

Tygerberg Student Parliament

Student Parliament Sitting

Date: 17th March 2015

Time: 18:05 – 19:35

Venue: Teaching Block, Lecture Hall 4

Minutes: Ms CF Elliot-Wilson

Speaker: Ms LZ Letsoalo

Introduction:

Welcomed by the Speaker to the first Tygerberg Student Parliament sitting of 2015. Speaker calls forward the Head of TSR, Mr Dumisani Majombozi, and the Speaker for Student Parliament (main campus), Mr Gerschwin Hamunyela, for the Commitment to Unity. House stands for the Commitment to Unity. All seated and Sitting commences.

Speaker introduces the rules of engagement, and the procedures for the evening. Everybody is free to participate and to propose motions. Enquiries can be made at any time. Speaker introduces the agenda points for the evening.

Agenda Points:

- FEDICS
- Muslim Prayer Facility
- Campus Safety
- Student Fees Increase

1. FEDICS

Introduction of Guest Speakers: Mr Gary Howell and Mr J Pather.

Unfortunately, Mr J Pather cancelled and so could not attend the Sitting, nor was able to send a representative in their place. Though to be a board meeting held in Johannesburg.

First Guest Speaker: Mr Gary Howell

- His office is on main campus, Neelsie centre, commercial services.
- Charged with task of sourcing tenders for TSS
 - o have hand in managing TSS.
- Mr Howell ran through basics of how the process in sourcing a tender went about and the outcome of the process.
- Says our students are “the major stake holder”.
- Without the students “we wouldn’t be in business”.

- He highlighted important criteria taken into consideration
 - price that students would pay
 - “the most important thing to us”
 - address aspects of quality control.

- These two criteria were the two main used to assess sources.
- The panel wanted it to look better and have a fresh offering for students.
- Wanted capital investment in it.
- Process:
 - ad in newspapers (RFP)
 - received different proposals
 - shortlist made
 - 6 ‘finalists’ to be chosen from
 - negotiations and to work together in terms of contract
 - committee was put together to see which tender would be most suitable
 - consisted of 6 people
 - 2 of which from TSR (representing students)
 - others comprised of individuals from Mr Howell’s office and Manager of Faculty
 - committee scored each ‘contender’ (points-based scoring system)
 - unanimous decision = FEDICS
 - felt “quite sure” that the presentation addressed all of the concerns raised from the end of last year with regards to the service provided by FEDICS.

- As someone from commercial services, he is very happy with the way it looks now. FEDICS have their own cold rooms, certification of halal kitchen, there is a second facility, it is cleaner and fresher.

- Now in advanced negotiations with FEDICS:
 - with regards to contractual service-level agreement
 - pricing
 - convenience shop
 - TSR and other student representatives will have participation and input in the monthly management by FEDICS
 - trying to put in place SMS complaint to a number and have a turn around time of “perhaps 24 hours”.

- Pricing
 - have now installed convenience shop
 - need to “unpack the word ‘convenience’”
 - some limited supplies for when you are in a hurry
 - prices at which they can source the merchandise
 - mark-up percentage
 - Commercial Services will cap and monitor it.

- Second note of caution from Mr Gary Howell:
 - “if you are looking for faults you will always find plenty”
 - before we look at all the faults and look at our alternatives:
 - there were 5 other options out there
 - they didn’t have the same offering or pricing
 - FEDICS don’t have exclusivity as they did last year
 - FEDICS are aware that this lack of exclusivity means that a competitor can be put in place at any time
 - FEDICS have spent a sizeable amount of money
 - FEDICS now have a 7 year tenure here.

- Madam Speaker clarifies that the second guest speaker, Mr J Pather, as the representative from FEDICS was unable to make it to the Sitting this evening.

QUESTION ROUNDS:

Q: The final decision when choosing FEDICS was in the hands of the 6 committee members. Did the student representatives that were present have their feedback analysed (vote of no confidence form the students)?

A: 2 were present and would imply students were properly represented. All are, and were, aware during the process of the sentiment of the vote of no confidence from last year. Granted, the student body was not polled in mass as to their opinion of FEDICS.

Q: From last year, the vote to not have FEDICS return as the tenders for 2015 – what happened with that?

A: Committee went to every effort to appoint the one that performed the best. FEDICS themselves were aware of their own short-comings. Presentation showed that these problems were addressed. They are a “heavy-weight in terms of providing food services”. Decisions were made against a set of very strict criteria.

Q: What is the point in asking for change in an environment such as this with representatives if it is going to be overridden?

A: Difficult to answer, need to unpack question carefully. Would be negligent to appoint someone else who didn't address criteria as well as FEDICS presented to address them. University has procurement policy; how do you reject the one that is most competitive and addresses criteria best? Call made that advertisement be made at the time, and only had 6 choices.

Q: What was the gap between FEDICS and the runner up?

A: Not in a position to give exact gap nor am I legally allowed to. Decision was unanimous and FEDICS turned out to be overwhelmingly the better service provider. The gap was "substantial".

COMMENT: I would like to thank Commercial Services for facilitating to halal services.

Q: Why is it that you cannot tell us what the 5 other service providers presented?

A: There were 2 representatives from TSR present. Best to ask them for feedback. Secondly, not prepared with information to answer as [Mr Howell] was not briefed/made aware that that would be a question. Very happy to provide feedback if it deemed appropriate by university in terms of legalities.

Q: POINT OF CONCERN → Students are said by [Mr Howell] to remain the main stakeholders, but the opinions of the mass students have not been analysed. Further clarity on situation.

A: No poll was used. 2 of the members of the TSR were present at the decision-making meeting. They represent the students. Was thought that by having these 2 on the committee would be sufficient and fair and acting in best interests of students.

TSR MEMBER ADDS TO A: TSR set up a Committee, included Osler representation as well. Came together and discussed the tender. Very difficult on this campus to get the opinions of everyone. The points that resulted from the committee discussion were put forward to Mr Nick Wayne, and from there taken forward and decision made.

Q: POINT OF CONCERN → Point of concern clarified. Thank you.

Q: [Asker] from main campus. As far as [Asker] understands all residences are supplied by the same company. Tygerberg is a branch from Stellenbosch University, so would they not have the same as us?

A: Not the same company for all residences, there are a number of different ones.

ADDED BY STUDENT IN HOUSE: confirmed → the University uses 3 companies.

Q: In terms of the convenience store, is it possible to have student participation in terms of trade off? Ask students what it is they want and so company can buy in bulk of what students want rather than small amounts of various items.

A: thank you very much. Answer is “absolutely yes”. In the process of finalising agreements. Hopefully will provide for the students.

Q: Could the students who represented us on the council shed more light – i.e. a presentation – to explain what happened with the discussions and decision made?

A [NICK WAYNE]: Was 1 of the representatives present. TSR put priority of the students’ opinion above everything else. Tender process wasn’t fully something that could be based on opinion – it was a points system with criteria. Spent December holiday thinking of it. Also, being a student here did everything he could to try procure what we wanted, some of the points did come through, some didn’t. HK structures need to form a way forward from here to move together. We can have the perfect FEDICS if we want to

Q [TO MR WAYNE]: Can you tell us who you voted for? As you represented us and we voted against FEDICS, how did it work?

A [NICK WAYNE]: It was not a matter of voting, it was a points system, where you awarded points for where they addressed certain criteria well, and they [FEDICS] scored highly in certain areas

A [MR HOWELL ADDING]: To clarify, it was a score-based system. As the process goes on, nobody is aware who is going to “win”. The scores are tallied at the end of it. The tender with the highest score was then chosen.

Closure of first agenda point. Speaker introduces the next agenda point and the guest speaker to make their statement and later answer questions.

2. MUSLIM PRAYER FACILITY

Introduction of Guest Speaker: Mr E Mouton.

Mr E Mouton

- Speaking on behalf of Faculty Management.
- Many parties involved.
- This is about a bigger matter, not only about prayer facility for Muslims but for Shofar and His People members as well.

- Mr Benjamin is adamant that it is an approach not just for Muslim students but all students from all 3 religious societies.
- Feedback from Faculty Management perspective:
 - Facilities Management not ready to give answer tonight
 - 3-4 years ago, there was planning for a new lecture hall complexes. It became clear that with building lecture theatres it required additional academic space
 - Became clear in planning:
 - needed to make distinction between academic and other practices
 - limited funding
 - space requirements for halls and break-away rooms
 - they proposed: other alternative space be found
 - engaged with the 3 societies → one of which was the Muslim Society that Mr Benjamin headed as Chairperson.
- Way forward is to look for another space to accommodate them
 - find short-term space and how to take the matter forward to find new space for the 3 societies.
 - Mr Groenewald instrumental in facilitating discussions.
- Agreed with one another that space will be found in TSS, where permanent facilities will then be erected in order to accommodate the 3 societies
 - matter that needs to be dealt with between Facilities Management and Commercial Services. Both departments play a role in terms of the department in charge of the TSS space and it's facilities.
- Engaged with Muslim community – came to agreement that sports hall would be made available on permanent basis, with consent of Commercial Services, on Fridays for students and staff.
 - still there is the need for a smaller space exclusively for them on a permanent basis
 - along with His People and Shofar
 - cost to accommodate will be significant - asked for strategic funding
 - informed that strategic funding was allocated
 - large portion of money
 - Dean and Faculty Management have said that if there is a short fall, they will help in making funding available
 - but still waiting on Facilities Management and Commercial Services
 - as far as [Mr Mouton] is aware, matter seems to be concluded with regards to the space for the 3 societies

- matter should be concluded between Facilities Management and Commercial Services within the next week or two
- Allows Facilities Management to conclude the drawings of these places and bring it back to the student bodies affected and the TSR.
- Funding is always a problem.
- Confirms with Mr Gary Howell on these latest happenings – he has been on leave so not 100% aware of the latest happenings.
- From student perspective:
 - want things to happen quickly but there are always other factors
 - getting close to the point where we can put the proposal on the table
 - award tenders
 - get matter concluded very soon.

QUESTION ROUNDS:

Q [MR SHAIK]: With regards to construction that began, we think it's highly unfair that prior to the planning of the lecture halls, the 3 societies came afterwards. While discussions have taken place with Faculty Management, Commercial Services, and Facilities Management – Muslim Society and Muslims have been trying to compromise and find alternative spaces for prayer in hospital and dentistry building. Problem with hospital is the area used is guarded by security who aren't always there. They have been sitting with this situation for months now. Humbly requests to please have short-term space for daily prayers.

A: It is not correct that you had to wait. The process can be very complex. [Mr Mouton] sees [himself] as always fighting for the students and defends the students. It is not the intention to get Muslim students in this position. Proposed venue is the Mankadan . Proposes to have a further discussion with [Mr Shaik] off record or after this Sitting.

Q: What is the expected date of completion?

A: [He is] fighting with Commercial Services and Facilities Management. Would like to say tomorrow, but in the real world it is not such. Not more than 3 months at the most. Don't quote on it, but hopefully not more than 3 months. The whole process itself and to have transparency has to go through various levels and committees in order to ensure it is done properly.

COMMENT: On behalf of the Muslim Society, Muslim students, parents, and staff, we are also putting in effort. Trying to convince parents and students that Faculty is trying, but can't keep making excuses to appease them. "So please we need it to be finished".

A: Agreed

Q: This is seen as a Society issue, why it is dragging out so long? Muslims require prayer facilities. The right to a facility is in regards with the constitution of our country. Have you taken into consideration the TSS building and the problems we may foresee with regards to spacing.

A: We shouldn't distinguish between Societies. The area used for prayer is not just office space, it is for religious groupings. We are pushing this matter to get it resolved as soon as possible, as it affects all 3 Societies. Have no intension to favour any of the parties above the other 2, where all 3 are dealt with on the same basis.

Q: Could we still utilise the old prayer room?

A: Furniture is at the point of being delivered to the small group break-away rooms. It is a temporary solution. Rather pursue that (the small break-away space) as it will cause other problems as the old facilities have been allocated to, and need to be used for, academic purposes now.

COMMENT: Highlight the urgency for a space as there is a need/requirement to pray 5 times a day.

Q: Please provide us with a list of people who are best to contact in order to deal with this, because previously there have been issues with promises made but were not and have not been delivered.

A: [He is] here, speaking on behalf of Faculty Management. We rent the facilities. There have been engagements with others. It would not be appropriate to speak on behalf of Facilities Management. Give us the opportunity after tonight, for a week or 2, to give formal feedback. At the point where we will be able to give Faculty Management and student representatives details with regards to what is on the table and what will be taken forward as priority. Have been dealing with Mr Shaik (Muslim Society) via emails, and will continue to do so over next week.

Q: I am thankful that you are taking religious Societies into consideration. However, not all of the religious Societies on campus are taken into consideration, and meetings have been going on with those exclusive 3 Societies in mind. Our Society have to pay the TSS, but were told to use lecture halls instead, and now have

been blocked from using lecture halls. Please look at broader scope of each Society on campus and please give a solution.

A: With the growth in student numbers and development of new lecture halls, they needed to ask you to move out. It was never our intension to fulfill the role of the TSR to look at all Societies on campus. [Mr Mouton] take[s] your point but this point needs to be addressed by the TSR, and taken through their bodies/channels to the appropriate levels in order to accommodate the necessary structures.

Closure of this agenda point and move on to the third agenda point of Campus Security.

3. CAMPUS SECURITY

The Speaker explains that the representative for Campus Security cancelled this morning and so will not be present at this Sitting to answer questions or to give a statement. Any questions posed by the student body will be noted down and handed over to the representative, Mrs S Barnardo.

QUESTION ROUNDS:

Q: Regarding cameras and the main gate. An incident took place, and we went to USBD only to find that there is no footage on the cameras located in the area where the incident occurred. We believe there are cameras there as a form of security, but nothing is being recorded. Also, if you don't have a student card to use by the booms, you just need to sign in. How secure is this system? Because there have been incidents of robbery. How safe are we? How does it work? How does it benefit and protect us?

Agenda point closed and Speaker moves on to next agenda point of Student Fees.

4. STUDENT FEE INCREASE

The Speaker introduces guest speaker, Mrs A Murray, from the Financial Planning office on main campus. Mrs Murray makes her statement, with main points as follows:

- Potential questions communicated regarding student fees sent from TSP to her via email. Statement based on these questions – helps to cover all bases and may pre-empt some of the questions that may be on students' minds attending the Sitting.

- WHY and HOW?
 - Annual inflation that occurs every year.
 - 9.5% student fees and inflation now makes it 9.7% increase.
 - Higher education rate is calculated and weighed up
 - differs for each university and is compared to CPI
 - there is a higher education price index (thus will be higher increase than average highschool)
 - don't use normal inflation rates.
 - Stellenbosch University compared to other universities
 - we are actually at the bottom of list with regards to price increases (Stellenbosch is one of the cheapest)
 - need to consider that different modules and courses presented will have different costs.

- State-subsidy no longer covers us:
 - Used to cover us, now is no longer the case.
 - Total increase year on year has been 1.9% with inflation at 5.7%.
 - Another limiting factor is we are capped in the 2 biggest subsidies.
 - New smaller developing universities are getting sections of this funding.
 - Big universities are being capped, with Stellenbosch University being one of them.
 - We have growth, thus a need for more space and facilities, and so additional costs that go towards this.

- COMPONENTS of the increased student fees:
 - Modules/courses
 - Accommodation
 - Meals and washing facilities
 - Per faculty → module-specific charges
 - Travel charges (exchanges/to go to hospital)
 - Memberships (i.e. gym) and societies.

- APPROVAL PROCESS
 - Creation of a council to discuss and decide.
 - Sub-committees were also created.
 - Decisions were made via these sub-committees.
 - The Rector and Vice-Rector were also informed and involved.
 - Budget prices were determined and discussed
 - via the sub-committees
 - calculations and assumptions were made

- results/findings go to the Finance Committee, and from there is passed on to the Rector.
 - The approval of the budgets is done by 3 committees:
 - Student Fee Committee
 - discuss increased tuition fees and the ad hoc fees
 - they approve any new items that are put on the student fee roster, i.e. new societies.
 - Housing Fee Committee
 - approve increase in accommodation budget
 - involved in the tender processes and costs.
 - Bursary and Loans Committee
 - discuss and decide which bursaries are awarded/offered and where the money in this budget goes.
 - Recommendations are then filtered to higher levels based on the discussions and decisions made.
- COMMUNICATION OF THESE INCREASES TO STUDENTS
- SRC has representatives on each sub-committee
 - representatives are also present on the council at the meeting/discussion for the final decision.
 - Communication done predominantly via the university website, the yearbook, SMS, and email.
 - Discussion begin in last year June, and the final decision with the council in December.
 - Delays in communication mainly due to changes in committees and committee members present (i.e. the SRC members) as terms of office end. These committee changes occur in September, which was mid-process of the fees discussions. But a separated meeting was held with the new committee members in order to have everyone on the same page and up-to-date.

QUESTION ROUNDS:

Q: Would it be possible to get a projected budget? Things go up and we are not aware of it until we are being charged for it. Secondly, it is understood that there is an increase in percentage and it may be less than other universities, but the overall price is still so high.

A: Increases happen at the beginning of the year – there should be no increases during the year. There is a projected 5 year plan looking forward. There is also next year’s proposed increases. Things tend to get charged late on your student account, but there are new processes in place so that everything can be paid off

by September. Ad hoc aspects come through later on the student account. The SRC meeting points can be sent through and can be circulated amongst students. There are also cost-saving activities going on. We also look at the total increase of other universities as well as per module for comparison, and so costs will be differentiated.

Q: POINT OF CONCERN → Broken inter-departmental communication with regards to costs. Sometimes there are miscellaneous costs from different departments with regards to textbooks. Students buy a textbook but then prices go up not long after (within the same year). Some of these books are compulsory or are very important for different modules, but are offered by faculty, i.e. psychiatry.

A [Mrs A Murray]: Noted and will be taken through. There are meetings with departments and Faculty coming up soon.

A [Mr E Mouton]: Will take it forward.

Q: End of last year there was a big issue with people not being registered at the beginning of the year. The communication was to account holder and they came to the university and didn't know what was happening, and so is there any way we can sort this out?

A: Communication goes out to those listed as the account holder, or if a parent has been listed as the main contact only then will it go to the parent. We communicate by what is on the system. But there are other avenues, such as one can look up their account online.

Madame Speaker makes announcements:

- Constitution will be released on 31st March 2015
- There is a notice board in the TSS for students to use (agenda points) and for updates to be posted
- Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12-1pm

Sitting concluded.