**CHEA Board Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, August 11th 2015 @ 8:45pm

La Reunion Cooperative, 7910 Gault st. Austin, TX 78757

Board Members present:

* Hannah Wright – Board Chair
* Corey Williams – Secretary
* Andy Goolsby – Treasurer
* Genieva Croley – Member at Large

Also Present:

* Patrick – Sasona Member
* Oliver – Former Sasona Member

*Hannah Wright called the meeting to order at 8:46pm.*

# Minutes

Andy: Error in minutes for Agenda item 1 - Treasurer Update. "Beginning of April" should be "beginning of August"

*Hannah moves to approve minutes as amended above, Genieva seconds. Minutes approved as amended via consensus.*

# Agenda item 3 - Proposal to institute a CHEA wide property ban for Oliver Markley

Oliver: scheduled a meeting at Sasona to tell his side of the story, no one came, so he didn't have a meeting.

*Oliver provides the board with a document detailing the unfinished projects he was working on while he was Steward.*

Oliver: wishes to be able to work with the current Sasona Steward - Trip to further work on these projects. He has no intention of socializing at Sasona, or even at LaRe, unless invited.

As such he wants the board to reinstate the decision Sasona made at his member review that the board later overturned because that decision did not have a ban attached to it.

Andy: Part of the reason the board changed the decision from a contract break to an eviction was so that Oliver could move out when he wanted to and not face potential additional charges. Oliver you've already moved out of Sasona?

Oliver: Correct

Andy: And is your room already filled?

Oliver: Yes

Andy: So there is no vacancy gap between when you moved out and another member moved in

Oliver: there is not

Andy: Ok so that would free you then of the liability of having to pay for that

Hannah: Melissa pointed out that when a member of sasona is evicted that also comes with an automatic chea wide property ban. Her question to us is does the eviction the board decided on include a ban from chea properties? We didn't talk about that or were aware of that policy. It doesn't seem to me that the board should make the decision to add a ban. Sasona could always propose and vote on it's own ban.

Genieva: This whole issues arose out of not following protocol, so where do we stand if we make an exception for one person. Is that going to hurt us? Do we have something we can say to back this up?

Andy: Good point. If we're going to be sticklers for policy then we need to stick to them. It sounds like the board decision could have done more harm than good, as the original decision would allow oliver to be there.

Oliver: Not interested in being at Sasona, only interest is to work with Trip

Corey: This is all a little confusing. I don't think the actual decision the board made has any bearing in determining whether or not there is a ban in place. The actions Sasona took that Sunday before is more the determining factor, when the house voted to do a non-renewal. As far as the board is concerned, and I'm mostly speaking for myself here, but I don't think any of us thought what we were voting on included a ban.

I don't think Sasona can institute a CHEA wide ban, I think that's just part of their policies that are out of date. So I think the easiest thing to do is check in with the house and see what it wants to do in terms of there being a ban or not. I don't feel comfortable saying either way how Sasona should feel regarding this issue.

Oliver: Could that question when asked to Sasona include the additional information that my only interest is working with Trip not hanging out at Sasona

Andy: I know when we've banned people at LaRe, even though they were banned from the property and common areas they were still allowed to go directly to a resident's unit. So even if you were banned from the property you would still be able to go directly to someone's room, unless sasona has a policy otherwise, but I don't see how that could be legally enforced.

Oliver: My reading of the policy is that if you're banned, you're banned

Andy: A renter's right is to their particular space so a member of sasona renting a room could have you over as a guest and you could go from off property directly to their room, you just wouldn't be able to linger in common areas.

Genieva: I hear what you're saying about not intending to socialize around Sasona, but for members affected by your behavior would that be triggering for them to see you in their home?

Patrick: Sasona's set up a bit differently than LaRe so I'm not sure it's possible to enter private spaces without moving at least briefly through communal spaces where people who may or may not feel comfortable with that may be. Might be possible with planning and calling ahead.

Hannah: I think Corey has a good point. This is a really sensitive issue for those involved, so I also don't feel comfortable issuing or not issuing a ban. I think Sasona should decide that. I think that makes the most sense. I don't feel comfortable speaking for people involved.

Genieva: Yeah I also don't feel comfortable speaking for people at LaRe and saying Oliver can't visit LaRe.

Corey: I don't even feel comfortable saying as such either

Andy: Yeah. It would seem like the best course of action would be to have someone at Sasona put up an item pertaining to you being banned.

Oliver: They already voted at the membership review to not have a ban.

Genieva: Given changes in the membership at Sasona + other factors I think this should go back to Sasona as an agenda item.

Hannah: Can we go over quickly the votes that have happened so I can understand the timeline? First was the vote at the mem review to give a contract break and that did not have a ban on it. Then at a Sunday meeting Sasona voted on a non-renewal and that usually carries a ban with it.

Oliver: Then board basically carbon copied the Sasona sunday meeting decision.

Hannah: So it's no ban, ban, then ban

Oliver: Just wants to ensure Trip can get help if he needs it.

Hannah: I think that can happen regardless of if there's a ban or not. Given everything that's been going on it sounds like it wouldn't be good for you or Sasona, for you to be at sasona at least for a while.

Corey: I would say whether there's a ban or not, I don't read anything that would prevent you from taking part in CHEA related business as long as you were not on Sasona property. I don't see anything limiting that, so if you and Trip wanted to meet for coffee someday and hash out some stuff I don't see anything in this that would prevent you from doing that.

Genieva: I Don't know too much of the house's history but Thad was evicted and I saw him once on our property. Was he allowed

Hannah: His eviction came without a ban. We voted that he could come on property.

Don't mean to drag this process on longer than it has to but I think this should be a Sasona decision. I don't feel comfortable issuing a ban from the board level or not doing it. Does that sound legally okay?

Patrick: I think the thing is is there anything in CHEA policy that prevents the board from kicking it back to Sasona, and if there isn't I don't see anything wrong with someone making a motion to say Sasona has final say in this.

Andy: I don't think there's any policy on the CHEA level that prevents us from kicking it back to Sasona. I think it's important to have Sasona be the final say in this matter. Asking them to ratify their decision to ban him from the property seems legit.

*Agenda Item 3 Tabled*

# Agenda Item 1 - Treasurer update

Andy: the CHEA account is doing well. As last update we had $2530.18, we currently have 3494.60. We received transfers from both Sasona and La Reunion. Paid Andi Shively for Quickbooks expenses. Paid the lease and loan to NASCO. Had to spend $10 to get bank records for the deposits and written checks from the CHEA account. Now has context for all the transactions listed as unknown in Quickbooks. Going back over everything with a fine tooth to make sure all the funds were transferred correctly we received the correct amounts, and if there are any mistakes we need to retroactively fix we can look at them. This may take a while to do.

Hannah: So you're basically doing an audit?

Andy: Yeah. I want to make sure checks written from the account were for CHEA business and that funds were transferred properly from both the houses, because if there were mistakes made we can fix them if possible.

Hannah: For a while Sasona had been paying the wrong amount and is now paying the right amount, would be helpful to know how much sasona had been mispaying to try and correct that

Andy: I feel like that particular language might not be correct just because I have just recently taken over the treasurer duties and don't know what the previous agreements were on the board level. I know there's some confusion around that and want to wait until I have the numbers to make any kind of determination as to whether something was a mistake or not.

Corey: As part of this I'm going to be going through all the board minutes to find anything related to lease payments, budget amounts, etc and hopefully figure out the progression of how things developed.

Andy: And if the board made some mistake somewhere we can look at retroactively fixing it

Hannah: Sounds like a lot of work, let me know if I can help. So taxes are in motion?

Andy: review of our books are in motion. Andi won't be able to review our books until the later half of the month, then I'll be able to pass our books off and begin our taxes.

# Agenda Item 2 - Co-op tour update

*Agenda Item 2 - Tabled*

# Agenda Item 4 - CHEA wide zero tolerance policy for harassment

*Discussion on different reference documents, what info was included in them. Do not have documents in front of us for the meeting.*

Patrick: what's the issue with doing a membership review in response to allegations of harassment?

Genieva: Briefs everyone on Membership Review process. For issues of sexual harassment the mem review meeting was triggering for everyone involved. It's also really difficult to separate your personal connections to people in the house and the situations being discussed. Need a process that's less stressful for all the parties involved, as part of a smaller group to help alleviate the stress put on the entire house.

Andy: We had an associate member that we membership reviewed for sexual harassment. Worried that a zero tolerance policy might mean that we wouldn't have a membership review which could be problematic jumping straight to eviction. Usually the house can get together at a membership review and discuss the situation without taking the issues lightly.

Genieva: Doesn't want things to go straight to eviction. Idea is to have a committee involved to review what happened and make a decision. It can be really easy for people to overlook things because of personal biases.

Corey: There's two parts to this, what we define as harassment / a violation of this policy which may take a bit more time to come up with, and how we implement the policy which is what I think we can talk about tonight. We already have the procedure of member reviews, and if the board thinks something's wrong with a member review they can revisit it. I think this could possibly be an inverse of that. Whatever committee structure that we have fields these things and makes a decision on it. Those decisions get reported back to the house where the house could through some reasonable form of supermajority thought something was wrong with they way the committee handled an issue could revisit the issue themselves as a house.

Patrick: Anyone accused and put through this process needs to have equivalent rights as if they were to go through a membership review. The accusers should have the option of using either process. Membership reviews should still be an option if the accusers want to go that route.

Andy: Sounds like the committee could mainly be for mediation so the issue doesn't necessarily have to go to a membership review. People could instead take this to the committee and discuss what happened from both sides.

Genieva: Another NASCO house had two mediators at each house that members could go talk to after feeling like they were harassed. The person accused would then be informed of the accusations and could pick someone to talk to. Then those two people pick a 3rd person. Each person gets someone on their side plus there is a neutral 3rd party. Each person speaks to the committee individually and they discuss the issue. Harassment can be a very embarrassing issue and that might prevent people from stepping up and talking about it.

Patrick: By the time it's gotten to the point that a committee can form chances are it'll lead to an eviction. If someone's going so far as to get this committee together, not to assume guilt, but it definitely sounds like the accused would have crossed boundaries multiple times. Sounds like it would often already be beyond the point of mediation.

Andy: Using mediators as proxies can allow for uncomfortable communications to happen between folks, affirm boundaries, and maybe prevent them from having to get to a membership review point.

Corey: Point to keep in mind while working on this. If we make the barrier to entry too high or too difficult to start this process then it's simply not going to be used as often as it should.

Hannah: Having mediators to create a safe space and allow conversations to take place could be a good corrective action to maybe head things off before they get really bad. That group could review the situation and suggest corrective actions or decide to kick it to the house for legal actions. That sounds like a really good tool that we're missing.

Andy: Having a specific group of mediators seems like it would be difficult especially with turnover. Do we know of any group that could provide a training for the houses so people could in theory just reach out to anyone at either of the houses to mediate.

Genieva: I don't think anyone stepping in to this will be fully equipped to handle this. We have a member who did a lot of social justice work and could talk to her to see if she's keen on doing a training.We could also talk to NASCO about a training.

Hannah: I'll get that ball rolling.

Patrick: If someone asked me to mediate a situation I wouldn't know where to begin. I have a concept of what harassment is but that's something I usually have to feel out for myself. I wouldn't know how to do things like ask questions without offending people. It's a very touchy subject and I think mediators probably need some kind of training on it.

Genieva: That's one of the things that came up in Oliver's membership review, people want to be objective, but how do you ask questions without being insensitive to the people who were involved.

Corey: A lot of times I've seen people establish guidelines for the discussion at the onset of the discussion, so people know how they're going to be talking to one another. That can be a good starting place for those kind of things.

Genieva: I think that's another thing that was kind of missing. I didn't really understand how the process was going to work going forwards

Patrick: In Oliver's case where would this mediation have taken place on the timeline?

Corey: It would be nice if everyone has this training, but I don't ever want the situation to develop where because it's not explicitly someone's "ball" to pick up, nobody ever picks it up. I also don't want people to feel like they're forced to mediate a situation if they're not comfortable doing it. How do we select / ensure mediators are available.

Patrick: Mediators need to inform house officers and/or the CHEA board so that everyone knows an incident took place, even if it is amicably resolved, in case it does come up in the future. There's a chance these behaviors could reach a membership review level after mediation so there needs to be a record of incidents and what decisions were made. It can't just end at the mediator.

Genieva: We could vote people into mediator positions, but it's not a very easy job and I don't foresee people really wanting to take this up. My original idea is that would be up to the board, however I don't potentially want to take a decision away from other members of the house. It can also be really intimidating talking to 5 people. Although Abby doesn't live at either house so she could be a really good person to talk to. We could maybe set it up so we've already stepped-up as board members to be mediators. Also while surely some situations will end up going to the house there are still extreme and sensitive situations that can happen where you might not want to talk to 17 people.

Patrick: I don't think there's really a distinction to be made, what is "minor" or "major" harassment will differ from person to person. Mediation needs to be an option for any level, and if either party thinks the process isn't working for them it could go to something larger. I think if neither side wants an eviction, they have motivation to go to something smaller first. Unless a party is set on pursuing eviction, which point I think it's definitely something that should go to membership review.

Corey: If the responsibility for mediation is going to fall to anyone, like in the worst case scenario where a member can't find anyone to mediate for them, I think it has to default to the board members. Maybe the board members + a few specified house officer ships. There needs to be some sort of fallback, otherwise they should have the option to reach out to someone they feel comfortable with at the house for mediation. Those mediators can then loop the board in afterwards if that's needed.

Patrick: I wouldn't feel comfortable giving the power to evict someone to two or three mediators. I could easily see how having so few people involved could yield unfair results. How much power should the mediators have? It's a very narrow line between enough power to resolve a situation and having too much power potentially resulting in a lack of due process. I don't feel comfortable handing that much power to a few people.

Hannah: I'm thinking of this as more of a stop-gap.

Andy: In the past at LaRe we've had accusers write anonymous letters to the house detailing what they experienced that were read off at a membership review.

Corey: You could keep anonymity through the mediator as a proxy. If each side picks a mediator and have a third neutral mediator, that's potentially three signatures for a member review.

Genieva: I do agree that it can be scary to give people so much power. I do like this idea of people being able to write anonymous statements or go to mediators.

Patrick: I also think it's important that people know who the mediators are and feel comfortable talking to them and let members know that this is a resource that's available to them.

Hannah: I'm going to email Daniel and see about getting a training. It might also be good to identify people who would be good mediators at the houses and have a meeting with them and the stewards to start talking about implementation. Genieva could you email out the policies you were talking about to everyone so we can read over them at the next meeting.

*Agenda Item 4 - Tabled*

# Agenda Item 5 - Fill in board job descriptions

Hannah: I wrote down a few bullet points. I'll start up a google doc and everyone can contribute and fill in their positions.

*Agenda Item 5 - Tabled*

# Agenda Item 6 - CHEA part-time position – review of current draft

*Agenda Item 6 - Tabled*

# Agenda Item 7 - CHEA part-time position – Working Group 4 – Job Requirements

We said we weren't going to require them to know everything, so this may be moot.

Could have requirements of amount of co-op experience.

Or community development experience as well.

Should we require any kind of educational background? A lot of times that information isn't very useful.

Setting a 4 year degree requirement would be needlessly limiting our pool of candidates.

We want someone who understands co-ops and can pick up on our policies and structure, and if they understand financial and legal stuff even better.

Being able to work with a team

*Agenda Item 7 - Tabled*

# Agenda Item 8 - Clarifying NASCO-CHEA-House relationships – subcommittee update

Things in general are better at Sasona, there's a lot less animosity. Actually an exciting time for Sasona right now with all the new members.

Sasona working on improving their policies lately.

Can be hard to get the two houses together for events.

Might be useful to connect LaRe's Outreach coordinator and Sasona's event's planner.

*Agenda Item 8 - Tabled*

# New Business

Hannah: We have a bunch of board emails that people send messages to that none of us get.

Corey: Can probably work with Tech to figure out / reset passwords for "phantom" accounts.

Hannah: Need to do some housekeeping, Can talk with trip to help figure out the emails.

Hannah: Beth and Abby are coming to Sasona to talk about the ACBA. I don't think we've renewed our membership?

Andy: I haven't received a bill from them. We should also be receiving a maintenance reimbursement mailed to Sasona soon.

Hannah: We'll need to decide as a board whether or not we want to renew our ACBA membership.

Genieva: We should maybe look into setting up a cross-house forum / email list

*Meeting adjourned at 10:25pm*

**Next Meeting**

Tuesday, August 25th 2015 @ 8:45pm

Sasona Cooperative, 2604 Paramount Ave, TX 78704

**Agenda**

1. Treasurer update
2. Co-op tour update
3. CHEA part-time position – review of current draft
4. CHEA part-time position – Working Group 4 – Job Requirements
5. Fill in descriptions for board positions.
6. Discuss a CHEA wide zero tolerance policy for sexual and racial harassment.
7. Clarifying NASCO-CHEA-House relationships – subcommittee update