camp, they can be asked, “What would it take to make you move to at least Neutral?”

We discussed the possibility of, in the case of disagreement in the content of the report, including a “minority opinion” in the report—not for something like the choice of topic, on which we need to speak with one voice, but once the report is being written.

We summarized the results of the discussion as follows: We're going to try to make decisions by consensus. When consensus is difficult to reach, any of us can move to call a vote. This needs to be seconded. On non-substantive matters (logistics, etc), a simple majority (not counting abstentions) is enough to move forward. On substantive matters, at least 7 Commissioners must agree. Everyone agrees to abide by the decision. If there is a minority opinion, if the minority can suggest a way for this opinion to be represented, and if 5 Commissioners agree, then it will be.

This summary will be cleaned up, and re-presented to us for a decision later at this meeting.

The “quirk” conversation

As a means to get to know each other better, we shared some about our personality, working style, and quirks we have that might affect our working together. We were moved and grateful for all that people shared.

LUNCH

Study topic discussion

UU Infidels letter

We discussed the open letter from the UU Infidels, which was sent to each of us along with a cover letter inviting us to respond.

A response will be drafted, which we will approve before sending out.

Study topic discussion & hearing planning

Process observation and adjournment

SATURDAY

Some discussion of logistics, around when to meet tonight and tomorrow.

Hearing planning

Process observations.

LUNCH

Hearing

Hearing debriefing

We felt that it was a genuine hearing—pretty much everyone got to speak, and we heard.

During the open time, someone said they send us a suggestion for a study topic and never heard any response. We told him that we had many submissions and couldn't do all of them, but we wish that we had been clearer that we did send a response to everyone who submitted a topic.

The demographics of this group: we had 22 participants, who with 2 exceptions were over 40; 1 Latino and the rest white; 13 of them were denominational affairs chairs. We discussed ways to make sure a diversity of voices are included in the conversation. We did specifically invite youth and young adults to this hearing. It was noted that when doing outreach to different groups, yes, it would be great if they all went along with existing structures, but sometimes we have to do extra/exceptional things to go and seek those groups out. We noted that we did do that in the research leading up to the last report, and will do so again with this one. However, it may not be possible to get all the responses we would like in all of our interactions with the larger UU public—in particular, these hearings.

Study discussion

Note: Amendment to the decision-making process: Change “7 yay's” to “no more than 2 no's.”

Arthur

Arthur informed us that he has decided to resign from the CoA for personal & professional reasons.

Process observation and adjournment

SUNDAY MORNING

Brief review of agenda

Issues arising from Arthur's resignation

At the synchronization meeting, there will be a member of the Committee on Committees as well as Gini Courter and Bill Sinkford, who are on the Committee on Committees. The Board isn't meeting until the weekend of our meeting, so we won't have a ninth person at our April meeting—but it may be possible to have someone join us in April even before they are officially a member.

The process: the Board will appoint someone for a year, and then in 2007 we'll elect 4 people, one for a 4-year term, the rest for regular 6-year terms. It is likely that whoever is appointed will run. We brought up the question of our independence, and how that sits with having a Board-appointed person for a full term, but feel that in general we'd be more worried about the disruption of having more people than usual come on in the middle of a project.

We discussed what qualities we would like Arthur's replacement to have. There are three basic demographic things we're looking for: a middle-aged female lay person of colour, between 40 and 60. We would like someone who is compassionate and able to manage not knowing what's going on—we can't stop the whole process until they're caught up. Also, it's important the person not come in with an agenda—they're joining an established group, which has a formed identity and an ongoing process.

Other items from Gini's email

We discussed other items from Gini Courter's email, which have an impact on our study process.

Shorter studies

We're going to talk about the issue of a self-study in April.

International topic—it's worth doing a little more work, and if we have to drop it, then drop it.

Synchronization meeting discussion

Process observations

Check-out