

## **Martlet Publishing Society Board of Directors Ad-Hoc In-Camera Committee Report on 2012 Full-Time Staff Raises**

Nov. 22, 2013

In June of 2012, then-Managing Editor of the Martlet, Kristi Sipes, had to suddenly end her employment at the Martlet due to difficulties with her immigration status. After Ms. Sipes's departure, Editor-in-Chief Vanessa Annand and Production Co-ordinator Glen O'Neill discovered that Ms. Sipes had implemented significant raises for full-time staff, including herself, in a manner which did not adhere to Martlet employment policies.

At the June 25, 2012 meeting of the Martlet Publishing Society(MPS) Board of Directors (hereafter "the board"), Ms. Annand informed the board of the raises, noting that they had not been approved by the board. Ms. Annand and Mr. O'Neill also expressed concern that the raises were unequal and not in accord with the Martlet's Organizational Relationship Structure, in which the managing editor, editor-in-chief, and production co-ordinator occupy positions of equal seniority and thus should receive the same salaries and benefits.

The board unanimously passed a motion at its June 25, 2012 meeting which annulled the raises implemented by Ms. Sipes by amending the contracts of the editor-in-chief, production co-ordinator, and advertising director, resetting their salaries to \$1150 bi-weekly.

(Also at the June 25, 2012 Martlet board meeting, former editor-in-chief Erin Ball was offered the position of interim managing editor, which she accepted.)

At its July 16, 2012 meeting, the board established an ad-hoc in-camera committee to do the following:

- Review relevant Martlet policies and bylaws;
- Review how the raises were implemented and what policies and bylaws, if any, were not adhered to; and,
- Make recommendations to the board of directors.

### **Relevant Martlet Policies and Bylaws**

This section lists the Martlet policies and bylaws related to employee remuneration as they existed in the spring of 2012.

#### **Policies (2012)**

- Employment Policy #3 – Terms of Reference for the Editor-in-Chief and Production Co-ordinator Hiring Committee.
  6. The committee shall propose revisions, if needed, to the job descriptions and remuneration of the salaried staff. These proposals shall be ratified by staff at a Staff Meeting prior to March 1.
- Employment Policy #4 – Terms of Reference for the Advertising Director Review Committee

4. The committee shall fourth review the remuneration of the Ad Director and recommend changes, if any, to the Board of Directors.
- Employment Policy #5 – Terms of Reference for the Managing Editor Review Committee
    4. The committee shall fourth review the remuneration of the Managing Editor and recommend changes, if any, to the Board of Directors.

## **Bylaws (2012)**

### **Part Five – Officers**

20. The Martlet shall employ four officers:
  - a. managing editor
  - b. editor-in-chief
  - c. production coordinator
  - d. advertising director
21. The managing editor, editor-in-chief, and production coordinator positions shall be appointed by:
  - a. the decision of a five (5) person hiring committee consisting of the incumbent and four (4) members elected by the members at a member meeting; or
  - b. a resolution of the board of directors.
22. The advertising director position shall be appointed by
  - a. the managing editor; or
  - b. a resolution of the board of directors.
23. The officers are solely responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Martlet.

### **Part Six – Staff**

24. Staff means:
  - (1) Any person who is currently employed by the Martlet.
  - (2) Remuneration for staff shall be at the discretion of the managing editor.

### **Part Eleven – Bylaws**

37. If conflict exists between these bylaws and any policy, these bylaws shall prevail.

## **Findings**

The raises implemented by Ms. Sipes were not in accord with Martlet Employment Policies #4(Duties)(4.), #5(Duties)(4.), and possibly #3(Duties)(6.). The raises for the Managing Editor and Advertising Director were not approved by the board, and it is unclear whether the raises for Editor-in-Chief and Production Co-ordinator were transparently approved at a staff meeting.

While not implemented in accordance with Martlet employment policies, the raises were not technically in violation of the 2011-2012 Martlet bylaws. Bylaw 24(1) defined “staff” as “any person who is currently employed by the Martlet”, bylaw 24(2) held that “remuneration for staff shall be at the discretion of the managing editor”, and bylaw 37 held that “if conflict exists between these bylaws and any policy, these

bylaws shall prevail.” Thus, since Martlet Employment Policies #3(Duties)(6.), #4( Duties)(4.), and#5(Duties)(4.) could be read as conflicting with Martlet bylaws 24(1) and 24(2), the bylaws prevailed over the policies, technically leaving the determination of remuneration for all Martlet employees, including full-time staff, at the sole discretion of the managing editor.

According to former full-time staff members, the raises would have had a significantly harmful impact on the Martlet’s operations by reducing funds available to hire part-time staff. Former staff also noted that there was a general lack of awareness of Martlet policies related to employee remuneration.

### **Corrective Action Taken**

At the October 24, 2012 MPS annual general meeting, the MPS corporate bylaws were amended change the definition of “staff” to “Any person who is currently employed by the Martlet, not including the four officers (Managing Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Production Co-ordinator, Advertising Director)”.

### **Recommendations**

1. Martlet bylaws and policies should be amended to require that proposed changes to full-time staff remuneration must be approved by both Martlet staff and the Martlet Publishing Society Board of Directors (Graham and Glen’s suggestion) -> Graham to suggest bylaws.
2. Training of all Martlet staff in Martlet policies should be reviewed and, if necessary, improved.
3. Members of Hiring Committees and Managing Editor Review Committees must be well-acquainted with, and follow, all relevant policies.