Background:

First and foremost, there is no rule that denies me the right to reply with background and a statement that I would try to improve my interaction. Regardless of my disagreement with the writer about how I handled the event, which is in line with both my and other board members' handling of this situation in the past, there was no reason to push the matter beyond providing an acknowledgement of their concern. I have a recording of the whole incident, however due to the presence of numerous young minors, unrelated people and conversations, and the size of the recording I have not yet had time to redact out unrelated information for sharing.

this event crowd has had nearly the exact same complaint generated by multiple board members, including more earlier in the day for anti-maskers being asked to leave. Additionally, the hosts of these events and those like them have a history of inviting large crowds with no planning, propping doors, ignoring waivers, and allowing young children to run around unattended. One of the prior meetups of a retro group found a number of non-members in the chemistry lab, this one I had at least three instances of unattended minors including the same member and non-members leaving their child multiple times after being informed they are not allowed unattended.

Previously, there has often been a second board member or an officer who shows up to the event to help resolve problems, and those who complain about our enforcement of our policies would bring it up with one of them. However, at this event I was the only DnO who would try to resolve the problem. The only other DnO in the building was Freddy, who chose to not assist with the crowd, waivers, or other issues present. Given my complaints against him, I was not going to try and speak with him directly.

I have the full email headers in my takeout archive; I have redacted the sender for this document since it is irrelevant.

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Subject: Re: [BOARD] [ADMIN] Feedback on this weekend's Retro Computing event

From: Tails Hartnett <hon1nbo@dallasmakerspace.org>

Date: 10/25/21, 12:49 AM

To: <REDACTED> <<REDACTED>@gmail.com>

CC: "Dallas Makerspace (Dallas Makerspace)" <admin@dallasmakerspace.org>

<REDACTED>,

As the board member present I'd like to first to apologise for my tone. Between the time the issue

came to my attention and when I made the room call for waivers, I had just been berated by some

of the visitors in the previous rooms, yelled at for closing the safety doors that were being propped,

dealt with a number of unattended children walking the premises, and lugged the equipment to try

and get waivers signed as efficiently as possible for those still present. I had a large building to

cover, children to find parents for, and a large crowd of people invited by a member who did not

involve DMS leadership nor manage the event with all of his guests (this was the member I was

speaking with at the event).

I can definitely work to improve my tone and keep things level in such stressful situations, and I

will take that feedback to heart.

As an entirely volunteer run organisation, it is unfortunately the case that whomever has to deal

with this situation is in effect, like you say, a "camp counselor." As an entirely volunteer run nonprofit, there are not typically people stationed on the grounds. I only happened to be there for an

unrelated meeting when I received complaints about the group and encountered all of our security

doors having been propped open. Our volunteers pickup after members who dump their oil on the

floor, get berated by anti-maskers (of whom there were a handful in the Retro computing group

other members already had to ask to leave earlier in the day), and have to wrangle crowds brought

in without knowledge of the facility policies or safety requirements by an individual member. It's

easier to think of this like working retail. People in a retail store may be adults, but unfortunately a

large number of them do not treat the facility with care like they would their own home or office

which puts a large strain on those working there cleaning up the results. The key difference is we

are not a facility open to the general public without a valid membership, and as a result there is no

signage nor instructions for non-member guidance because there are never supposed to be

unattended visitors.

We had just had a similar situation happen a couple months or so ago with another event hosted

by a single member without forming a plan or informing the guests of the liabilities and safety

requirements. Two volunteers caught off guard and trying to deal with it all found several visitors

unattended in our chemistry lab and various heavy equipment areas without supervision. One of

them even decided to start shooting a film and trying to get a camera in members faces who were

not consenting to being filmed. We have policies for events, and unfortunately in this situation they

were not followed by the organiser for the Retro computing event.

Regarding event logistics, it is important to note that we do not endorse nor provide resources for

non-DMS events such as the Retro computing meetup that took place. A DMS member who is

involved in the retro computing group organises these, and booked an event in our facility without

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warning us of a need for volunteers nor did they handle the event logistics as our members are

required to do. The other events you mentioned, such as the atomic event, were additionally not

DMS events but rather put on by an individual or small group with the exception of facility

tour/orientation, for which there were volunteers assigned and managing those events.. Members

may invite guests to our facility and book rooms for things, however it is their responsibility to run

the event.

As far as DMS is concerned, you were all guests of the sole member present. As such, the member

is required to have everyone present sign the liability waiver and handle guest entry and exit. This

became an immediate concern due to the unattended minors wandering the halls and rooms

combined with our security doors being propped open. Even after being informed they need to

keep their children with them, parents (including the member you saw me speaking with) were

repeatedly refusing to keep their children with them. In such a situation there is, unfortunately,

little time for pleasantries.

As for the access control systems, it's unfortunately not as simple as you assume to implement a

guest access card system. On top of the technical challenges to implement with our existing door

controllers, and costs for build out a system to manage the cards, this still requires volunteers to

manage administering the cards to visitors, programming them for the event, configuring the

event details and what doors are covered, etc. This would be a large amount of logistics and

financial expense for an event which DMS did not endorse or sponsor to begin with. If the single

member who brought everyone as a visitor does not arrange for volunteers currently, such a

system is only going to cause even more confusion. In addition, it would not stop one from entering

dangerous areas such as the Machine Shop, industrial sewing machines, heat presses, and more

dangerous equipment which were accessible from where the event was taking place. This would

require more access control doors to be installed.

Again, I will try to work on my tone for these situations as a general matter of trying to keep things

under control, however there is nothing we can do about the logistics if the Retro group member

who sponsored the event does not provide a plan.

Regards,

Tails Hartnett

DMS Board of Directors

On Sun, Oct 24, 2021, 22:34 <REDACTED> <<REDACTED>@gmail.com> wrote:

To whom it may concern,

I was an attendee at this weekend's DFW Retro Computing meetup at your facility, which was

also my first visit to Makerspace after having heard a lot about it (and after having attended two

online classes offered over the course of this year). I'm writing to express my concerns over the

way that this particular in-person event unfolded, especially the way that one of your employees

or volunteers handled himself.

When two of us arrived to set up my display machines around 1:45 p.m. Saturday, we found the

main entrance door propped open (which we didn't question at the time -- my friend has

attended events there before with his family, and as I said, it was my first visit). We were shown

the way back to one of the rooms and dropped off some of my display items, after which I signed

in and completed the liability waiver at a kiosk.

My first impression was that your staff or volunteers didn't seem to be actively managing either

of the two public events taking place; I had to ring the doorbell leading back into the shop areas

numerous times to get access to the rooms set aside for us, and even then, we got competing

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information from different people about whether or not we were even able to set up at that time.

I was also confused by the fact that there was no signage showing which room(s) were set aside

for particular events or classes.

With that said, all went well from my standpoint until the last 30 minutes of the event, after close

to 1/3 of the attendees had already left, when a young man (Caucasian, approximately in his

early 30s, with blue-dyed tips in his hair) came in and loudly interrupted the conversations to ask

which of us had signed the liability waiver. He then directed all those who hadn't to come and do

so - which, in and of itself, is a reasonable request.

However, the tone and attitude with which he ordered people around was not. At no time did he

identify himself as a Makerspace volunteer or staff member, or give any sort of preamble to his

request. His tone and demeanor were unnecessarily confrontational -- my impression was of a

very angry, overworked summer camp counselor speaking not to grown adults, but to unruly

teenagers. Without even waiting for people to start filing out, he began lecturing the entire room

on the fact that doors had been propped open and that people had been using the wrong

entrance to the facility. He then laid into the one Dallas Makerspace member still present at the

end of the event, who as I understand it was not one of the organizers of our event.

Whoever this person may be, he is a liability to your organization. As a guest who had followed

all of your directions I could see, I still felt unwelcome. And, if I had been the one member

present, I definitely would not have appreciated being lectured in front of a crowd of people and,

seemingly, being held responsible for a lack of planning that wasn't (as I understood it) in any

way his fault.

These are my observations as a casual member of the DFW Retro Computing group and a firsttime visitor to Dallas Makerspace.

I appreciate the fact that your organization has very valid and serious potential liability concerns,

given that your facility houses expensive and dangerous (to untrained personnel) equipment of

various kinds, not to mention expensive computer hardware and all the other furnishings and

gear on hand. Having been trained to work in both a woodworking shop and an auto garage, I

understand and appreciate those dangers.

With that said, I have also worked on the staff of numerous public events in North Carolina and

Texas, including 5K races, home tours, and concerts -- each of which had its own safety and

security concerns for volunteers, participants, and the general public. With that experience in

mind, I offer three observations in response to your staff member's concerns and the general

state of things on Saturday:

Your organization was hosting at least one class or tour and two separate public events (a

nuclear energy event and our meetup). You could have, and should have, done more to

prepare by having a volunteer in your lobby to direct people to the appropriate locations. It

is your responsibility to prepare your space for members of the public who aren't prepared

for their visit, and make sure you have enough staff or volunteers on hand, well ahead of

time, and prepared for the day ahead.

It is not reasonable for your staff or volunteers to harangue guests who aren't members --

people who, as far as I could tell, hadn't been given any directions on arrival, who had no

signage to follow other than signs obviously there for your members' benefit and a pointer

to the "Main Entrance" -- about how they haven't followed the proper directions. If you are

going to host public events at your facility, it is your responsibility to provide enough staff or

volunteers, enough information (other than a liability waiver), and enough guidance to

make sure your guests act according to your wishes.

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You've clearly invested heavily in security and access control for some points of your facility.

If you're going to host public events, you can -- and should -- add additional access control

points for areas outside of the allotted space. Inexpensive hotel-style key cards are readily

available, and can be set with parameters to make sure your guests for public events

cannot access dangerous or even just "off-limits" areas. If there are areas you want guests

to access, you can set those cards up, issue them, and then charge a fee if they aren't

returned afterward; if only members have those keycards, and if your members are trained

on how to act and react during public events, then the possibility of an accident or

intentional harm becomes much less as well.

It's also, in my opinion, unreasonable to expect every single guest to be escorted at all times

between the outside doors and the meeting rooms -- even, apparently, to the restrooms and

back -- by a Dallas Makerspace member. Again, if you're going to host public meetings, you

either need to provide sufficient volunteers yourselves, along with sufficient signage to make

sure they're kept safe and informed ... or, you should not host public gatherings at all. I highly

doubt that any loosely-affiliated, informal group of our size has enough paying Dallas

Makerspace members in its membership to do so, regardless of whether what you're asking of

those members is fair.

Faced with this kind of attitude and reception, I'm not inclined to become a member of Dallas

Makerspace anytime soon, and I'm definitely not going to recommend that DFW Retro

Computing, or any other group, consider having gatherings there, until or unless it's clear that

there are more mature leaders and better logistics on hand.

At the same time, there's a definite place in the community for the makerspace concept -- you've

clearly done a lot to lay the groundwork for a great space to educate and inspire the public -- and

I really do value that.

So, I hope those changes do happen soon; I'd be glad to hear from friends or colleagues that

things are different in the future, and consider coming back under better circumstances at that

time.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

<REDACTED>

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