

DORMCON MINUTES – FEBRUARY 23, 2012

Dorm	Representative	Absent
Baker	Michael Plasmeier	
Burton-Conner	Janille Maragh	partially
East Campus	Robert Johnson	
MacGregor	Edward Mugica	
Masseh Hall	Regina Cho	
McCormick	Sheila Lee	
New House	Benjamin Shaibu	
Next House	Austin Brinson	
Random Hall	Alexandra Westbrook	
Senior Haus	Katy Gero	
Simmons Hall	Eli Ross	
President	Ellen McIsaac	
Vice President	Virginia Nicholson	
Secretary	Deena Wang	
Treasurer	Leonid Grinberg	

1. Ratify Dorm Tax agreement

- Leonid – I was meeting with Donna to make dorm taxes more transparent, create a contact person for changing taxes, and deadlines. We worked on an agreement for deadlines for taxes. The spring tax is 20% of the fall tax. We have a new contact person and new procedures. I like this agreement. It makes things easier to plan.
- Ellen – There will be a standard date to decide on dorm taxes.
- Ben – What about if students move?
- Leonid – We will keep the difference. Students moving makes it difficult to plan.

Results	
Yes	9
No	0
Abstain/Absent	2

The Dorm Tax agreement was passed.

2. Presenting DormCon Budget

- Leonid – A brief summary: last year we spent \$8,000 net. I'm happy with that because we're on track for lowering the surplus. We owe \$5,000 for past things: \$755 to New House for REX; \$1,600 for DormCon retreat; for the 2008 dorm formal we owe \$3,500. Those will come out of current money.
- Ellen – The joint dorm formal happened in my freshman year. The idea has come up multiple times. Next House has decided they don't care about the money and none of the three dorms (McCormick, Simmons, Next House) are still using that account.
- Leonid – I will send out a budget spreadsheet.

- Leonid – We’re expecting the same amount of taxes. I’m budgeting \$10,000 for CPW. I think it’s reasonable. \$5,000 for miscellaneous, like the Trader Joe’s shuttle and piano drop. Steer roast has its own category. We have enough of a margin.
- Austin – How much is in reserve?
- Leonid – \$20,000. We have 30k in balance.
- Regina – How much do we receive from dorm taxes?
- Leonid - \$50,000 to \$60,000.
- Leonid – We spend more in the fall because of REX.
- Question: What about the long term expenses that will drain the budget?
- Leonid – We can behave as we have been until we stabilize intake and expenditures.
- Patrick – After which, spending money on reoccurring expenses will decrease?

See website for budget spreadsheet

- Ben – DormCon pulls stuff from the budget.
- Leonid – This is the expected expenses.
- Ben – Is there any money reserved?
- Leonid – \$30,000.
- Regina – If we approve the budget, what about the retreat money?
- Leonid – If you’re concerned about retreat, the money is going to go to Endicott House anyway.
- Question: Is this all we’re spending on?
- Leonid – Every year, there are random events, like the Big Gay Party.
- Question: Is the funding rolling?
- Alicia – Yes.
- Ellen – If a dorm wants to have an inter-dorm event, then you can ask DormCon for funding if you have a budget. That’s what miscellaneous is for.
- Leonid – This miscellaneous fund is unique on campus. Any two people can ask for money just for being dorm members.

Results	
Yes	8
No	2
Abstain/Absent	1

The budget was passed.

- Austin – I disagree with the budget.
- Michael – I am reevaluating Baker’s role on DormCon. I want a proportional refund of the dorm tax.

3. Discussion of DormCon's purpose

- Ellen – Last meeting, we had a lot of agenda items, so we didn’t have a full introduction to DormCon. I want to make stuff clear, like the big question of DormCon’s future goals and how to improve DormCon. What DormCon has is a unique method of funding to

make events happen. The idea of a dorm tax makes events happen, and they're valued. Some are joint events like CPW and REX. We want to expand on this to make inter-dorm events. This was not done in the past because last semester, there was crazy organizational restructuring. Our other role is advocating for dorms and dorm residents, like during the i3 video debacle.

- Virginia – i3 is why people come to MIT and choose a dorm. There have been complications during editing. A few dorms felt strongly and brought the issue to DormCon. We discussed it with housing and a group of us worked with housing over summer. As a group, we're more powerful than single dorms. It benefits all students.
- Ellen – The dorm security committee only wanted one undergrad representative to give a dorm perspective. I served on the committee and their final suggestion was to let dorms do their own things. Every year there's some issue where it's important to have a coalition of dorm presidents to give opinions.
- Virginia – If you want to leave, ask whether you have the best interest of constituents in mind. There's something special about MIT dorms. If you think about DormCon taxes, Random can't get all its event funding from itself. DormCon is in charge of CPW, so Alicia has control over event coverage. Three dorms spoken up about leaving. We can help on issues with administration. For example, if you don't want to be RBA binding, instead of going to the dean by yourself, others can help.
- Alicia – I see that DormCon has two roles. One is an organizational role and dealing with the administration. CPW, the REX booklet, funding could still happen as a committee of council, but it has to get done. For i3, REX, and CPW funding, I don't want to make changes until we make sure it happens. There are also less tangible benefits. Last IAP, there was an alarming REX statement. The presidents got together to write a letter because we knew and trusted each other. It was natural to come together because presidents see each other as allies. That could also happen with the council, but until that happens, I want to keep DormCon. It's amazing to see how many issues come up.
- Michael – People have been talking about the discussion role. The funding role is what I don't think is efficient and good policy for dorms to apply. I want DormCon to have \$1,000 in operating expenses, but not the rest.
- Ducky – Individuals pay for funding.
- Patrick – So you don't want DormCon to subsidize smaller dorms. Random has a quarter of the residents of a larger dorm, but during CPW, they generate a lot of energy which is disproportional to number of residents. If DormCon can't fund CPW and REX, Random and Senior House can't have big events.
- Brian – Before you make the decision, see how you have benefited, like Piano Drop, etc.
- Michael – I have a broader disagreement with redistribution.
- Brian – Groups won't save money over a long period of time for these events.
- Ellen – DormCon encourages inter-dorm events. Many dorms wouldn't put in the same amount of funding for an inter-dorm event.
- Virginia – If you left DormCon, wouldn't the vote would go to residents?
- Austin – I think that an exec meeting can decide.
- Edward – I don't think the MacGregor constitution has DormCon written in it.
- Leonid – Next House historically has less money going to it.

- Katy – If senior house funds its own party, because Senior House doesn't have that much money, other dorm's members can't attend.
- Alicia – I sat on the Review Committee for Orientation and I'm the REX VP. I've thought a lot about REX and Orientation. I no longer think about REX or rush as a competition between dorms. So many amazing things happen because of Rush. It does attract freshman to your dorm, but that's a relatively small part. It gets freshman excited about MIT and it's important for upperclassmen and dorm culture. It's hard to commit to your dorm when working on school. REX rebuilds dorm culture and pride in MIT. Yes, many things could still happen if a dorm funded own events, but I want everyone to question whether they care about REX and why. It's bigger and more nuanced than we even say it is.
- Regina – For general discussion: now that the UA council is made of dorm presidents, what is the difference?
- Virginia – Last year, there was an early proposal for a committee of dorm affairs, which would have replaced DormCon. A subset of the treasury committee would talk about money issues. The issue right now is that a new committee isn't going to be made. The fact is that you have people on the DormCon committee and CPW is happening soon. We need to look at the short term as well as the long term.
- Jonte – One concern that frats and sororities had: there was a major objection to having dorm presidents on same council as the IFC and Panhel. They were concerned that the UA council would be monopolized for dorm issues. The UA council can't discuss dorm issues. The proposal was that the UA organization handles broader undergrad issues, and IFC and Panhel handles Greek issues. If there's no DormCon, what about dorms? We could create a UA committee, even one on affairs and one on funding to segregate the functions of DormCon. The short term is important. I think that DormCon should exist and should be outside of the UA. IFC and Panhel are concerned about DormCon going away.
- Ellen – The UA council is for all undergrads, but need organization specifically for dorms.
- Question: why split?
- Ellen – DormCon has a Judcomm which should be more active. We're meeting with the administration to make DormCon Judcomm happen. If dorms do bad things, we can fix them.
- Virginia – Judcomm can be a layer between administration and students.
- Ducky – You probably don't want IFC and Panhel talking about dorm affairs. Trust me, since I tried to negotiate the REX-Rush agreement. The dorm affairs committee would probably look like DormCon. I am the risk manager. I serve as a resource for alcohol and events and I can run alcohol training. I think it is useful to have. Now, the only people you have talking to you about alcohol is administration.
- Jonte – I think one thing about DormCon that's great is that committees on the UA don't have people doing work. DormCon has the structure of specific positions to tackle additional problems.
- Alex – I had the impression that DormCon wanted to dissolve.
- Alicia – I don't think it would dissolve itself alone. If all of DormCon's functions were taken care of, then it could go.
- Virginia – All the roles of DormCon were filled in that proposal.

- Ellen – A retreat is the place to discuss the big questions.
- Alex – Consider the UA. One of my concerns is that I want fewer meetings. If UA cut down to monthly meetings, great. Currently, the Council has weekly meetings.
- Ellen – DormCon has always been putting off questions. We need to work productively with the UA. That's why we want to discuss this.
- Virginia – I'm concerned about the council advocating for dorms.
- Brian – I think it would benefit new people to go over old meeting minutes. Every year we have this discussion about the meaning of DormCon.
- Ducky – We have to have CPW events allotted by the 9th, which is the Friday after next meeting. Some of the presidents are not okay with the REX chair randomly handing out.
- Alicia – I would allot CPW events like early returns. I would get CPW chairs to tell me the important events and try to give proportional amounts of events to all the dorms. Some dorms want few events, which is good. Some dorms want more.
- Virginia – Charging for movies is not a DormCon requirement. Neither is the saferide time.
- Regina – Who gave the responsibility for CPW events to DormCon?
- Alicia – Admissions.
- MacGregor – We each deal with our own CPW chairs.
- Alicia – Someone needs to compile the dorm's respective events. If there are issues, we can deal with them.

4. Discussion of retreat

- Alicia – Someone should use this money.
- Regina – What would it entail?
- Ducky – We would hangout for a night and discuss important issues in the morning.
- I'm personally fine with it, but it's hard to find a good date for everyone.
- Ellen – Fill out the doodle.
- Jonte – I was involved with UA as a freshman and sophomore. The really nice thing about having an overnight retreat is that the day covers formal business and during the night, you actually get to know each other. That's why the senate is tightly bound. I would encourage it. People who went on the retreat were more productive.
- Regina – One of purposes of the DormCon retreat is figuring out its role, so do we need the UA to be there? Are there plans to involve the UA?
- Jonte – You are the UA. I'm sure UA officers would go along with it.
- Patrick – The discussions we have during retreat are important, but the goal is to get to know each other, so we don't get mad and behave stupidly. Respect doesn't just happen.
- MacGregor – I think you should limit who can be the guest.

It was decided to make the guest explicitly a dorm resident.

- Ben – What's the agenda for the retreat?
- Ellen – We would be answering questions on DormCon and team bonding.
- Friday to Saturday. Saturday to Sunday nights.
- Ben – Would it be possible to leave early?
- Ellen – No, part of the benefit is being in it for the whole haul.

- Brian – This argument is stupid. You already paid for it, so just do it.