 MINUTES

AILG Plenary Meeting Minutes

 Wednesday, April 29, 2020 | Online only| Meeting called to order at 5:05pm by Akil Middleton

# In Attendance

# Welcome and Introductions

This is our first virtual meeting, so please bear with us.

# FSILG Office & Student Council Update

Brad Badgley provided an update, thanking alums for their help during this time. We currently have 14 empty FSILGs, and about 43 grad students (including GRAs) spread across the other houses. The FSILG Office has communicated with alum corporations about which residents are in each house right now. The office has continued to work with students, and CP\* (the virtual CPW) has been going on recently. IFC and Panhel have both created VP of Diversity and Inclusion Chair positions this year, and IFC is also looking into an Academics Chair. MIT has been continuing to do increased security checks, and groups will be contacted if things like open windows in their house are noticed during a security check. The office is working with students to envision possibilities for how to do recruitment if that has to be virtual/online. GRAs are important for the coming year, and the FSILG Office is going to move forward in hiring them for the next year. The office will discuss with houses about whether the groups want the GRA to be in residence or housed on campus during the time when FSILGs are not housing undergrads.

# MIT’s Outlook through the Fall

Suzy Nelson, VP and Dean for Student Life, presented a status update and view forward for the MIT community and MIT FSILGs. Thinking about reopening campus and the roadmap, she will meet with our students to discuss. FSILGs are part of the MIT community and will not be overlooked, though right now there is not much certainty or answers, just questions. There are a number of Emergency Management Working groups. In addition to the undergrads leaving campus, and courses going online, there has been a lot going on. The MIT dorm residence system is housing about 2000 people (1300 grad students, about 200 undergrads, various staff). MIT and FSILGs depend on revenue, and there will have to be a lot of replanning. MIT realizes that FSILGs are more dependent on undergrad revenue than MIT as a whole, but there is an impact all around, and this is a very significant situation. MIT Student Life’s budget is 85% from student revenue, too, so they understand and are aware of concerns.

Cecelia Stoupis and MIT Medical has set up the Sean Collier Care Facility for COVID-19, 75 bed observation unit in Johnson ice rink. There was concern that both MIT and MA overall might need surge capacity for care. The care center is for people who are ill and need some care, but not hospitalization. So far, this facility has not needed to be used, but it is ready. Burton Connor has been set up as an isolation dorm, for students (including grad students) who may need a place to be quarantined away from their current living situation.

As MIT considers reopening in the fall, there are 4 key drivers. We need antibody testing for the virus, a method for contact tracing, some therapeutics for the illness, and a vaccine. There is also the factor of balancing risk to individuals and the community, as a public health matter. When considering bringing students back, the question is their health but also their impact on other people’s health. What would be socially acceptable ground rules for when people return, such as the new social norm of wearing masks, and how to accommodate remote work and lowering lab and living density. We would need a feasible isolation plan.

All the remote learning paths we are considering might work, but are different. We could do fall completely remotely. We could do the fall semester half/half, with half the undergraduates being present for each half of the semester, so only 2200 undergrads on campus at once. It’s easier to bring grad students back because they have lower density already. We could divide the year into 3 semesters, and each undergrad might pick 2 of them for on campus present, so 3100 undergrads on campus at once. We could have all undergrads return to campus in the fall but continue with remote teaching as much as possible. We might also decide to delay the start of the semester.

Residential Education Operations Group has formed, under Ian Waitz, to adapt/reinvent MIT’s residential education model, including academic and non-academic components of the student experience/education. The experience needs to be positive and special and beneficial, not isolating. These questions are all being raised, and there will be town halls and discussions to engage students in the problem solving. Trying to figure out what is safe; potentially having only one resident per room and only 3 per bathroom, and having meals be to-go/take-out. MIT hopes to delay making decisions until the summer, because things are still changing quickly, but it makes sense to think about it now. Consider how to care for those who might get sick, and how to protect vulnerable populations. New Vassar construction is delayed, so MIT is not going to have new dorm space coming online in the fall.

Propose forming an FSILG Operations Team that looks at issue particular to FSILGs. Pam, Judy, Brad, and others will be starting to work on that. MIT and other peer schools are talking about these issues, and de-densification is a big concern. FSILGs could consider, if there was a 1 person per room, 3 people per bathroom rule of thumb, what would that look like? How could FSILGs operate and set up social cultures where there are no group events or parties? How would our groups participate in contact tracing or regular testing schemes?

There will be no in-residence programs at MIT this summer, and FSILGs are not going to be housing summer boarders or undergraduates. If undergrads are working in Boston this summer, they cannot plan to live in FSILGs.

# Treasurer’s Report and Proposed 2020/2021 Budget

Eric Cigan presented the Treasurer’s Report.

Eric reviewed two reports: the AILG profit & loss and the balance sheet. No big surprises, but we are underspending as some of our programs are slowed. Facilities is still working intently; PVP is still getting rolling in its new form. The annual meeting expenses and other food spending like the plenary are not going to happen.

Erig Cigan also reviewed the proposed budget for next year.

This sheet shows this year’s budget, this year’s projected actuals, and next year’s budget. At the last AILG Board meeting, we voted to endorse a proposed budget. But, since then, we’ve gotten more data about projected actuals, and we’ve heard about MIT’s need to reduce DSL budget. So one thing we are doing is dropping the request for education & accreditation budget from MIT/DSL, a total of $15,700. However, we will still ask IRDF to support SLI/BSF program, as that has been important and we are putting it to good use. We expect the PVP program to be somewhat less than the former Accreditation program due to the restructure/reorganization of having administrative support to cover some of the tasks instead of a contract with a program coordinator who handled those things. Plenary meeting experiment with evening meetings these last two years seems successful, so we’re planning to go to all evening meetings instead of breakfast. We are adding budget to administrative, to cover some tasks that the FSILG Office and some volunteers have been doing, but which makes more sense for us to pay someone to do, including some note taking work at meetings. We’re also looking at QuickBooks online as a way to make the bookkeeping more distributed and transparent. We were planning to have a $5000 loss this year, but instead we had about a $16,000 profit. So, we will plan to have a $21,000 loss next year, because we are a non-profit and are not trying to accumulate money; we’re trying to run useful programs and services. We’ll get a copy of this circulated (it’s already posted on the website).

# Spring Semester Housebill Reimbursements

Pam Gannon provided an update.

MIT committed to providing rebates to MIT students for their FSILG room and board costs, similar to the dorm reimbursements, for the partial semester. The FSILG Reimbursement Team met nearly daily for a month to figure out a plan. This group had DSL and AILG members, and the reimbursement process has begun. The reimbursements will be channeled through the FSILG house corporations, which will issue payments or credits to their own students. FSILG house corporations provided documentation and filled out applications, and we are asking for more documentation as needed from many groups. Pam and others at DSL will review and approve, then the VP of Finance will also review and approve, asking for more information as needed. DSL will be issuing the checks to groups. There are applications submitted by all groups. 11 organizations have done everything, and checks will be cut. 14 groups are through DSL but now in VPF review. 9 groups are still working on DSL review.

This has been a lot of work for everyone, so thank you for your help and transparency. MIT is the only college we know of that is providing this support to FSILGs and FSILG students. Suzy Nelson and the MIT administration have been extremely supportive and understanding of our groups, and we can all appreciate that.

# Committee Reports

Peer Visit Committee – Roy Russell provided an update about the PVP. Thanks to John Covert, who has been the Accreditation Coordinator since it started, and who will continue as a member of the committee. PVP will work with FCI to get some administrative support for scheduling and document tracking. We hope to do some virtual visits, to collect and disseminate some pandemic best practices among our community. If you are interested in volunteering or hosting a visit, please get in touch. The proposed new questionnaire that PVP will use is posted on the AILG website. We definitely need everyone’s volunteering and participation as we get this rolling, and doing more next fall.

Facilities Committee – Larry Stabile provided an update about the Facilities Committee. The committee has been working to support the houses/corporation during the pandemic. Created a continuity document to help people keep things in order with empty/near empty houses. They have been contacting house corp presidents to make sure people have a plan and are able to do it. For example, there are concerns to do a clean-out to make sure there is no food left out, and that there is no pest problem developing. Working with the BSF to check on egress/safety and if there is food. Working on plans for restoration, and how students will pick up belongings. City inspections (Boston, Cambridge) are suspended, but BSF pre-inspections done. We can still do repairs to essential systems (plumbing, alarms) with PPE.

# News from the FCI

Scott Klemm updated us about FCI. Joshua Schuler is the new FCI Director of Facilities and BSF. He has been involved with our system for a number of years and is no stranger to our houses. FCI is providing BSF services to AILG, and this is one thing Josh will be doing. The Facilities Management Program is starting; get in touch if you want to participate. About 8 groups have already signed up. Description of the program is on the FCI website. Note that American Alarm and other services will not go into any houses that have residents now, so only the empty houses will do the quarterly alarm tests. FCI is working with the Facilities Committee. Offering services such as facilities walk-through (daily), motion camera setup. Working on developing a service for future needs, such as packing/shipping student property, and dealing with 1st class mail & packages. Working on document for guidance and ideas for what groups might want to address while occupancy is low.

Note that we do not think that our insurance will cover business disruptions from COVID-19.

# Announcements

* Next AILG Board meeting (call) will be Thursday, May 7 at 6pm
* The AILG Annual Meeting date & plan is TBD. We need to vote on the budget and vote in new board members. We will likely do that virtually in the next month or so, and will probably just defer the dinner/social gathering until some future time.

# Adjournment

Adjourned 6:30pm

# Abbreviations

AILG Association of Independent Living Groups

BSF Building Safety Facilitation

CPW Campus Preview Weekend

DSL Division of Student Life

FCI FSILG Cooperative, Inc.

FSILGs Fraternities, Sororities and Independent Living Groups

GRA Graduate Resident Advisor

IFC Interfraternity Council

ILGs Independent Living Groups

IRDF Independent Residence Development Fund

LGC Living Group Council

Panhel Panhellenic Association

SLI Safety, Licensing and Inspection Program