SGA Minutes 10/29/17

I. Attendance
Senator Andrews is sick and not present for today’s meeting. She did not send a proxy in her place.
Senator Fleischer has sent a proxy in his place.
All other senators are present for today’s meeting.
Speaker Aaron is present for today’s meeting.
Co-Chair Wright is present for today’s meeting.
President Sohn is present for today’s meeting.

II. Acceptance of the Minutes
President Sohn motions to accept the minutes.
The motion is seconded.
16-0-0
All are in favor.
The motion passes and the minutes are recorded.

III. Announcements
President Sohn begins with announcements. She thanks Senator Fleischer’s proxy for coming in today. She continues by giving him information on voting for legislation tonight, which might be happening, that he can vote in favor, vote against, or abstain. She continues that she has a couple of announcements but that she will try to get through them quickly because there are two guests on the agenda tonight.
She thanks everyone who helped on Halloween at President Patton’s. There were over 800 people, not SGA people, from the community there. She urges those who stay in SGA next year to stay in touch for this event to occur again and to participate in it. The second announcement is regarding NesGov. She wants to “double check” with Senator Vargas if he is interested in going.
He replies that he is interested.
President Sohn tells him to check his slack and email to keep in contact. The topics for NesGov are Social Justice on campus, Student and Administration relationships on campuses, and the role of the different Student Governments on campuses. The senators who will be going are: Senator Vargas, the Chief of Staff, President Sohn, Diego Garcia, Senator Gosseslin. If there is anything regarding these topics that they want the representatives to go talk about or pose questions to other schools, please let them know by November 9th. They will be meeting to prepare for this. The next announcement is in regards to a “to-go cup initiative” that was brought up by many of their constituents.
Speaker Aaron continues that they received an email from a Super Senior Feb who was really interested in working on educating students about the to-go cups in Dining Halls, and how the waste can harm the environment, and what our role as students is in eliminating that waste. They are putting together a group with the Environmental Affairs committee that will look at how the to-go cups can be eliminated or reduced, and how we can educate students on their impact.
President Sohn adds that if any senator is interested in this subject to reach out to Speaker Aaron. She believes Speaker Aaron is “taking the reins on this” and helping them get set up.
Speaker Aaron adds to let her know if you’re interested in this and she will put you in touch with the group.

Senator Pustejovsky states that when she was talking to an admin about the subject he discussed a couple different systems colleges have done and he would be interested working on that. As well as Christie, one of the CRDs, who came up to her after the Open Forum and said that she had a program at her college that she liked so she would be a good contact too and a good place to start. These programs are re-usable tupperwares, checkout programs, there was a program that students bought hooks and had tupperware.

Speaker Aaron thanks the Senator for her comments.

President Sohn states that Speaker Aaron shared a memo the everyone that Karen Guttentag and Brian Lind wrote to Senator Fleischer and President Sohn, parts she read out last week. She wanted to let them know to use this as future reference as it goes in depth about the purpose and processing of these hearings.

Next, she goes over the difference between the responsibilities of a senator and a cabinet director. The responsibility of a senator is to represent the voice of their constituents. It is not meeting with admin to try and implement things, that is the role of the cabinet director. If you need to meet with an admin to help you get more information on a bill “that’s perfectly fine.” However, if you are trying to meet with an admin to try and implement things, this is more so the role of the cabinet director. She states that “your job, in the foremost, is to represent your constituency and voice their concerns.” Also, if your meeting with someone from the community, like an admin or staff, and you’re the only one there from the SGA and “you want to say something about the SGA,” like the stance the body takes or the decision the body makes, especially if it has not been talked about, you should probably wait and talk to this body about it before someone makes statements regarding the SGA. These are some things the President wanted to say to make sure this body is on the same page moving forward.

She motions to add something to New Business. There have been a few people who have come up to her and other members of the senate in regards to tensions regarding racial profiling that has been happening on our campus. She believes someone will be coming in later tonight to discuss this topic at hand too. It’s more of a “discussion” New Business element.

The motion is seconded.
16-0-0

The motion passes and the subject is added to the agenda.

There is one more announcement. In light of the motion, something the President wants to put out as an idea is that as the SGA there has not been time to just discuss things like current events or affairs on campus. A lot of the time, this body might need a bill or something tangible to start a discussion around a subject. There are things that this body might not have an answer to that should still be discussed in the SGA because they are concerns of what students have. Moving forward, looking at, possibly through the handbook or bylaw, that anyone in SGA can voice their concerns or anything that the Campus is talking about, like 10 or 15 minutes.

Speaker Aaron adds that if anyone wants to send items to add to the agenda that one might want to discuss with others so other students will know that this body is talking about it, and prepare to talk to their constituents about this issue.
Speaker Aaron states that the body forgot to accept the minutes. She asks if there are any corrections to be made.

President Sohn has a correction, which she will send by email and that will be updated. She motions to accept the minutes.

The motion is seconded.

16-0-0

The motion passes and the minutes are recorded.

Speaker Aaron states that Senate Check-ins are next, feel free to discuss anything happening on campus, but she urges the body to keep them quick just because of all the agenda items today.

Senator McCormick has nothing new to report.
Senator Koontz has nothing new to report.
Senator Salas has nothing new to report.
Senator Gosselin is working with Speaker Aaron to approve Club Tennis.
Senator Pustejovsky asks about Club Tennis since it just showed up on her desk at Student Activities for the new student organization process.

Senator Aaron states it was approved by SGA Student Organization Oversight Committee but then denied by admins.

Senator Schurer has three things today. He met with Publicity last week and they discussed the SGA website which will be moved to “weebly” as it is much cheaper and has more user-friendly options. They appointed eight “awesome people” to the First Year committee and they met today and discussed a few things, but he will let Senator Vargas discuss in further on those subjects. They launched a class website, Instagram, and snapchat today. The website contains information like important go/links, an events page that highlight like the four top social events of the weekend, the last part is #MeetMidd. #MeetMidd is inspired by Humans of New York and is looking to get beyond the surface level and help try, and create better relationships among our classmates. He says you can find it all over social media.

Senator Vargas adds that they discussed two ideas. One is based on the senior celebrating 100 days, having 100 days since matriculation. They thank Senator Warfel for this idea. Then having an event for the Febs, when they arrive, called Meet the Febs. Also, he is working with Senator Gosselin on a new bill about vending machines on campus.

Senator Vijayakumar has nothing new to report.

Senator Goldfield has nothing new to report. He asks if the body needs to ratify the First Year committee members.

Speaker Aaron asks the First Year senators to send a list to the Chief of Staff.

Senator Fleischer is working with EatReal on the bill that was passed last year.

Senator Warfel has been working with Sexual Relationships and Respect committee and they have been discussing with the different commons about who oversees distributing condoms. Also trying to tampons and pads in all freshmen halls, too. So working out a pilot program for the first year class. She is in the beginning stages of working with three other members of the Social Committee about potentially getting “tailgating” back.

Senator Pandey met with the Mental Health and Wellness committee and they assigned roles to more specifically work on.

Senator Mahboob met with Dave Donahue, who works for the Office of the President, and they discussed what “free speech looks like on this campus.” They have this new policy that
was implemented over the summer in regards to potential speakers being brought to campus. She has been having conversations about racial tensions on campus with her constituents.

Senator Pustejovsky met with the Institutional Diversity committee this week. They have another meeting with AIM, Alliance for an Inclusive Middlebury, in the next couple of weeks and so they are gathering subjects they want to speak about with them. There was a survey sent out from the Community Council that students “really responded” to last year so they are looking at compiling some of the answers given on the survey and ways they can move forward with it. Someone from Community Engagement reached out to her about the Senior Class gift. There was a fund from the class of 1998 that is for community service projects so thinking that it is the twenty-year anniversary looking at how the Senior Class can give back. She brought this up with the Institutional Diversity committee because they can either do something like that or through this Financial Aid survey. When she was on the Education committee they were discussing initiatives for reducing the amount text books cost through the book store but the funding fell through. Looking at possibly how the Senior Class could give back to this. She asks Senator Koontz about laundry.

Senator Koontz says that she is still waiting to hear back from the admin. Since they must meet with the laundry service which is “going really slow” since there was a change in the laundry service’s office. She has been sending emails and is waiting for their responses.

Senator Pustejovsky states that there were a lot of answers on the survey regarding laundry.

Senator Koontz states that they spoke about reducing prices for laundry so the Senators should keep in touch about this subject.

Speaker Aaron asks for updates about the Common Agenda.

President Sohn responds that she sent all the findings, from the feedback things they had, to President Patton and other members of her SLG. They are still deciding how to move forward with an announcement, there was an article in the Campus but there was a “slight misprint” in the copy and it’s still there. Another thing they are thinking about is adding another point to it depending on how the conversation tonight goes. They are still planning to put out an announcement but there are a couple different things that have come up, and those are going to be addressed first.

Will Dowling is the Student Liaison to the Endowment. He recently met with the Board of Trustees and the Endowment report.

Dowling begins by giving a few updates. He states that the last time he came in he talked a lot about a potential forum that he would like to put on, open to the student body, about the Endowment. He brought this up with David Provost and they are looking at having two forums. One will be focused on finances more broadly so like what goes into operating this place for a day and just essentially how the school is run, and financed. The other one would focus specifically on the Endowment, which would be led by himself, Provost, and Ted Prescott. They would discuss specifically where the endowment is invested, what are the strategies, and then what the school does. This is ideally what they would like to get done for this year. His report on the Board meeting will be in the form of a document that this body will get as well as the student body which will be sent out the middle of the following week from now. The Board meeting itself, he still should check on what information he can relay, but the endowment is doing very well. In the past three years, they have seen returns of 13%, which averages like 4-5% a year,
this reflects an overall growth in the market more broadly. In terms of fossil fuels, the investment is falling a lot, it is down to about 5% of the Endowment. Provost and Ted are in conversation with Divest Middlebury and he said that everyone on the Board is “on board” with the divest initiative. He urges the body to reach out with any questions and he states he will have the report out in the next week or so.

Speaker Aaron asks the body if there are any question. She yields to Chief of Staff, Ish Alam.

Alam thanks Dowling. He has two quick questions. The first is the document going to go to just the SGA or the entire student body.

Dowling states it will go out to everyone with a survey that will ask student’s their interests in the endowment, what they know and what they don’t know.

Alam asks if he has a “tentative timeline” set for the two forums.

Dowling states he has a meeting with Provost tomorrow where they will discuss, as of now they have not picked a date. Ideally, one would be held before Christmas break. Dowling will keep the body “in the loop” and if they have questions they can email him at wdowling@middlebury.edu

The next guest is Mike Roy, the Dean of the Library. He will be talking about a SGA “partnership.”

Roy first apologizes for not being able to make it to the meeting last week. He cites the “work-life balance” and did not look at his reminder until Monday morning, so he apologizes for that. There are four things he wants to touch base with and figuring out how to interact with the SGA in a more meaningful way. First is the conversation about textbooks, there is a faculty-library committee that he is a part of and their project is to think about textbook costs and how that impacts students, looking at working with the Financial Aid office and the bookstore and faculty, on the choices the make for their courses, and the overall cost of them. Sedge and Dan have also met with Roy that was very productive and if anyone else is interested in getting involved then the “more the merrier.” Next, is in regards to Library Space. There is a group in the library called the “space team” and they think about space, and how it needs to involve to meet changing needs. They regularly do “pop-up surveys” and these are mostly reaching people who are in the library. So those who aren’t coming to the library they are still wanting their feedback on space and how they can make it more accessible and engage students in thinking about changing space. If there are folks interested in this subject, they meet a couple times a month and he urges the body to invite people they might think are interested. Susan Burch, a Professor of American Studies, wanted him to relay information about a project that is thinking about disability studies and how to make the campus a more accessible space. She is involved with some people in Arizona discussing “digital way founding” and thinking about how to move around campus. An app that would display information and navigate campus if you were on crutches or something. If there are folks that are interested, get in contact with Roy and he can connect them with Burch. The final one is, as the body may have noticed we have been going through a “budget crisis” and making hard decisions about what to cut and what not to cut, so this year’s budget eliminates the 24-7 during Finals. Some love this program, others don’t. He speaks about a conversation he just had with his son who went to Middlebury. He asked him about the 24-7 during Finals and his response that he never used it that it sends a bad message when students should be prioritizing sleep and their wellness. He does understand that it is utilized by some and they are welcome to make their own choices, and of course most people
don’t want to be in the library at these early hours. He talks in 2008 how this occurred and the SGA voted that it was “critical” show they wrote a check and paid for the program, this is still a possibility. He thinks the body should still have a conversation in regards to health and wellness, and the idea of a 24-7 open hour library. He mostly wanted to come and announce these subjects, take questions from those who had them, and to get involved.

Speaker Aaron thanks Roy and asks him when he would want the names for students by that would be interested in getting involved.

Roy responds that for the textbooks it is a yearlong project but he would recommend in the next two or three weeks, before Thanksgiving. For the library space, there is not much urgency but by the end of the semester. He is not sure about the accessibility and that subject in regards to dates. For the 24-7 library hours, it should be before Thanksgiving due to the security firm needing a contract for those days.

Speaker Aaron asks if he has an estimate for the cost of expanding the hours to 2 a.m. Roy responds that the library would be able to probably cover that. The challenge is getting students to stay until 2 a.m. for those working at the library and then needing a staff person there too.

Senator Pustejovsky states that many seniors thought the 24-7 hours promote bad health and wellness habits so they thought it was a good idea not to encourage people to stay up.

Senator Pandey responds that he talked to a bunch of people and it is “not their wish” that they are staying up this late. He states that faculty is not going to adjust to this fact that there is no 24-7 hours anymore when students get a stream of work due in a couple, back-to-back, days.

Roy responds that students do receive their syllabus in September and they know what the plan is. He certainly believes that all this work comes to a head during this time but it is not the case that faculty adds extra assignments during this week.

Senator Pandey clarifies his point. That the people he spoke to were “technical majors” that have like three exams in a row. A better idea might be to provide tea options or fruit where people can find healthy ways to stay up.

Roy talks about a possible hot water dispenser.

Co-Chair Wright takes a “straw poll” on those who have used the 24-7 hours at the library. Around six have, then the number dwindles as Roy asked those who have stayed past 2 am, 3 am, and so on.

Speaker Aaron comments that they discussed last week there are other places on campus people can stay all night like Bi-Hall or Axinn where they won’t kick you out.

Senator Mahboob comments that she only stayed in the library until those early hours once her Freshmen year. She states that she could “due without it.” She states that it is not in high demand and not sending a good message to students.

Senator Goldfield asks Roy why they chose the 24-7 hours “to cut” since the primary role of the college is to educate and the role of the student is to learn. Even if we say there are other spaces, students should not be made forced to go to these other spaces where they might not feel comfortable especially during the most stressful time of the year, Finals Week.

Roy responds that most of the cuts were directed at journals, databases and monographs. There is a tradeoff where they are trying to balance these cuts to journal subscriptions and how to make that cut smaller. They made the decision to protect their staff and professional development in the hopes to continue to sustain these skills being taught and the role of the library. 24-7 hours have always been “problematic” where half of the people thought it was
sending a bad message and then part of it was to save some access to journal subscriptions. There were cuts made across the budget.

Speaker Aaron asks if they anticipate the same cut being made next year.

 Roy responds that the word he heard today that the budget is going to be “flat.” However, journal subscriptions go up four percent each year so that a flat budget looks like they will be looking at the different ways this will affect next year.

Speaker Aaron asks if there are any more questions.

The Chief of Staff if the library will be extending their hours just for finals week until 2 a.m.

 Roy responds that it would be just for finals week. They rely on students to be there and many students do not want to work until two.

Speaker Aaron urges them to put up signs that they will not be doing the 24 hours this year.

 Roy states that they are considering that.

The body thanks Roy.

Next is Doug Adams to speak about the Housing Room Draw.

Adams first asks for a “show of hands” of those who have done room draw before. The interesting thing about room draw is that it does not affect as many people as how long it takes to do it. About 700 students a year go through the open draw process and this does not include sophomores because they use a different system. A clear majority of the student body does not go through this; however, it takes up a lot of energy on campus. The desire for next year is to get ahead of the curve with simplification, explanation and making sure they are a transparent about the process as they can be. One of the biggest things, something he checked his notes about with his conversation with this body last year, is the question of seniority. There are two options on the table for seniority. The current system that they have used for many years is that seniors get to go on the draw first like seniors receiving their time slots before the juniors. This is not required they can also have mixed groups as well. There are certain requests they have received about a mixed senior-junior group without a penalty for that time slot for the group. There is no way to play it both ways. Either seniors get better time slots or it is juniors and seniors mixed together. He is not looking for an answer tonight but wants the body to discuss with their constituents and he would like an answer next week on the systems. They need to start putting this together to explain to students. Seniority means that seniors receive their time slots first and then juniors, or a senior who did not want to go with a group of seniors will receive their time slots second.

Speaker Aaron asks a point of clarification.

Adams responds that if you’re a senior you go first, if you’re a group of seniors you go first. However, if you’re a senior who wants to live with a group of juniors you get a time slot like the juniors. This mirrors an older system that occurred two systems ago.

Speaker Aaron asks how this occurred last year.

Adams responds that last year there was a lot of manual labor in trying to create, which created some of the glitches going on in the system, because they were literally trying to duplicate the old system in a system that did not let you do that. “It was a series of round holes that they tied to slam circles into.” The simpler system is to do one of these two options: seniority or mixed.
Senator McCormick asks that for the mixed then everyone would just go at the same time.

Adams responds, “correct.” The mixed means that everyone goes at the same time which means that a group of juniors could get a time slot before seniors. There is no seniority under the mixed options.

Senator Koontz asks if you’re a group of just seniors you would get a better slot then if you were a group of juniors and seniors mixed.

Adams responds that yes in the mixed group there is no penalty for the mixed group.

Senator Warfel asks if there is any room for seniors to pull juniors into their better time slots.

Adams states that there is not.

Speaker Aaron asks where Febs fall into.

Adams responds that there is not.

Speaker Aaron asks where Febs fall into.

Speaker Aaron asks if you want to see where “Febs get lots of benefits” it is the seniority system for the draw. Senior Febs, Seniors, and Super Senior Febs get the same time slots under seniority.

Speaker Aaron asks if this is for one year, what happens when you move out half way during the year.

Adams responds that this is for the spring draw for fall semester.

Senator McCormick proposes a hypothetical. If a Super Senior Febs have an Atwater suite and they leave after half the year, does that suite just vacate.

Adams responds that they usually fill it with students who were abroad or those requesting a change on campus. Around December, January, and February, they are moving around six to seven hundred people around campus. If you have some moving out and some moving in, then those students can draw people in.

Speaker Aaron asks if this is based on the time slots or numbers.

Adams responds that they are using time slots. They learned a lot from last year, so there will be more times offered and there will be no longer time slot as well. The draw is going to take four to six weeks. The reason for this is to give everyone a reasonable amount of time, with a seven-hour day and fifteen minute groups, there are 28 slots a day. They cannot do everyone in a day and they don’t want to, they want to “stretch it out.” Some of the advantages are being able to tell students what is available in that day so they can regroup. They will know the next what’s available and will include the search engine. You also know that there are not that many groups during that day and one group can go at a time, and you don’t get kicked out after fifteen. He proposes a hypothetical using Co-Chair Wright where 15 minutes goes by and he had time slot two but Senator Pustejovsky is next, so she knows what she wants and grabs it but it is taken off Co-Chair Wrights list of available spaces. He can continue to go through just because they know not everyone can make the time slot available. They do not guess what the students want but they just provide the opportunity. He believes this will help. There could be people still on the site when you log on, but it is not their intent for that to happen. The system glitch that literally allowed people to grab locations will not happen anymore. You can’t sit on a room forever.

The Chief of Staff asks if this is just for the eight-person housing draws.

Adams responds that this is his next question. Once the body decides on seniority or mixed, which he takes a quick straw poll, when the majority is in favor of seniority. He asks for a formal response next week that he will bring to the Residential Life committee. The committee will have a meeting next week and they had strong feelings towards seniority too. The next questions are: one draw or two. They used to do a lot of draws with a large block draw and a
small block draw and he states “it got really complex.” The system was not “savvy” enough to let people regroup so the all-in-one draw option. Then in this case it lets any size group go, and then you choose your group before then get your time slot. In this case, the group gets to see all the options available so like five-person suite could get five singles during their time slot. Any combination of the maximum size, you can’t go up but you can go down.

Senator McCormick asks if there is a five-person suite that wants to break into a group of four what happens to that last person.

Adams responds that they would have to choose at that point or not choose anything and go into the summer draw.

Senator McCormick follows up that if there are none left of the five people then they must take a single.

Adams responds that this is right.

Speaker Aaron asks if the group gets the time slot.

Adams responds that there is one time slot for the group.

Senator Pustejovsky asks what the issue is with the system that occurred last semester.

She states her hesitation that it would create tension to have one person out of the housing draw because they did not get the house they wanted.

Adams answers by stating that the issue was there were multiple groups in the system at once last year and that was a problem. Last year was a manualized process.

Senator McCormick speaks from experience that it takes time to “re-group” after you don’t get your specific housing.

Adams responds that there is no system that will allow them to do everything they want. They could do it as a live draw but this would require someone physically being here or having a proxy. However, this system allows for one to do it anywhere in the world and any one of those five people can do it.

Senator Pustejovsky shares another complaint regarding those abroad. That it is in the interest of these students that these changes are fixed and not changeable at all. There were troubles with Wi-Fi, communication and the dates being rearranged.

Adams agrees this is why he is trying to get ahead of with the communication and these systems, so by the time it launches in April or May and so that the spaces and time will be set. The other advantage is maximum flexibility. Their responsibility now is more educational opportunities, while some do it on their own and create their own systems, it is their responsibility to get out the information ahead of time. This does create tension and angst, but he does not see anything to get around this and try to remove it from the immediacy of the moment. Their intern starts tomorrow and will be working on listing videos and exterior and interior shots of the buildings on campus which is there but hard to find so making sure it is clear.

Senator McCormick is there a possibility of making a list of how the housing shows up on Star Rez.

Adams responds that the search function is horrible. They are looking to reverse that and they are considering what that is going to look like and will hopefully have something for students to look at by January.

Senator McCormick recommend possibly making the timeslots shorter because people do their research ahead of time.

Adams agrees but he does not want anyone to feel rushed. They picked the time due to the number of groups and if it was reasonable. They are looking at getting longer time slots for those who receive lower numbers.
Speaker Aaron speaks in regards to finding their rosters of Social Houses and Language Houses and these students unsure if they can get a good number or not. She asks if there is any way to do room draw then social houses.

Adams states they used to a reverse of that at the request of social house leaders. Social houses need to exist to fill their beds as social entities on campus if they can’t they end up not being able to fill the bed at all. Then you have an empty bed in a social house that you can’t fill. He continues that placing a transfer student in Tavern is not the best plan for these students or the social house. It could be great, but it’s totally random. If they reverse them, those programs could fail based on a desire for real estate and not a desire to become a part of that program. He says there should be a desire to speak Russian in the Russian house not because you didn’t get an Atwater suite.

Senator Pustejovsky asks if they are doing the separate draws, there was issues with seniors holding out for a townhouse and then waiting.

Adams states “it’s a great philosophical question.” If eight seniors didn’t get the housing what does one do.

Senator Pustejovsky clarifies her question.

Adams states that he would love to hear feedback on this question if we do it this way what are people going in for. If you’re doing the one in all draw, then it’s all open and can take the tension, and anticipation over. They did some research post housing draw last year when they saw that they did a lot right, but saw their faults as well. What they did last year was “way more” than what any other school has tried before and they asked why because the system allows for students to make the decisions for themselves. The two-draw method is breaking the two-different grouping, the five to eight would be the large group of housing, these are the small housings on campus, places like Beach House and the Shannon Street apartment are part of a separate draw, these are like Turner House, Voter Suites. Once this was completed then the smaller housing would go. If the body chooses the seniority method, then seniors go first with the five to eight and then for everyone else. This provides the opportunity to regroup and a new draw time and that does allow for people to get two separate time slots. So, a senior could get a good time slot in the larger housing draw then get a terrible time slot for the smaller housing, this does mirror the system they had before and creating a balance. The recommendation from the Res Life committee was the all in one draw and seniority.

Speaker Aaron asks if there is any way to get information on interest houses and superblocs factor in.

Adams states that they can speak about this. These programs launch in January.

Senator McCormick asks who is on the Residential Life committee.

Adams states it’s members of Community Council, First Year senators, members of Res Life staff, they are looking to add additional senators to join the committee. Co-Chair Wright, Charles Rainey, Sarah Howard and adding two more Res Life people, Pub Safe representative, Adams, and Hall- Holts. It is a large group with students and faculty and be representative of different needs because of the conversations they will be having in regards to Res Life.

President Sohn asks if any senators are interested in joining this committee.

Adams explains they meet for 90 minutes and meet every month. They are looking to have a meeting in the upcoming week.

President Sohn urges underclassmen to get involved too. Seniors are leaving in the upcoming year.

Senator McCormick states that those voices are important because they have experience.
Co-Chair Wright adds they have Res Life experience too.

Adams states that the public is welcome to the meetings too. He conducts a straw poll on the all-in-one draw or the two draw. It is pretty much half and half. Adams states if anyone has questions they can send an email to him.

The body thanks Adams.

Speaker Aaron states they have two subjects left on the agenda. The first is from Co-Chair Wright, he will give an update from Community Council.

Co-Chair Wright states that his conversation should lead naturally into the conversations about racial discord and tension on this campus in general. The Community Council met with President Patton and did a similar common agenda, it was an extension of SGA common agenda that centered more specifically on Community Council’s jurisdiction. They are confident on what the agenda will look like, he will send it once it is ratified that will probably happen this week. The first subject on their agenda is a commons review. It has been almost twenty years since it was implemented and he states that faculty, staff, and students are interested in fully discussing the commons, conversations surrounding Res Life staff, working with Pub safety, and sort of the “pedagogy behind the commons system.”

Senator Mahboob asks if they are thinking about “abolishing the system.”

Co-Chair Wright replies “no.” It is not on the table, now, they have not had the conversation yet but he sees abolishing it as improbable. They are evaluating the system and looking at how it can benefit the community in a way that matters to folks. It is an Envisioning of Middlebury in regards to Res Life and including all these different voices during the conversation, he states he might include radical envisioning of the commons system but not dismantling the system. He states they will ratify the agenda tomorrow and there are a lot of conversations they are hoping to have especially the small conversations, have connections between little things that can be solved easily and creating tools and networks. They are looking at their website for Community Council.

Adams states that having a timeline for the review and the broad strokes for this process.

Co-Chair Wright adds that something they must discuss is racial profiling on this campus.

Senator McCormick leaves the meeting at 8:30.

There is a two-minute break until the next conversation.

Speaker Aaron thanks Charles Rainey for coming in as the President of the Black Student Union. This conversation is about racial tension on campus which is important to talk about as student representatives and it’s their responsibility to address these issues, and make students feel safe on campus. Tonight, they are discussing why this matters to the body as students, what are role is here and hopefully leaving the conversation with some solution on how to move forward and work with admin. Speaker Aaron adds that President Sohn talked to President Patton about this. She adds that it is important to be respectful when the body talks about the administration, they are trying to work with them not against them, and they are trying to help us. We all have a “common goal, a common agenda.” It’s important to bring up these conversations. There is not a lot of time so she urges senators to be quick in their remarks. Also, she adds at any point this conversation wants to move to off the record then the body can go into an executive session.

Senator Mahboob mentions that Rainey is the President of the Black Student Union.
President Sohn adds that in slack, earlier today, Ish sent in the general channel two or three articles regarding this topic in The Campus so please look at that for background information.

There have been a lot of other articles written about this subject too. He mentions one, written by Matt Gillis to President Patton that was in the Campus. Another was an article written on Allison Stanger and another is an article written from a faculty member regarding the racial profiling of another professor.

Rainey introduces himself as the President on the Black Student Union, representing the Board, he apologizes that they all couldn’t be here. They want to show their support for the “Demands of Justice and Healing” in response to racial profiling that was posted on Beyond the Green. Some of the students who wrote this anonymously have been involved in other forms of activism in regards to this “terrible situation.” Especially students from the “I am Addis movement” who have been very vocal about what has been going on, on campus, and the abuse of the black community. There have been extremely racist remarks and racist depictions of past community members in the form of some awful things around campus. In response, BSU is going to consider co-sponsoring a few ideas to see in a resolution by this body that will be seen “hopefully sooner rather than later.” It’s time, there has been no conversation in regards to this subject from this body and it’s gotten a lot of press, people are aware of it, they would like to know what senators they can get to co-sponsor a resolution like this, how they can be better on bringing conversations like this to this body particularly in regards to students of color on campus, and not having to have people come to this body and do this. What is the approach and plan to bring this to admins, he asks.

Speaker Aaron thanks Rainey and states that there is important action this body can take. The cabinet, a diverse group, and she thanks Rainey again for coming in as a representative of the Black Student Union, discussed sending an email to admin about the conversations they are having as it is important to this body and students.

President Sohn continues that they spoke with members of their cabinet and got some information that members of The Campus have met with admins about racial profiling happening on campus. She mentions there might be some information coming out, later this week, about their conversations and providing more information to the student body. The cabinet spoke about the article for Beyond the Green and essentially forwarding this to President Patton and pushing for some answers to what their thoughts are on the different points made, and what they must say about some actions that have happened. Another idea was having a sort of “round table” discussion with different members of the SLG and stakeholders in what is happening on campus and other cultural org group members and to have a discussion, and to open it up to the community. These are the two ideas they discussed moving forward. Legislation is something this body can do but not the cabinet, that is a conversation we should have here. There was a wider question about what our relationship with admins looks like and moving forward.

Speaker Aaron states that it is important to get the thoughts on this tonight. Thinking about making long term goals for Middlebury and thinking about the future, legislation seems more short term like this is how we feel, “goodbye.” Something the cabinet members are talking about are having workshops and talking to the admin, and bringing in voices from different groups on campus. So it is not just sent in an email, it’s our faces and can answer questions in person.

Rainey responds that he would like to read some summaries of “what people are asking for” he believes that they discuss big institutional change. One is short term like an apology to
Addis for what happened, he also thinks that in that is a recognition that racial profiling happened on campus which is what the admins are failing to do. They are proactively saying that they did not racially profile a student, when she was in fact racially profiled. It is this failure to admit that there was this failure upon this institution, if “we are not willing to admit” then how can “we got about fixing it at all.”

Speaker Aaron asks Rainey to explain the racial profiling that happened on campus.

Rainey responds that a pub safe officer said that they saw Addis, “who is a black woman on campus,” at the car that was taking Charles Murray away from campus, but she was in fact not there. In fact, several eye witnesses place her in Proctor during the same time also her Wi-Fi check-ins place her at Proctor, she was not there at the car. However, there is a failure to admit that this is racial profiling, but the administration continues to peddle this untrue narrative, which is deeply offensive.

Speaker Aaron asks about the “current status” of this.

Rainey states they are sticking to this story, that there hasn’t been this recognition that she was racially profiled.

Co-Chair Wright responds that the “cases are closed.” There are two separate cases, performed by different bodies, said two separate things regarding where Addis was. There was a judicial case, that was performed last spring, that ruled Addis was not at the car, not guilty for those allegations put against her by that public safety officer. There was an HR case, he asks Adams to “correct him if he’s wrong.”

Adams has not information on it.

Co-Chair Wright continues, that there was an HR case done due to Addis’s complaint of racial profiling against that public safety officer. That HR complaint ruled “that she was in fact at the car.” Two separate cases, performed by two separate bodies understanding that it is an HR complaint that admin cannot comment on it. So in seeking a comment from President Patton or any other administrator on that ruling, “at least this is what I have been told by administrators,” because it is an HR complaint they cannot comment on that.

Senator Mahboob asks why they cannot comment.

Co-Chair Wright believes it is a “federal statute.” It is going to require some clarification because he has not seen that statute, he doesn’t know if it’s baseless, that’s just what he heard from admin.

Senator Goldfield asks two questions, “for clarification.” He asks that this means administrator can’t give any reason to this body, or the student body, why they came to that conclusion.

Co-Chair Wright responds that this is what several individuals have claimed to him.

Senator Goldfield’s second question is about the date in the Beyond the Green article that these demands need to be answered by “noon Friday November 10th.”

Rainey responds “we want closure.” There is also a town hall the him and others are organizing, that they are trying to get which is like what President Sohn described, in terms of trying to get people to the table and really talk about what is going on. There is some urgency that these questions being discussed. Also, talking about some of the things on these demands like to fire Bill Berger, mandatory trainings and getting a restorative justice principle getting put into the CJB and AJB in place. They haven’t gotten a timeline for this, which is problematic. This is something that they want, they want some transparency in the process. BSU would also like to see some legislation come through the SGA and whoever is trying to sponsor this, “let me know, give me a ring.” They would like to see this public safety officer, who these racial
profiling claims were made about, to be fired and removed from the campus. This is something that has really effected one of our community members and also they would like someone to, they invited Laurie Patton to the panel, in an honest way to respond to community and answer the questions in regards to this case. He asks if anyone is willing to support this.

Speaker Aaron responds, in reference to the training she speaks about how Baishakhi Taylor and Katy Smith- Abbott talked about, at the open forum, that was poorly attended, a restorative practices trainings with UVM which has students, faculty, and staff, work on crimes that were committee and come to common understandings. She urges Rainey to reach out to Baishakhi on this, it would be integral on what he is talking about.

Rainey responds that he is has, but to his understanding these would not be mandatory. Speaker Aaron clarifies, that it is a workshop and they are talking about how to implement it so it would be a critical time for BSU to be involved in as a means, the admin are taking a lot of time working in December to move forward with these goals and she highly recommend for him to be in communication with her.

President Sohn thanks Speaker Aaron for bring this information up. Restorative practices, there are trainings going on at the end of this semester for students, faculty, and admin, who are already in the process of getting trained for restorative practices. It is going to be a three-day training process that hope is that a group of people on campus are trained in leading these conversations about restorative practices and looking at how to implement these. With the end goal of teaching the rest of the community about restorative practices work on our campus, because it must be a whole community effort behind this. Restorative practices are different from restorative justice, there was someone in her cabinet who clarified the two. Restorative practices is about being proactive, building conversations in classrooms and for our community and how to react to a certain moment, while restorative justice is a community based way to react to something that has happened, part of restorative practices, it is more of a community decision of what the judgement is in the situation should be. This specific letter, from Beyond the Green, is asking for restorative justice, but she thinks it is important to include somewhere about restorative practices, that is the first thing our community decided to work on. She has a specific question for Rainey, she asks if President Patton is set on attending the meeting they are planning of having.

Rainey was given by her coordinator that he would have a formal decision on Monday, but she has received the message.

Co-Chair Wright is excited to hear from senators on this. He states that demands are great because they represent something, they represent an experience, a willingness to change, but his concern is what happens when demands are not met that it creates a certain volatility, that is perhaps warranted, there are racial tensions, there are instances of racial profiling that occur on this campus, it happens, there is a deep existence of racial injustice in Middlebury’s history. “When we are talking about demands, we are not talking about having a conversation.” This disturbs him, because he wonders on how much stuff on the list has been posed as a question to the admin, he understands the immense power dynamics there which makes this challenging. He understands that questions are not a mechanism for change in a lot of ways, he is wondering what happens when they don’t have an effective space for this conversation in the form of a question to the admin, then these demands are not met. This is an anonymous group, there are no signatories on this letter, he understands that there are power dynamics that discourage signing a letter like this, he is concerned that something bad might happen if this body does not approach
these questions very carefully and what the connections they are hoping to make between groups.

Speaker Aaron states that there is a lot of potential for something great to come out of this, especially because “we are the SGA and the administration does listen to us and meet with us regularly.”

Senator Pustejovsky speaks as a representative from the Institutional Diversity committee, that this committee might be a good channel to go through because they have “such strong official connections to the administration.” She references their upcoming meeting with Alliance for an Inclusive Middlebury, “we are supposed to be the student representatives of that part of it.” She understands the difference from the senate versus the cabinet but she thinks that it could be useful to bring them into the conversation because they have these connections. They talked about this before meeting and stated that they would really like to be a part of this.

President Sohn addresses this point, the two co-directors from the Institutional Diversity committee were present at the meeting today and participated a lot. She also tried to connect them with Rainey, but she doesn’t believe that they have gotten a response back. They are interested in getting involved with this, there is also a lot of members of her cabinet, that relate to cultural orgs that are looking into getting connected with that as well.

Senator Mahboob has a few comments. She thanks Rainey for coming in today and bringing this conversation to the table. She thinks that this will be the first of many conversations “this isn’t something we are going to figure out overnight.” It’s not going to take a bill, it’s not going to take several bills to actually create institutional change it’s going to take drawing connections when we can and that is asking questions as well. In terms of demands, she was wondering if he could elaborate the emotions behind the letter as people might perceive it with hostility or an aggressive nature.

Rainey states “people are angry.” He continues, “there was a picture of a black woman being ran over by a car with a noose behind it, people are just upset.” He thinks this is where the tone is coming from. One, there have been no conversations about this, people feel like they are not being listened to, not only by the administration but also by the people who represent them, in the student body. These are both fair statements. He thinks there have been “messed up things that have happened.” People just want action; he understands the bureaucracy of the senate and the relationship with the administration. His question is now, he just wanted to start a conversation in this body, he wanted to see who among the people here are willing to bring these things to the table and present these things and start the process of recommending these things to get done. Who is willing to co-sponsor this, he asks. What ideas are people behind, this is the conversation the BSU board is interested in having, who is willing to get behind what.

Speaker Aaron agrees that action is important, she believes now they should aim to meet with the Institutional Diversity committee and BSU and President Sohn to figure out ways to start this conversation now, as Senator Mahboob said. To collect our energy and move forward with this.

President Sohn asks what people think about the conversation she had with her cabinet and the points she brought up.

Senator Pustejovsky worries that sometimes this body puts too much emphasis on legislation, where the Community Council, the Institutional Diversity committee are just as important. She wonders if the senate is the best way to go through, she wonders if the admin will just as easily ignore their legislation too. She wonders if a bill is the best way to go about this, in reference to the points brought up by President Sohn, she continues that going through the
cabinet side, this has hopefully been seen by admins already, and she doesn’t know if smacking the senate on the bottom of the demands would make it more powerful, especially considering they didn’t write it. She thinks it would be useful to go through the cabinet side.

Co-Chair Rainey responds that he also believes there is a strength in showing that the student body agrees with something like this. He believes therefore it’s important to discuss with their constituents about this. They have a history of doing this in the past, he references his time in SGA when him and Senator Cohen co-sponsored a bill with demands for undocumented students, this was written outside of SGA, but was a sign of their support through this body. He didn’t hear that, but they were ready, it was a relatively easy bill to get passed through here. He doesn’t know why they can’t do these demands on campus and start to explore these other channels. He brings up the efficiency of the campus, in reference to Community Council, the first meeting was meeting the different members, while the second meeting was taken out by establishing a Common Agenda with Laurie Patton, which is the “antithesis of what this is.” He thinks that it is important to take a part in these other mechanisms but let’s not let the senate of the hook in doing this, it’s possible to do both.

Speaker Aaron believes accountability is important here. She has seen a lot of bills go through the SGA, something they should consider is that sometimes conversations are more effective when they are not arguing over wording and points. She strongly recommends to keep talking about this, before they force themselves into something that might not accomplish what they are trying to accomplish. She hopes they will move forward with the recommendations from the cabinet.

Senator Pustejovsky clarifies that she didn’t think that the conversation should happen in this body but she was worried that the conversation sounded like this could only happen through senate. She thinks that this body is not that powerful in this conversation, she references President Sohn’s remarks in the beginning of the meeting, that other methods are just as important.

Speaker Aaron states the members who are specifically on for Institutional Diversity are dedicated solely to that and would make a huge impact.

President Sohn yields to her Chief of Staff. He states that something one of the cabinet members brought up in their meeting was that they should think about their relationship with the administration and he does not want to frame this as picking sides, but depending on how they handle this, they could as SGA lose a sterling working relationship with the administration. He would encourage everyone to think about how important that is. He thinks this is tied to how we can respond to this, if we put this on a bill and send it to admins we are not going to be on a very good side, he continues that this shouldn’t be a reason why they don’t do that but that he just wanted to make people aware of this.

President Sohn states that something that all students wan are some answers, and this letter is demanding a response from President Patton. She states an idea that the senate email to the admin specifically asking for them to respond to these points, so we can get some clarification and push on the need to focus on how to address these points more so immediately then later on.

Rainey gives a closing remark. He would like feedback from their representatives, BSU@middlebury.edu, they would their feedback on these points made in the letter and how we can work together with BSU on how we can make black students feel safer and more included on campus. He hopes that everyone wants that in this room, he thinks everyone wants that in this room. He thinks that this conversation is a great way to launch off of that. In terms of the
relationship with the admin, he is becoming concerned about the role and the ability and power of the admins to decide the course where SGA goes. He thinks that this is something that can continue to propagate in a negative way the marginalization of voices that may not be the popular ones on campus. He thinks this is a side effect of allowing admins to bog down the process, this is something to consider that admin is altering the course of SGA. He hopes that it doesn’t on this one.

President Sohn believes it is important as a body they agree to send this email, the cabinet has agreed to be signed on to this email but she just needs confirmation from this body if you also agree. She understands if people don’t.

Speaker Aaron asks what email is she sending.

President Sohn states that it was going to be about the Beyond the Green article and to get some more clarification on the action points they are taking and what is happening from the admin point of view.

Speaker Aaron would feel more comfortable if they sent specific points, because the whole thing it has a reference to the termination of an admin and she does not feel that this is the way the SGA is approaching this.

President Sohn states that it is to get clarification about where the admin stand on these points and to be more transparent to the student body too.

Rainey states he wants to bring to the next meeting some of these points with the intention of voting on them.

Senator Goldfield would recommend in the email to ask one of the admin to come into their next meeting, instead of having written communication and relaying back-and-forth, questions can be answered face to face.

Co-Chair Wright agrees there needs to be multiple people at the table.

Speaker Aaron believes this is a good step forward.

President Sohn yields to her Chief of Staff. He wants to know if they are sending this article to the SLG or coming up with some points closely related.

Speaker Aaron believes that it should talk about the main points, that we had this conversation, then rather direct it to something they have already seen. She wants their advice of how we can move forward make it apart of the common agenda.

Senator Mahboob asks how do we know if admin have seen this.

Co-Chair Wright responds that they have seen it.

Senator Pustejovsky does not believe it is a bad thing to send the article.

Speaker Aaron asks President Sohn if she wants to continue the conversation over slack.

President Sohn will send a draft to everyone.

Rainey asks for them to cc on the email BSU.

President Sohn states they can speak about it afterwards.

Speaker Aaron motions to adjourn, and they will hear from President Sohn about this and will continue next week. She thanks everyone for staying longer.

The motion is seconded.

16-0-0