

MATC General Membership Meeting Minutes 4/22/09

Board Members Present:

Kate Mitroka (President)
Elizabeth Garcia (Vice President)
Claire Ryan (Treasurer)
Tracey Rosen (Secretary)
Blake Charlebois (Registration Officer)
Gloria Murillo (Webmaster)
Denzil Bernard (Director of Operations)

Club Members/Users Present:

Chandan B., Aleric S., Dinesh P., Bob K., Bob L., Avik B., Tamar B., Patricia G., Andreas S., Maria R., Marco B., Camila P., Bo S., Andrew I., Sukanya P., Dana B., Faissal S., Nahi O., John B., Tracy S., Solveig H., Alex E., Maya Noel., Alan M., Marianna A.

27 Club members were present. Quorum was met.

Meeting was called to order at 9:45pm.

Proposed Agenda:

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Introductions and Officer Reports**
- 3. Thank you to volunteers**
- 4. Upcoming Events**
- 5. Proposed Constitutional Amendments**
- 6. New Pricing Structure**
- 7. Financial Report**
- 8. Discussion of Financial Report**
- 9. Discussion of Constitutional Amendments**
- 10. Discussion of New Pricing Structure**
- 11. Member Concerns**

1. Welcome

Kate welcomed the assembly, thanking them for their attendance and reiterating the meeting procedure stated on the agenda. Questions will be addressed only to the Chair, who will then redirect or answer the question as necessary. No member or user shall directly address another member or user. Members were provided with yellow index cards to indicate their priority in the line of address.

2. Introductions and Officer Reports

a) Kate- Job entails coordinating communication with EOs, Board members, instructors, etc.; organizing all Board meetings; working with guest instructor contracts for festivals and workshops

b)Elizabeth- Job entails coordinating all volunteering for regular club events, series instructors, and practica/milonga DJs.

-Thanks to door volunteers, their work is very much appreciated.

-1 new instructor for the Mar/April series, 2 new instructors for the May/June series.

-1 new DJ, with more expected to start in the next semester.

-Created a class curriculum with the aim of standardizing the teaching system. Currently getting instructor feedback on the new curriculum.

-Monday classes have been added, others are encouraged to come up with more ideas for Mondays. Also in the works is a DJing class for a Monday, as well as different volunteer opportunities.

-Idea for the future is a class for current and prospective teachers to exchange teaching techniques and advice

c)Claire- Job entails keeping track of money going in and out of the club account, collecting membership dues, processing reimbursements.

d)Tracey- Job entails taking down minutes for each Board meeting.

-Currently slightly behind in minutes posts, but will shortly have all meeting minutes on the MATC website

e)Denzil- Job entails securing locations for classes and milongas

-The club now has access to a broom and mop to keep the floors cleaner for events.

-Currently looking into cheaper event locations

f)Blake- Job entails keeping track of who has paid for an event and who is a member of the Club

g)Gloria- Job entails sending out weekly emails, and updating the website

-Currently preparing to overhaul the website this summer

3. Thank You Volunteers

A thank you was extended to all festival and workshop EOs, Tea milonga organizers and volunteers.

4. Upcoming Events

The assembly was notified of the following upcoming MATC events:

May Madness (May 8-11)

New Series (beginning May 6)

Tea Milonga (April 26)

Our mission statement:

We are a volunteer-based student organization dedicated to the philosophy and proposition that tango is not a commodity but rather an art form to be shared freely. It shall be cultivated in a community of Club participants, which fosters leadership and operates with a firm appreciation of the various talents, abilities, and motivations of those who give that community form.

5. Proposed Constitutional Amendments

a) VIII. Amendments to the Constitution

Any Club Member may submit to the Board an amendment to the Constitution. Before it can be ratified, any proposed change to the constitution must have 1) gained the sponsorship of at least three (3) Board Members, and 2) been presented to and discussed with Club Membership at a General Membership Meeting. Ratification of any proposed change shall occur during a subsequent General Membership Meeting and in the same calendar year as the initial proposal.

To be ratified, a proposed Constitutional amendment must be passed by a minimum of twenty-five (25) votes or a majority of two-thirds (2/3) of the Club Members present at the General Membership Meeting, whichever is greater.

Concerns with original wording:

-Does not explicitly state that all amendments need to be sponsored by Board members nor that they have to be discussed at a GMM
-Only the requirement of a 2/3 majority for ratification does not safeguard against the possibility of a small number of people changing the constitution.

E.g.

MSA registration requirement for a SO: at least 10 students

Quorum for a GMM: 20% of the total membership(10) = 2

Number of votes to ratify amendments: 2/3 of the attendees = 2

b) V.1-e Limitations

Irrespective of when and which Board position he/she held, no person shall serve on the Board for more than two (2) full terms, or more than three (3) terms (in case of one or more partial terms). Service amounting to less than three-fourths (¾) the life of the Board on which the term was served, shall be considered a "partial term." Otherwise, the term shall be considered "full."

Reasons for proposed amendment:

- As a student club conscious of the high turn-over inherent to a university, MATC is committed to offering leadership opportunities to as many people as possible
- As a VSO MATC recognizes the contributions, time, and effort of it's constituents and is committed not to place undue burden on any member
- Promote influx of new ideas
- Prevent stagnation in leadership
- To ensure perpetuation of the club by identifying and encouraging new members to take up leadership positions and to avoid dependence on a few members

c) V.1-f(iii) Candidatures

Any club member in good standing may submit to the Election Committee an application for candidature which shall include their name and University of Michigan Student status. If candidates undertake any of the activities listed below, they shall disclose them to the Election Committee along with their application:

Concerns with original wording:

- Does not require the person submitting an application to be a member
- Does not require the person to be a member in good standing

The proposed amendments will be voted upon at the next General Membership Meeting.

6. New Pricing Structure

In order to account for increasing operating expenses, the Board recently created a new pricing structure for regular club events. Although it is impossible to know exact costs and revenue for the rest of the year, careful thought was put into the new structure so that the budget will balance.

2009 Annual Budget-\$24,000
Projected 2009 Revenue-\$17,000
Difference- \$7000

Projected 2009 Revenue with new pricing structure-\$20,000
Difference from Budget- \$4000

2010 Annual Budget- \$23,000
Projected 2010 Revenue with new pricing structure- \$23,000
Break even

- Does not address the loss up to this point, but both Fire and Ice and Alicia Pons have made money this year.
- New pricing structure will be re-evaluated after every series.

7. Financial Report

Operating expenses (not including special events) Jan-Apr.- \$7573

Revenue from membership dues and passes Jan-Apr.- \$9324

Fire and Ice Net Profit: \$4110.77

Liabilities: Current Club liabilities total \$70

Fire and Ice housing reimbursements totaling \$189

Not all receipts have been received for Alicia Pons, so the final amounts have not been tallied. However, it appears that the workshop did make money.

2009 financial operations are progressing in agreement with the budget set out by the 2008 Board.

8. Discussion of Financial Report

Marco asked if the source of revenue loss had been identified.

Claire replied that there have been 2 main sources of loss. Festivals from last year had lost \$1000 by the end of the year, and membership and pass fees only added up to \$18,000.

Alan remarked that he was surprised the club is losing money. He said that Clay Nelson, whose main source of income is tango festivals, takes in a lot of money because he publicizes across the nation. He suggested that the club publicize festival more in order to avoid price hikes and budget issues.

Kate replied that the Board has been working on publicity including the Tango-A listserve, flyering, and newspapers.

Elizabeth added that she created a club account on Tango-A and has been posting announcements for Alicia Pons, and May Madness. She also said that the club has been sending flyers with people going to festivals in addition to sending flyers directly to some festival organizers. People who are traveling are encouraged to notify the Board of their plans so they can be supplied with event information.

Alan replied that the club has been doing a good job so far, and said to Denzil that the floors in the classrooms look good. He added that free passes to advanced dancers should be given to specific people, and that festivals are like parties, where people get invited for free because they bring people with them.

Tracy said that Clay Nelson's events are wonderful, but they cost a lot of money. She then said that the club is doing a great job.

John said that complimentary passes have been offered to certain people for May Madness and mentioned that Oregon (where Clay Nelson is located) is a different scene than Ann Arbor that has been around longer. He also said that current MATC members are getting advice from longtime members such as Ramu, to provide a good atmosphere and work to make events affordable.

Nahi said that he sees the need for the price increase. He is also concerned about being selective about people who will contribute to the atmosphere. He emphasized the need for balance between increasing memberships and festival attendance and maintaining quality and atmosphere.

Aleric said that Alan made good and valid points and mentioned that the club has been doing complimentary passes. He also noted that Clay personally profits from his festivals while paying DJs very little, and it is important to keep in perspective the fact that the club is a non-profit.

Kate encouraged people to come to the board with any specific concerns or ideas on festival publicity and organization.

Bob K. agreed with Aleric and stated he was happy with the board's approach to the budget.

Chandan agreed with Aleric about being a non-profit. He asked if operating expenses increase every year.

Denzil replied that the operating expenses do not increase every year, but some expenses can change depending on a change in university policy. They did not change last year. He said the goal is to meet regular operational expenses from the revenue generated through regular classes, while festival and workshops are managed separately.

Alan said that he meant to use Clay Nelson to show a potential scenario for the club. He said that another example is Yale, a small community with smaller festivals but a good atmosphere. He said it would be better to talk about festival issues as a source of income, and that non-profits can still make a lot of money and then spend it. He also said that Aleric made a good point, but a monetary buffer would be nice to have.

Kate said that she was hearing from the group that the club should work on getting the word out about events to the right people at earlier times.

Avik said that lots of people have lots of different needs, and that some people only attend certain club events. He suggested separating the events in terms of payment so that single events can be cut if the budget doesn't allow for them. He gave the example of the fact that the current pricing structure groups Monday and Wednesday classes and practicas, but some people only come Mondays, while some others only come Wednesdays.

Kate commented that Avik's statement reflects Denzil's statement about the club's goal to make festivals pay for themselves and have regular events pay for themselves.

Aleric said that he was invited to the Yale festival both last year and this year. He said that the difference between Yale and MATC is that Yale has the same people organizing events every year, which is not the club's situation.

Avik said that the Monday and Wednesday events were independent when he was teaching there (at the Grange). He said that before they were not aware of the revenue going in and out, and this might be an argument for including Mondays at the Grange in the pass.

Kate commented that the Board will consider different options and continue to evaluate Club finances and needs. She added that the board is trying to figure out what administratively makes the most sense since everyone is a volunteer, many are students, and there is a high turnover rate.

Claire said that the board is encouraging people to come to the Grange, and that the board wants to include as much as possible in a pass. She said that the more cash the club has, the greater the liability it has, and a new pass would make the Registration Officer's work more complicated.

John said that including Monday nights is good because dancers should dance as much as possible, as members.

Kate mentioned that Tracey is taking down the words said and the opinions expressed, and that the board will study them.

Avik said that he doesn't disagree with John. He said that financially speaking if it's administratively possible, it might be better to separate the Monday and Wednesday events because as it stands, people are subsidizing the cost of something they are not using.

Kate said that the board will continue to re-evaluate the pricing structure's function in the club.

Faissal said that the classroom rentals were expensive and asked what they're rate was.

Denzil replied that classroom rates vary depending on the size of the room. The club had 4 classrooms at the beginning of the year and currently has 3. He said that G115 was \$50/hour and the other rooms were \$35/hour. [Correction: Classroom rates are per day, not per hour]

Faissal asked if there was any way to lower the classroom costs.

Kate asked if the stated rates were student rates.

Denzil replied that they were university rates.

Bob K. asked to clarify if the rates were per day or per hour.

Denzil replied that the rates were per hour.

Bob K. asked if the rates added up to \$175/day/room.

Denzil [missed what was said]

Bob K. asked if the rates added up to \$300-\$400/day for all the rooms.

[Missed what was said]

9. Discussion of Constitutional Amendments

Bob K. said the board has done a good job and supports the intent and purpose of the amendments. He said that with regard to the problem of defining a member in good standing, the amendment should be voted upon first. The club should then determine the definition of a member in good standing separately.

Kate said the matter will be handled similarly to the change in pricing structure. She said the term "member in good standing" is not defined in the constitution, and feedback from the club on an appropriate definition will be considered in order to create one.

Dinesh asked what would happen if 3 board members did not sponsor a proposal for amendment.

Kate replied that anyone can bring an amendment to the board, and that 3 members are needed to bring the proposal to official discussion. The amendment does not necessarily get approved.

Dinesh stated his concern about the possibility that no board member would want to carry an issue being raised.

Elizabeth stated that she would hope board members voted into office by the club would be responsive to an issue that a majority of people feel is important.

Dinesh said that he was still concerned about the potential veto power of the club.

Denzil stated that an issue can always be raised by members at GMMs; the sponsorship only indicates that the members of the Board find the suggested amendment suitable for discussion. They do not necessarily have to be in favor of it.

Bob K. said that he agrees with Denzil.

Tracy S. said that she doesn't understand how having 25 votes or 2/3 of the members present vote for approval to pass an amendment solves the problem of safeguarding against a small number of people ratifying changes to the constitution.

Kate replied that the system sets a minimum floor of 25 votes but allows for an increased amount if the meeting size is bigger.

Elizabeth said that fewer than 25 people should not be able to change the constitution.

Dinesh said that it is good that any person can serve on the board, but the term limit doesn't allow for someone who is liked to stay on if elected. If the person was not liked, they would be voted out.

Kate acknowledged Dinesh's concern and stated that the goals of the term limit exist to keep one person from feeling pressure to continue and to encourage more people to become involved.

Elizabeth added that the term limit reflects the mission statement to foster leadership and involve as many students as possible. She said that by falling into a pattern of voting for one person, the club can miss opportunities. She stated that it is important to acknowledge the experience of more seasoned members and that they should play an advisory role and encourage new members. She added that people have many skills and it would be unfair to discount someone less well-known, especially with a high-turnover student club.

Kate said that there are lots of different ways the club is segmented and that there are people who continue to help the club from many different locations. She said there are many ways for the institutional wisdom to remain.

Faissal asked how many members the club currently has.

Blake replied that there are currently approximately 85 members.

Faissal asked what would happen with regard to the amendment process if the number of members dropped below 25.

Kate replied that it would not be possible to change the constitution at that time.

Faissal requested that the board clarify the situation of “members in good standing.”

Kate said that the term was used in other places in the constitution besides the proposed amendment, but it was not defined in the constitution and that the board wants input from club members on how it should be defined. She said a call for feedback on the subject will be included in future emails.

John recommended rephrasing the amendment to section VIII because the wording is ambiguous.

Tracy S. offered a modification of the amendment based on a floor of 25 members

Denzil clarified that a minimum of 25 votes in favor would be required, not a minimum of 25 people attending. Twenty percent of the membership is required to hold a meeting. Two thirds of the members present would be needed to approve an amendment in the event 25 is less than 2/3 of the members present.

Kate said that in order for an amendment to pass, 25 people must vote for it.

Denzil said that it is not 2/3 of the total membership that is needed to pass the amendment, but 2/3 of the members present.

Kate said that the substance of the proposal is that 25 people must vote yes in order to change the constitution. If anyone wants to change the wording, he or she should send the proposed wording change to the board in an email.

Dinesh said it is now clear to him because the 25 votes are needed to pass the amendment rather than simply needing 25 people to vote on the amendment.

10. Discussion of New Pricing Structure

Avik asked if full year passes already purchased are still valid under the new pricing structure.

Kate said that they are still valid, and that the pricing structure goes into effect starting May 6.

12. Member Concerns

Maria said that Elizabeth forgot to mention a few volunteers in her earlier statement. She said that the board puts in a lot of effort, teachers are all volunteers, and they pay to teach. She suggested the board consider a token acknowledgement to people who have contributed in the form of a small monetary discount.

Kate agreed with Maria's statement about the high value of teacher and volunteer contributions and stated that the issue of token acknowledgement for teachers would be added to the board's agenda for discussion.

Elizabeth agreed with Maria's statement about volunteer contributions and said that she remembered difficulties arising with token acknowledgements because of full year and half year passes. She said the board could re-evaluate this issue.

Kate said that the issue of token acknowledgement would be on the next board agenda.

Alan said that he considers himself neutral, but he has noticed there is no collaboration between MATC and other tango organizations. He said he does not understand why there is friction between the groups, and that everyone should go to all local events. He suggested collaborating with MTango and stated that there is time enough in the week for all groups to coexist. He said that people should encourage others to go to other events and mix with other people, and it seems like the divisions have gotten worse.

Kate replied that the club is open to collaboration, but there are some constraints from MSA.

Alan asked what constraints were in place from MSA.

Kate replied that the club cannot be part of an event where one of its members profits financially.

Alan asked if anyone did not agree.

Denzil said that the club has many events and some events with other groups overlap with those of MATC.

Kate reminded the meeting participants that all comments or questions should be directed to her.

Alan asked whether Fridays were an option.

Denzil stated that the MTango group that Alan referred to began its classes sometime in May last year initially with classes on Wednesdays at 7:30pm, a half hour before MATC's own classes. As such the club couldn't be expected to ask its membership to attend their classes. They have only changed their classes to Fridays recently. He also said that the Board is responsible to its own membership and is committed to providing members with as many opportunities for tango as possible at affordable rates. He stated that the club also has made announcements regarding other events in its emails, and there is a page on the website including other tango opportunities in the local area.

Aleric said that Alan was being idealistic and that the club has been running events for the past 8 years. He said that when there are competing events with an event the club has already announced, the event does not go as well for the club. He gave an example of the most recent New Year's milonga, stating that the MATC New Year's milonga was not as successful because another milonga was announced for the same night. He also said that MTango had sent an email to its general membership stating that the quality of MATC instruction was poor. He read a quote from the email and then said that MATC has never made such statements about other groups and that he would be reluctant to collaborate with such groups who had.

Kate said that MATC is not responsible for what other groups say about the club, and that the board remains committed to pursuing its mission.

Solveig pointed out the various occupations of the board members and acknowledged their time and effort toward the club.

Kate thanked Solveig and the assembly for their comments and stated that she feels privileged to be part of the board.

Alan said that like Obama continues to communicate with Iran and leaders such as Hugo Chavez, the board should talk to other groups if there is conflict, and that the groups should work together to coordinate days. He said that he is not being idealistic, and that tango is supposed to be fun.

Bob K. said that some people left the club and formed MTango, and that the email reflects on their character. He agreed with Kate and said the organization is evolving, and conflicts should be worked through.

Maria said that she addressed concerns about the email to Jenny (Wang), who apologized and removed the wording. She said that Jenny does promote MATC events.

In the interests of time, Kate thanked the assembly for coming and encouraged them to talk to and email the board with any feedback.

Motion to adjourn:

Proposed by: Bob K.

Seconded by: Dinesh

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 11:30pm