

4/4/24 Special Meeting of QCA

Start time: 7:00pm cst

Attendance:

Janella Reising, Ann "Tianna" Randolph, Paige Thorne, Thomas Gaasch, Ryan Juel, Christopher Picotte, Rebekah Byland, Jasmine, Abby Frie, Alan Wiggs, Alli Cassel, Amanda (Rico) Dalsted, Amanda Holt, Anita Phoenix, Atlanta Weir, Autumn Rivera, Damarra Atkins, Daniel Greene, Derek Herauf, Erick Toro, Hayden Peterson-Lyngen, Heather Bufkin, Jake Harstad, James "Sparky" Green, Jen Riehm, Jeremy Myers, Jerry Keohen, Julie Castro, Kat Briggs, Kevin Ehrler, Kyrine "Kitty" Ness, Michael Mangskau, Mike Leewright, Molly Smedsrude, Robert Setter, Samantha Cozort, Scott Olson, Taha Omer, Triston Callantine, Vincent "Bunny" Ness

Notes:

Board opens and Paige shares a prepared speech. Highlights items that they believe are helpful context for the conversation to come: 501c3 status being new, taxes never being filed, policies being the responsibility of the Board, notes about the definition of General Membership, some discussion of items that led to the breakdown in communication, and factors that have been present since the inception of the org. Overall ending with the statement that we hope to move forward and create a better experience.

Ryan and Tianna echo these sentiments with their own statements and calls for collaboration.

The Concerned Members are addressed

Heather shares a prepared statement. Highlights several concerns about the breakdown in communication, the history of QCA trusting untrustworthy people, and factors surrounding the handling of the situation with Richard.

Robert shares a statement. Highlights that the changes feel like a whirlwind, which is causing some of the members that were around when QCA was formed to feel some of the trauma that was experienced at prior cons. Urges that the membership needs to be included in conversation and feel like active participants wherever possible.

Amanda(Rico) shares a statement. Highlights that committees should be open to at least the voting membership for participation whenever possible. Notes that they want to see more transparency and communication with a comparison to the Linux incident with open source. Notes that the announcement of Richard's resignation felt delayed and vague. Concern that the Board is stressed with the needing to get the organization compliant as a 501c3.

Jeremy shares a statement. Highlights that transparency has long been a problem with the Board going back for years, notes that the membership should have a say in the Convention Chair and other QCA positions beyond just the Board.

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The Nesses share a statement. Highlighting that it feels as though they have heard more about QCA/Con business from unaffiliated parties than from direct communication and have some fears about what is happening. It seems like a lot of drama.

Mo shares a statement. Highlights that most of what is occurring is circle talk and real action needs to be taken to fix this.

Taha shares a statement. Highlights that some of the communication feels like a game of telephone, that things don't feel transparent and items (policies, bylaws, meeting minutes, etc) should be available for everyone, touches on the announcement about Richard, feels that longtime members (in particular Heather and Damarra) are being silenced, calls for better communication and states that it is not acceptable that executive session recordings are not public.

Anita shares a statement. Highlights that from past experiences and knowing about some email chains that there are a lot of fires the Board is dealing with and sees the work being done. Notes that while prior Boards were given misinformation, this current group has dug in and found the correct information to make progress on items former Boards had tried to accomplish.

Dan G shares a statement. Highlights that communication is the biggest issue and it's important that everyone have access to items (policies, bylaws, meeting minutes, etc). Notes that everyone is busy, but that communication needs to be a top priority. Urges delegation where it can happen.

Erick shares a statement. Highlights a lack of documentation, states that Bylaws have never been available and when they went on the website there was no communication of that, brings up concerns about the Richard situation (states that there could be potential legal ramifications) and that the investigation of Team Lead Reviews seemed to take precedent, wants to see a proactive approach to things instead of reactive from the Board.

Robert shares a statement. Notes that the recent communications are showing improvement, makes mentions about the issues that have occurred that seem to be effecting the con, notes that the Con Chair is meant to be a go-between of sorts for the membership and the Board and the channel is not clear. It should be an action item to make that channel clear.

Paige shares a response. Mentions that Secretary role has to take minutes and it cannot be delegated, Treasure role has duties that cannot be delegated related to financial documentation. Notes that anything that can be delegated is being delegated and that the Board as a whole is working on items. Notes that the goal is to have all these documents (Policies, bylaws, Articles, and minutes) on the website. Notes that last year Bylaws were sent out the year before when they were updated in 2023 as they need to be sent 30 days prior to the vote to update. Notes that no one has requested the Bylaws and legally that is all that it being public requires. Adds that Bylaws are on the Drive in the General Staff resources.

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Damarra shares a statement. Highlights several issues and concerns that had been discussed with the concerned members group. (lack of access to recordings, meeting notes and other documents, issues with coordinating purchases, items that have been missed or late, unprofessional communication styles). Includes mentions of Richard's issues.

Erick Shares a response. Highlights that what was sent out for the Bylaws was a "Proposed Bylaws" on 4/9/23 and no updates were sent following on if the Bylaws were finalized. States that having to ask for Bylaws feels weird.

Ryan shares a statement. Highlights the events of Richard, voted to Board by the Membership, found not to be eligible, role was opened to Derek and Chris, went to Chris. Ombuds role was offered due to the knowledge he seemed to have regarding Nonprofits, once notified of the accusations of rumor mongering and leaking confidential information to other conventions he was notified immediately to cease and desist all action, his access was removed for all QCA items and he was told not to speak with any members of QCA, including Fusion Staff. Upon receipt of this message he resigned immediately and proceeded to decline any meetings for investigation and stopped answering messages. The reason this was not immediately communicated to the membership, was that we did not have any concrete evidence of what had occurred and the Board was not certain how to provide this information. One week later the Board sent out notice that Richard had resigned at the urging of concerned members, still without a solid rationale to provide and the Board wanted to avoid stating anything libelous. This message simply stated that Richard had resigned. Going forward the Board is creating a vetting and application process for future roles. This will be drafted and shared with the membership for feedback before voting into place.

Abby shares a statement. Highlights that there definitely should have been communication of Richard's resignation sooner, adds that a staff member at large sent an email to the full staff in response to that announcement of resignation that made it sound like he left due to Sexual Misconduct. This leads to apprehension about future items being sent to staff regarding staff members leaving. Secondly notes that somethings that are being talked about at other conventions are not related to Richard, but other cons do state they don't like Anime Fusion because of prior incidents and comments as well as current incidents where sly or unflattering comments are made about other conventions. Notes that they felt the email from the staff member felt unbelievably unprofessional.

Sam shares a statement. Highlights that the Bylaws were at one point open to all staff members and sometime prior to this current Board being put in place they were moved out of the Drive for open access. Meeting notes and recordings were not being sent out for years prior to this Board, so this is not specific to this Board. Notes that the job of the convention chair comment prior about Chair being a conduit is not accurate as people are able to reach out to the Board directly. Felt that comments about not feeling comfortable going directly to the Board is not an accurate portrayal of the full membership and requests this be noted.

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Paige shares a response. Highlights a request for the list that Damarra presented to be written and shared with the Board to ensure that nothing is not missed or brushed over. Addresses some commentary from Damarra's statement and notes that there are personal issues in communication. Notes that Vendor onboarding has been difficult with some vendors and gives general updates. Mentions that it would be nice to have some breathing space to focus on these items. Notes that regarding the Richard incident, with the notification it was asked to the other Board members if notice should be given immediately and it was decided that it should wait until we had something to explain the situation, provides the example that a vague message was sent out a week later and it lead to several misconceptions the reason for the resignation.

Heather shares a statement. Highlights that this is not about disliking the Board, this is because people are scared about what is going on. That the concerned members feel like they don't know how business is being conducted and that communication is needed, especially after the Richard situation. Notes that they brought the concern to the Board and that the Board did act immediately upon that notice. Mentions that there is a track record with QCA as being too trustworthy. Points out that conversations about the business are happening outside of the meetings and people feel out of the loop. Notes that this group was brought together in an attempt to push the Board to listen as they felt that their concerns were not being heard.

Ryan shares a response. Notes that the response to the email of Richard's resignation was another issue that fell onto the Boards priority list. Notes that this was during the investigation into Richard and the Board wanted to be thorough and ensure they had accurate information.

Tom shares a statement. Summarizes that he hears there is a need for more communication and trust needs to be built, puts forwards that this meeting could start brainstorming some solutions and offers the idea of a committee of the staff to identify choke points and ways to better communicate. Offers a thought on an index of things that are available on the Drive.

Damarra shares a statement. States they appreciate the sentiments of collaboration and wanting to work together, notes that this is required, notes that there is a lot going on that people are not aware of. Concerns about things that are long standing and some are new. States that this is not the only time things need to be brought up to be addressed. This meeting was to allow the full membership access to the information of what concerns are there and why they are there. States that there are a lot of fires and issues and that things will fall apart. This meeting was to impress upon people how serious this was and start a conversation on fixing these things.

Sam shares a statement from another member not comfortable coming forward. Notes regarding the Richard situation that this con was born from many people coming from other conventions vouching for each other, there were no background checks. That unless we want to interview all staff and do background checks, people are going to come in and want to be involved in leadership and may get into these positions because of vouching from other people. This is how that occurred with Richard moving into this position.

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Chris shares a statement. Highlights that many important things have been brought up, notes that QCA must operate as a business and certain laws and statutes need to be followed. States that not everyone needs to know minute items of the business. Does state that we should not allow emotion to dictate how things are done on the business side, states that this is best when relationships between parties are stronger, notes that recently it's been hard to follow the train of thought with some of the conversation as there has been instances where people have misunderstood things, but clarifying what is going on is difficult when other parties do not want to listen or when they don't have information or don't want to look things up that they are trying cite. Aside from that, once past the point of acknowledging the mistakes made we can find solutions and utilize skills to solve them. States that some of the roadblocks are people taking on too much and dropping all of the current internal drama with new members too soon or too quickly. Mentions that if there are personal issues, they should be directly addressed with that person or if not comfortable having a third party involved to assist. Notes that he has dealt with many difficult situations from his past experiences as con chair. Finishes his statement with the urging that we need to stop starting fires.

Final call for additional commentary.

Janella opens the floor for solutions to be put forward and states that this conversation has felt constructive and helpful. Notes that there is a need for continued conversation and collaboration to improve the communication on all sides.

Ryan responds echoing Tom's suggestion of a committee, mentions that this should be brought up at the Board meeting on 4/8/24 at 7:30 and urges members to attend to assist in forming this committee. States that if there are concerns, his DMs are open and he is open to listening and will treat concerns with confidence and will ensure it is properly prioritized and addressed.

Robert responds that there should be some breathing space created to allow for things to be done. Questions if there is something that both sides can do to create that breathing room.

Ryan jokes about going to the convention held weekend 4/6 to the bopper room.

Janella notes to counter the silliness that it would be beneficial to clarify that Membership and Board will not respond immediately to messages and to allow for adequate time. Requesting a response within 24hours can be difficult for 7 or more people to come together to work on an item to properly address things. Urges for both sides to allow for grace.

Tom states that another meeting should be scheduled in approx. 30 days to check in on the progress following this meeting to see if things are improving.

Rebekah states in spirit of moving forward that recently in a lot of communications to the Board that things come off as demands and requests that we work on shifting our tone to a more collaborative one rather than being a combative one. This is to assist in preventing more fires from being started to allow for people to see the message and not the delivery.

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Janella calls a close to the meeting with a statement of appreciation for all parties that have participated and states this was very important for us to do so that we can move forwards to fix the damaged trust and communication. Notes takeaways of sharing meeting notes and documents in the General Staff resources drive folder and finding ways to make the meeting recordings more available. States that anyone that has items or concerns is always welcome to reach out to any Board member and we welcoming any and all input.

Final reminder of the Board meeting on 4/8/24 at 7:30 on FCC and closes the meeting at 9:16pm cst.