

# ALPHA THETA CHAPTER OF SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY, INC.

Alpha Theta Chapter  
founded 1882

M.I.T.  
founded 1861

October 25, 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity, Inc. held September 19, 2005.

The meeting was called to order at 7:22 PM in the Chapter House Library.

Present:	Karl Büttner '87 (Board)	Josh Littlefield '81 via telephone (Board)	Adam d'Amico '99 (Board, Chapter Advisor)
	Joe Sikoscow '06 (Consul, Workweek Manager, Board)	Herb Mower '65 (Board)	Mark Curtiss '87
	Daniel Craig '03 (Board)	Mike DeLaus '82 (Board)	Josh Lake '07 (Quaestor, House Mgr, Board)
	Jack Field '08 (Fall Rep, Board)	Jay Krone '74 (Board)	Austin Ford '07 (Magister, Board)
	Dan Scolnic '07 (Rush Chair)	Aman Milner (R.A.)	

Absent: Bryan DeLeon '06 (Board, G.Z.) Doug Bailey '72 (Board)

Karl opened the meeting by welcoming the new Resident Advisor, Aman Milner. Aman is a doctoral student at the MIT Media Lab studying educational technology. He has just recently completed a Master's degree at Georgia Tech. Aman graduated from University of Southern California in 2001 and is a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

## REVIEW OF MINUTES

Minutes of the April 11, 2005 meeting were accepted as distributed by e-mail. Minutes of all previous meetings are available on the chapter website at <http://sigmachi.mit.edu/>.

## CHAPTER REPORTS

### Consul – Joe Sikoscow

1. The chapter has completed a successful workweek and rush. There are now 24 active and pledge brothers living in the house, including two new pledges who are upperclassmen transfer students. As of the board meeting, the chapter had ten pledge brothers, with two outstanding bids. Mark offered the board's help working with any concerned parents of bidees.
2. There are five upperclassmen living outside of the house. One '06 is living in an apartment, two '07s and two '08s are living on campus. Some may move in for the spring semester.
3. Wednesday Tea and weekly social events have been going smoothly without incident. This contrasts with the confrontation between members of Alpha Tau Omega and Delta Upsilon on Thursday September 15. The fight took place inside DU, as ATOs who were friends with DUs and were allowed in for a social function proceeded to let other ATOs in the back door. Campus Police were called and broke up the fight.

4. A new coordinator at the FSILG office has been appointed (name?)
5. The chapter is working to schedule a dinner with MIT President Susan Hockfield.
6. Campus Police are coordinating a pizza dinner with the chapter.
7. The IFC and Campus Police are organizing a Hurricane Katrina relief drive on Friday. The chapter is preparing for the upcoming Derby Days philanthropy event, so it is unclear how it will be participating in the relief drive.
8. Summer House has collected most of the rent owed from boarders. One boarder is refusing to pay her \$500 and claiming that the house was unlivable. She complained about mice, but also refused to perform any daily jobs to help maintain the house. Herb recommended contacting former Grand Praetor Kurt Gurstner for free legal advice. Regardless of whether she pays or not, the chapter made a good profit, but the exact numbers were not available.

The only major incident over the summer was the water leaking into 3LB during a very heavy rain storm. It is suspected that the gutter on the fourth floor above the bay window overflowed and water spilled through under the lip of the gutter. The problem may still exist, so it should be looked at, perhaps as a makeup workweek job.

#### **Quaestor – Josh Lake**

1. Taxes were paid in the spring, though there is still a small remaining discrepancy between what the IRS says the house owes and what was thought. The amount is approximately \$500-600 and is mostly late fees.
2. The final budget will be set after the meeting.
3. An alumnus who owes a large amount of back housebills, has been sending \$100 per month.
4. The Assistant Quaestor has been helping with the reimbursements.
5. The chapter applied for an IRDF grant, and will be reimbursed in the spring for educational expenses. IRDF asked for additional documentation from applying chapters, but had not finalized what was needed yet. The chapter submitted for \$14,000 for operating expenses plus \$10,000 for educational investment. \$7000 of the education portion was spent on a new house printer/copier, wireless network equipment, and monitors for the chapter's computers.

The \$14,000 is split between the two previous years, with \$11,500 from last year and \$2,500 the year before. This was because they could only apply for the June-Aug portion of the fiscal year of the first year of the operating grant. Each year, a house must apply for reimbursement from the year before. The IRDF office was overloaded with applications, so it has taken time, but most chapters who filed early got their full requested amount.

Karl reminded the board about the history of the IRDF. It has been in existence for some time, supported by donations of alumni of independent living groups. Its original purpose was to provide low interest loans to houses for renovations, but has recently begun providing grants for operational costs for items that can be considered educational. Last year, houses were surveyed to determine what percentage of the living space was "educational." We have one of the higher percentages, approximately 25%. This percentage of certain "operating costs" can be eligible for annual IRDF Operating Grants. Karl was unaware that the chapter had also applied for Educational Grant funds, but noted that we

should decide at some point upon a strategy for using the money best for the long term needs of the house.

6. The house has spend some initial investment in Derby Days. It is expected to recoup the costs from Weekends@MIT and fundraising, but neither of those are complete yet.
7. Bills from the summer were not paid. Water service was almost canceled, but the debt was paid.
8. Josh Lake and Josh Littlefield met in the spring to coordinated Quaestor and Treasurer, but have not done so yet in the fall.

#### **House Manager – Josh Lake**

1. The water main that had been inadequately patched last year broke again during rush. Actives put in the effort to dig up the pipe and it was replaced properly by Water Works, a company recommended by Boston Water for \$1500. They were very prompt with service, coming the night of the break, and settling on a contract the next day. The sidewalk did not need to be pulled up, only dug under slightly.

Josh Littlefield noted that we should still pursue recovering money from AAA for the improper work that was done. When the actives dug up the pipe, they made sure to take photos of the patch put on by AAA that may help in dealing with them.

2. The “Sigma” toilet in the third floor back bathroom is finally functional again, as is the urinal.
3. During workweek, several lofts were removed and rebuilt as bunks to comply with more strict sprinkler guidelines being enforced by the Boston Fire Department inspectors.

#### **Rush Chairman – Dan Scolnic**

1. Rush was successful, resulting in 10 pledges, 8 freshmen and 2 sophomores.
2. All the houses from the IFC netted around 275 pledges, which is not bad, but still a downward trend. The average pledge class was 10, although some houses had bad years. This year the freshman class as a whole had 70-80 fewer men than the year before, at 530, so the total pledge numbers are still more than half the men in the class.
3. Clearinghouse was revived, this time as a web based application. Use was mandatory across the IFC. It was to help houses locate and camp for freshmen, though the chapter did not camp. It also served to gather rush data that can be used by the IFC and houses to evaluate rush events and strategies.
4. The chapter spent approximately \$10,000 on rush, which is less than last year but higher than budgeted. The cost includes money spent on Campus Preview Weekend. Rush this year was also one day longer than last year.

#### **Magister – Austin Ford**

1. First pledge meeting will be tonight after the meeting.
2. The corporate board dinner with the pledges will be this Thursday at Ciao Bella on Newbury at 7pm.
3. Adam asked about the push from headquarters to mandate an eight week pledge program. Austin had not heard anything yet. The chapter should get in touch with Grand Praetor Shawn George to get a waiver if it is needed, so that the chapter can continue its traditional pledge program, which runs the length of the fall term and concludes at the end of January /

beginning of February. It is felt that the traditional pledge program is much less disruptive to the pledges' academic study than a program that would only run 8 weeks and conclude in the middle of the term.

4. The pledge exam will take place on December 4, and I-week will be January 26-February 4.
5. Karl asked how often the pledges are around the house. Austin answered that some are around a lot some less. Many come to dinners at the house and all are usually at social events. He hasn't explicitly listed expectations about house much time they should spend at the house, but they seem to be spending enough time.

## **CORPORATE REPORTS**

### **President – Karl Büttner**

1. Recap of the spring: The Scholarship Dinner was held on May 14 at the Hotel@MIT. Sixty-five people were in attendance, spanning 60 years of pledge classes. Newly inaugurated MIT President Susan Hockfield was the special guest at her first major fraternity event at the Institute. The Beaver Sig carried coverage of the event.
2. Next year's dinner will need to be planned soon. If we stick with the plan from two years ago, this year is due for holding the dinner in conjunction with MIT reunion week prior to commencement instead of during the academic term. The downside of this is that fewer actives can attend. It will need to be decided whether to proceed with this plan or to hold a standard dinner. Mark noted that if we do plan to hold it during reunion week, we should get word out to alumni soon to plans may be made. Jay asked which dinner had a better turnout, to which Karl replied that the last three years had about the same total number, but the reunion week event had more alumni and fewer actives than the semester events. It should also be noted that the reunion time improves the rotation of different individual alumni attending over the years.

Josh Littlefield noted that Symphony Hall was a very expensive venue and the corporation should look for a more affordable alternative this year, if we choose to hold the dinner during the same week as MIT reunion. Herb stated that early June is always an expensive time of year because of so many universities in the area hosting these kinds of events. The Faculty Club may not raise rates, though, so it should be considered. Herb also reminded the board that 125<sup>th</sup> reunion will be coming up in 2007, so it may not be so necessary to make a push for alumni attendance at the dinner.

Karl stated that a final decision will need to be made at the November meeting.

3. Discussion on the financial status of the corporation in both short and long term. The short term is supported by the annual donation campaign, which Herb provided an update for (The number of donors is down this year, but the total amount is higher than last year. Out of approximately 600 living alumni, 103 donated this year, including one \$5000 donation.) The last two years have seen strong donations. However, despite the strong donation support, the corporation's cash reserves are still not where we want them to ultimately be, having currently only about \$30,000 in the bank at any given time. This is not sufficient for dealing with unexpected costs.

In order to further strengthen the corporation's financial health, the corporation can look to its two primary sources; alumni donations, previously mentioned, which have been high the last few years, and rent from the undergraduates. Rent increases will most likely occur, especially since MIT has announced that it will be increasing dorm costs to closer to the true cost. This will relieve the downward pressure on FSILGs to keep costs down to remain competitive.

Additionally, IRDF grants are opening up a new source of financial assistance that the chapter and the corporation should plan for utilizing in the best way for the long term health of Alpha Theta. The funds for the new IRDF operating grants are initially coming from interest on its loans and endowments, but once those are exhausted it will be funded directly from donations.

Joe explained that IRDF educational grants are paid in arrears up to \$10,000 for expenses in the previous year. Since the deadline was approaching, the chapter had to spend quickly, choosing new computers and monitors. Next year, they think they might want to use the grant for upgrading the network, new desks, or new chairs. It was agreed that the undergraduates and corporation would discuss these topics again before next year's grant application was submitted.

In the long term, financial needs are primarily the renovation, which the corporation was ready to launch until the stock market crashed in 2001. Doug Bailey has been holding meetings and working with Bob Ferrara of the FSILG Office and Charlie Frick of Stewart Howe. The renovation will require special fundraising in the millions of dollars.

Mark noted how the new IRDF grants provide us an opportunity to invite alumni to donate through the IRDF. In doing so, the house benefits and the donations count toward MIT class giving. However, it is technically not possible to specifically earmark funds donated to the IRDF as being intended for a specific chapter. It is also possible to count direct giving to houses toward class totals, but there is no tax benefit. Information about both of these donation options was published in last Fall's Beaver Sig, in the form of a letter from MIT's Bob Ferrara. Josh Littlefield mentioned how, even though we are a 501(c)7, it is possible to set up a 501(c)3 fund whereby we could get the tax benefit. This is similar to Phi Kappa Sigma's percentage of educational value of the house, but they did not set up a separate fund.

4. The alumni Association of Independent Living Groups (AILG) meets periodically on Wednesday mornings and has become increasingly active recently. It has already set up the FSILG Cooperative and has just begun the Safety, Licensing, and Inspections program. It will function as a clearinghouse for inspection scheduling, document license maintenance, and reminders. Danny and Josh Littlefield attended the initial announcement meeting.

In addition to the Document Registry, the program has also hired a full time Building Safety Facilitator named Jay Flynn. His role is to be the liaison between houses and the city authorities. He will help houses prepare for inspections as well as attend the actual inspections.

The BSF portion of the program is optional, at \$500 per year. Jay Krone moved to allocate

funds to pay for the BSF, and Adam seconded the motion. It carried without objection.

At the next AILG meeting, an update on the accreditation project will be presented. The meeting will be in the Student Center at 7am.

#### **Treasurer – Josh Littlefield**

1. The corporation has about \$16,000 in the bank. The chapter owes about \$16,000 in rent from the spring, minus reimbursed costs of repairs. They also owe \$27,000 in rent for the fall. The \$16,000 from spring includes credit for workweek, but no accounting of expenses have been received yet. This needs to be taken care of soon because insurance and property taxes are coming due.
2. An accounting of alumni contributions skewed slightly from Herb's shows the corporation receiving approximately \$22,000 so far this donation year including a single \$5,000 contribution which is intended to go toward the renovation. Removing the renovation donation, contributions came in on budget.
3. We need to increase our cash, so we will probably have to raise rent. We are awaiting word on the operating grant from IRDF, for which we applied for \$15,000. We may have missed the boat for FY03, but we were only applying for a few thousand because it was a truncated first year of the program. We are confident we will receive the grant for FY04. We can already apply for FY05. That will wait because things can change at the last minute, like the new spreadsheet requirement breaking down maintenance costs.
4. At the annual meeting, we will discuss rent and the budget.

#### **Alumni House Manager – Dan Craig**

1. Fire Equipment Inc. performed an inspection of sprinkler coverage. They recommended less bedroom work than expected, but called for some expensive additions in common rooms, like the library, dining room, and foyer.
2. Karl gave some background info: At a fire department inspection last year, an abatement order was given requiring improving sprinkler coverage in the bedrooms. The final requirement is a clean bill of health from a sprinkler inspection company. After a walkthrough with Lt. David Cushing of BFD, a general list of sprinkler additions and loft repositioning was created. Over workweek, the chapter removed several lofts and converted them to free-standing bunks that are more compliant with fire code and reduces the number of sprinkler system modifications that may be required. Now we are in the phase of finalizing what sprinkler additions or modifications are required and hiring a contractor to perform the work.
3. While the specifics were not yet finalized, a motion carried without objection to move forward with the work and appropriate funds as necessary for the project.

#### **Alumni Risk Manager – Herb Mower**

1. MIT is providing funds for a pizza dinner with the freshmen to discuss risk
2. Ice cream and Moxie with the pledge class will be at Herb's house on Oct 23.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Work Week Budget Approval**

1. List of major projects completed during workweek:
  - a. Laundry room floor was stripped down to the beams and rebuilt. It was not intended to be so extensive, but pulling up the tile revealed a very rotten floor.
  - b. Poor urinal drainage (2<sup>nd</sup> floor?) was fixed
  - c. Removed lofts from 4LB and 2LB, rebuilt as free standing bunks.
  - d. Lined sub-basement
  - e. Swept roof
  - f. Cleaned gutters
  - g. Painted windows
  - h. Cut away vines that were eating into the brick
  - i. The lawn was cleaned up, but was later destroyed by the trench required to fix the water main
2. Total cost was approximately \$4000, but Joe could not open his spreadsheet.

### **Other Business**

1. Discussion of capturing institutional knowledge regarding work week. The idea floated around is using a wiki, The alumni house manager will look into it. One suggestion was the web hosting toolkit offered by the FSILG office, but it is very rudimentary compared to the house website.
2. Adam reported that Kurt Gerstner, former grand praetor, has published a novel titled *A Complex Solution*. His wife refers to it as his “pro-fraternity manifesto.” Kurt is donating all the proceeds from its first year sales to Sigma Chi.

The annual meeting will be on November 14, 2005.

The pledge dinner will be held at Ciao Bella on Thursday, September 22 at 7pm.

There is an AILG breakfast on Wednesday, September 21, 2005 at Twenty Chimneys in W20.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Daniel R. Craig, Class of 2003  
Corporate Clerk