Minutes  
February Board of Director’s Meeting  
February 15th, 2022  
Via WebEx Call

Attendees:  
Steve Deutsch  
Kevin Saunders  
Melinda Cirillo  
Rachel Rigolino  
Michele Halstead  
Fred Destefano  
Stephanie Blaisdell  
Emily Yulo  
Corinna Caracci  
Michael Cavalieri  
Jeff Gant

Others Present: Joshua Gonzales  
Recording Secretary: Jacqueline Pascar  
Call to order: 1:00 pm

Unanimous approval of agenda and December 13, 2021 minutes.

E.D. Report  
Steve announced that Follett had been purchased by a new group, Jefferson River Capital LLC, and shared, “Sean’s happy about this change, because they seem to be willing to invest a lot of money into the company and into growing the business.” Steve also stated that the portfolio had lost money in February for the first time in a while. The portfolio’s gains from the year prior, along with government assistance, were able to cover the corporation’s loss of about $1.5 million after the fall 2021 semester. Steve said, “We don’t have either of those things to protect us this year, and we’re certainly looking at an operating loss… So, it’s just something to be prepared for and something to factor in when we start getting the budget together for next year.”

Good and Welfare  
Steve welcomed board members to bring up any points of discussion. Kevin asked how working with an operating loss would affect this year’s programming funds, and if it would be considered to not distribute the funds. Steve reminded the board that the current year’s programming funds had been awarded at 50%. The Budget Committee would begin convening in March and would need to make the decision regarding programming funds for next year. Steve noted how the 2019-2020 budget was passed with normal financials and was then attenuated once the meal plan counts were much lower than anticipated. Program funding was also cut off for 2020-2021. Steve explained, “We could pass a full optimistic budget, very close to the budget that we had in 2019 or 2018, and do a sort of wait and see over the summer or very early in the fall semester and pull it back if we’re not seeing the kind of numbers that we expect.”

Steve shared that he hoped the plan to add another OZGI machine in the Student Union Building would remain within the budget. He said, “It seems to be working really well at Element 93 and Michael, Lisa and I have been talking about a separate program just for beverage containers.” The program would provide reusable beverage containers to eliminate the use of plastic cups and straws. Steve explained, “There's a lot to it, including our contract with Coke, but we're navigating those and doing research to see if and when we can do something like that.” The Culinary Institute, Michael’s former place of employment, already had a program for reusable beverage containers in place which could serve as a resource for New Paltz.
Rachel asked how staffing was in the dining areas. Michael responded that the staffing situation had improved but was not 100% back to what they had hoped for. Kevin shared that a few staff members had commented that the food quality at Element 93 was not as good as previous semesters. Michael responded, “I’ve heard that it's kind of a go-to spot for most people as far as offerings, flavors, everything, so that’s disappointing to hear.” Michael noted that Element 93 was the “most consistently staffed” location with most of the staff carried over from previous semesters and asked if Kevin could share more details offline so they could further investigate the issue. Steve stated that he would be interested to hear the issue as well, noting that he had already shared his concerns with Michael about the lines and expediting several orders at the same time. Steve commented, “GrubHub is here to stay and ordering online is here to stay. Being able to facilitate individual, customized orders for dozens and dozens of people at the same time is just an obstacle that we’re going to have to learn how to surmount.”

Kevin noted that a faculty member was recently concerned about whether cash would be accepted in retail outlets again. He asked if there was more information regarding payment options on campus. Cash and card were currently accepted at Element 93, The SUB’s Concierge Desk, and Starbucks at Parker Theatre. Michael noted that Sweets & Treats and Nesters currently accepted card and would soon accept cash payments as well. Michael also promoted the new express menu offered at Element 93. Created with faculty and staff in mind, the express menu offered a mix and match selection of soup, salads, and sandwiches to be ready for pickup within 10 minutes of ordering. Steve asked if there were any updates with the 10% discount being added to GrubHub. Michael confirmed that the faculty/staff 10% discount had been added to GrubHub and would be applied automatically for orders paid with a credit card. Faculty and staff members could also receive the discount in-person by showing their campus ID card at registers.

Stephanie commented, “I’m very sensitive to the fact that we charge student meal plans and sort of bill the food services program on their finances and then give faculty and staff a discount.” She asked if Michael could explain the objective of the faculty/staff discount. Michael explained that a discount was applied to student meal plans across the board and dining dollars also gave an incentive discount of purchasing $100 to receive $110 or $200 to receive $225 in dining dollars. Michael said, “So this is a supplement to that. If you choose not to buy dining dollars, you can still go to a register and receive that same incentive just for being a faculty member.” Stephanie asked if students buying food outside of their meal plans and community members would be the only ones paying full price. Steve confirmed and noted, “It’s not easy. Faculty members are very careful about how they spend their money generally, and it's just an olive branch.” Stephanie responded, “I guess for context for the students on the call, the departments do a lot of catering, not so much in the last couple of years, but we do support food services in that manner.”

Steve asked if there were any additional comments. There were none. Steve shared that The Budget Committee would begin to meet soon and asked Melinda for an estimated timeframe. Melinda responded that the committee would begin to meet in March, explaining that she was “…gathering data right now, trying to figure out participation of meal plan so I have some data to back up the numbers that I want to provide.” Jaca reminded the board that Michele, Emily, and Corinna volunteered to serve on The Budget Committee.

Steve asked if there was anything else to discuss. Stephanie reported that Student Affairs met with CAS and Sodexo to “…talk about our partnership and sort of supporting one another, and I really appreciated the response. I think that's something that we’re going to do regularly.”
Kevin asked where the Follett Access Program stood with the corporate change and if CAS was actively working towards the program being implemented for the upcoming fall semester. Steve confirmed that Jefferson River Capital did stand behind The Access Program, however it would take a lot of leg work to be the first 4-year SUNY school to implement the program and would probably not be ready for the fall semester. Steve explained, “I feel like it’s a great thing. I don’t have to deal with the down sides too much, but I think that everybody’s concerns and possible objections need to be addressed before moving forward, so stay tuned.” Rachel asked if Jefferson River Capital ran other bookstores. Steve said that he knew they were invested in other businesses but was unsure if they owned other textbook companies. Steve shared, “I do know that they’ve hired a lot of talent, not only this guy from CVS, but there’s somebody very big in the textbook field that they hired also to be part of this. So, I think they’re hiring their expertise.”

Kevin shared that Brian Obach forwarded a request from someone with the CUNY system to Lisa Mitten and himself. The CUNY employee was asking for guidance with creating a plastics reduction plan per the New York State requirement. Kevin stated, “...they basically are looking to almost model the CUNY plan on what we’ve done at New Paltz.” Kevin applauded the CAS Board and Sodexo for their work on the initiative that was being recognized amongst the state. Steve appreciated the great news and stated, “We’re going to try to push it forward every semester and try to come up with something else, like the reusable beverage containers, more OZZI machines... This is something we shouldn’t just rest on.”

Steve thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reminded the board that the next meeting would be held in April. The Budget Committee would be contacted in the meantime.

Meeting adjourned: 1:24 pm