

Infrastructure Committee report Fall 2022/ Spring 2023

Mel Blake (Chair)

Committee Activities

The infrastructure committee was very inactive this year, although more so than the previous year when it did not meet at all; since it was not asked to do anything, there was no reason to meet. Two meetings were held, one on Oct 18th, and one on November 22. The first meeting was attended by the chair and two others, the minutes for that meeting are given in Appendix A. This meeting was an introductory meeting and the nature of the committee and its mission was discussed. As part of the discussion it was clear that the committee is an entirely advisory committee with no actual decision-making powers. The committee is purely advisory and has no work unless called upon by the UNA president. However, there is no restriction that the committee cannot carry out tasks on its own initiative. Since one role is to advise updates to the UNA master plan, it was decided to ask the committee members to review the master plan and suggest updates.

The second meeting was held on November 22 to discuss the suggested updates. The meeting was attended by the chair and Jeremy Martin. The minutes for that meeting are given in Appendix B, and the chair's suggestions for updates are given in Appendix C. No other suggested updates were obtained. A general discussion took place at the meeting about possible improvements to accessibility at the planetarium, and the desire to make the planetarium bathrooms more accessible and the programs themselves more inclusive. The plan was to have the accessibility officer visit the planetarium and help assess things. While this was not able to be arranged, the discussion did result in grab bars being installed in the washroom. This was the last meeting of the committee for the year. No requests were made of it to do any tasks as part of its role in shared governance.

General Comments and Suggestions

1. The overall inactivity of the committee is largely a failure of the chair to organize and motivate the members of the committee. Most of the committee members have other leadership roles and need a much greater amount of time to schedule meetings than they were given. Using email rather than the Office scheduler was also reported as an issue. It may not also have been clear that people were to send me comments on the master plan for the second meeting. In any case, after only one person attended the second meeting the chair was fairly disheartened, and decided to wait for duties to be assigned to the committee, and this did not happen. Hopefully the new chair will provide better leadership.
2. It is clear that this committee is largely ignored as part of shared governance and the majority of the members are on the committee by position, and are presumably giving advice on infrastructure by other means. Given the large amount of activity on infrastructure on campus, such as the announcement of a new sports complex, and an engineer building, one would think that the infrastructure committee's advice and input would be sought and needed. However,

that is clearly not the case. My primary recommendation is that this committee be disbanded and removed from shared governance. There is simply no point to have a committee that is simply not utilized. The most recent minutes on its website are from 2018. Since it is only an advisory committee with no authority, and the president can strike an ad hoc committee to advise him on anything he wants, whenever he wants, having an inactive standing infrastructure committee is unnecessary.

3. With regards to the campus Master Plan, I had not seen this document before, and was quite surprised to see the planetarium not listed as a current facility on campus. I was even more surprised to see that the master plan is to demolish my facility so the recreation people can expand theirs. The claim is made in the document the planetarium cannot function anymore because of light pollution. I must emphasize here that absolutely no one ever consulted me or asked me about this, and being the director of the facility that was to be torn down and demolished, you would think that this would be the case. Common respect and courtesy, not to mention due diligence would require this, particularly since significant improvements to the observatory were made just a few years ago. As the only astronomer on campus, I am the only person on campus qualified to assess the planetarium's capabilities, yet no one bothered to reach out to me about this. We have very good outreach programs, with increased attendance, and with the observatory improvements are also doing research that is producing research papers with student co-authors. The planetarium and observatory should not be torn down. If the recreation center needs more space, perhaps an expanded facility can be built elsewhere instead.