

Global BIPOC Advisory Board
Meeting 16 Minutes
May 23, 2023
7AM PST - 9:00 AM (PST) 120 mins.

Roll Call: majick, hurdy gurdy girl, brainwane, thyme, aielen, Loup

1. Action items from past meetings
 - a. Ensuring recording for Meeting 14 is available, and that board members can make changes to minutes: Thyme
 - i. Done. Meeting 14's recording was made available and board members have been able to make changes to minutes
 - b. Working asynchronously through the mailing list and Google Docs to finalize minutes for meeting #11 and meeting #13, then inform thyme, who can then post them (*followup to Meeting #15*): aielen, hurdy gurdy girl, majick and brainwane
 - i. Some but not all members provided comments, feedback, revisions and approval between Meeting #15 and this current meeting (Meeting #16).
 - ii. Given (i), for clarity and alignment, this action item was discussed and worked on during this meeting (Meeting #16). Members who had not had time to comment, review and/or approve the minutes under this action item were able to do so during this meeting.
 - iii. Meeting minutes #11, #12, #13, #14 were approved by all board members.
 - iv. Owing to time constraints, meeting minutes for Meeting 15 are still pending review, feedback and approval from some members
 1. Action: brainwane and majick to review drafted minutes for Meeting 15, with comments and/or approval.
 - c. Checking with Loup whether Venmo is an option for receiving honoraria: Thyme
 - i. Done. Loup has confirmed both Venmo and PayPal can be used to distribute honoraria.
 - d. Collecting individual payment information (PayPal / Venmo) from all BIPOC participants that attended any board meetings between March 2022 to present: Thyme, Loup, aielen, hurdy gurdy girl, majick, brainwane
 - i. aielen, brainwane, hurdy gurdy girl and majick have relayed their individual payment information to Thyme/Loup.
 - ii. majick has noted that there are previous BIPOC meeting participants not currently on the board, that are also owed honoraria.
 1. Action: Thyme and Loup to reach out to all previous BIPOC meeting participants that are still owed honoraria but not currently on the board, to obtain their payment information.
 - e. Creating a minutes publication checklist based on workflow agreed in Meeting #15, minutes section 7(d), especially paying attention to "remove link to Zoom recording" (*followup to Meeting #15*): Thyme
 - i. Done. Thyme has created a minutes publication checklist for themselves.
 - ii. Thyme reviews implementation of the process/workflow, confirming the checklist with the board.
 - iii. brainwane raises the issue that our ideas for processes generally, not specifically this one, have not all resulted in complete implementations.

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- iv. brainwane suggests that recurring calendar items be tied to recurring tasks and workflows (i.e. the standard checklist to be included in each recurring meeting instance on the calendar), once the board decides the new recurring meeting date/time (refer (f) and (g)).
- f. Making calendar invitation for the May meeting, a recurring invitation for future meetings, and removing the old calendar item for Saturdays (*followup to Meeting #15*): Thyme
 - i. Thyme made a calendar for the May meeting (this current meeting). Now that the board will confirm a new regular meeting time (following Loup's input on Loup's availability - refer (g)), Thyme will proceed to make a recurring invitation for future meetings and remove the old calendar item for Saturdays.
 - 1. Action: Thyme to make a recurring invitation for future meetings, and remove the old calendar item for Saturdays.
- g. Checking with Loup about meeting dates/times that work for Loup on an ongoing basis (*followup to Meeting #15*): Thyme
 - i. Done. Loup personally confirms during this current meeting that Loup is ok with every 4th Tuesday of the month, at 7am PST / 10am EST (the meeting date/time originally proposed by the board in Meeting #15).
 - ii. Every 4th Tuesday of the month, 7 AM PST / 10 AM EST confirmed as official board meeting time going forward.
- h. Sharing moderation onboarding documents with the BIPOC Board (*followup from meeting #11*): Loup
 - i. Pending. Loup is still working on this with Brandon Blatcher (the most recent mod that was onboarded) and will share these documents during the next meeting (meeting #17). These new documents are being created as an outcome of Brandon Blatcher's onboarding.
 - ii. Meanwhile, Loup summarizes the onboarding process that took place for Brandon Blatcher:
 - 1. This process was markedly different from previous mods' onboarding process.
 - 2. Onboarding took place over 3 weeks.
 - 3. The first week involved going over all moderation tools (how they worked, how they are used) and best practices in content moderation policy.
 - 4. The second week involved shadowing Loup directly
 - 5. The third week involved setting up sessions with Thyme and then Jessamyn, individually.
 - iii. aielen asks whether these documents in development are entirely new, and about the existing documents that have been used for previous mod onboarding and current/previous moderation policy guidelines, standard operating procedures for moderation staff, etc.
 - iv. Loup clarifies that prior to Loup and Brandon Blatcher starting to develop these new onboarding documents now, there were no official or central

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documents/guidelines used to onboard/guide mods, or that mods could refer to regarding how to moderate. When Loup and Thyme (the mods before Brandon Blatcher) were onboarded, the only official documents that Loup and Thyme were given as references were the public-facing policy documents (e.g. https://www.metafilter.com/content_policy.mefi) and FAQs. Beyond these documents, any other guidance on moderation was offered through discussions with moderation staff. Loup notes that Brandon Blatcher and Loup are now striving to formalize and collate this informal, dispersed knowledge through the set of documents they are now developing. (Different staff members remember different aspects of moderation cases and approaches.) The new documentation is a result of trying to capture not only official policy but practices that were de facto policy and customary mod practices.

- v. Aielen notes that community members have been asking for years about the guides/policies/standard operating procedures moderators use and how they operate.
- vi. Hurdy gurdy girl asks: is it correct to understand that prior to Brandon Blatcher's onboarding, the mods had the public documents (e.g. FAQ), and then there were things that mods did but it was kind of more like an unofficial/informal understanding among the mods that "this was how they did things" but it wasn't actually written down - and now what Loup and Brandon Blatcher are doing is actually writing these things down and articulating them?
- vii. Loup affirms this understanding. Loup says 90% of the use cases of moderation are covered by the publicly-available Content Policy, Microaggressions and Community Guidelines. Outside that are other aspects that are covered by the FAQs, and then there is a huge list of random things that rarely happen that prompt people to examine what the applicable policy is and why we have it. This is why, for example, the mods have changed the policy for name changes for members that are transitioning. Loup will share more next meeting.
- i. Asking LobsterMitten to help with onboarding new mods (*followup from meeting #11*):
Loup
 - i. Resolved. Availability and logistics made this not work out for Brandon Blatcher's onboarding but LobsterMitten is willing to engage in the future
 - ii. Jessamyn took this role for Brandon Blatcher's onboarding.
- j. Reporting how moderation related actions can be quantitatively reported (*followup from meeting #11*): Loup:
 - i. Possible data that can be pulled: categories of content, action taken if it is deleted. It will be trickier to do something like cross-referencing any other data (e.g. length of time it takes for flags to be addressed)
 - ii. Prioritization of this work is discussed. Brainwane asks about the status of technical tasks that were already supposedly in progress, namely the flagging UX improvements.
 - iii. Majick agrees that the flagging UX improvements should be prioritized given this has been a subject of discussion since mid last year. Prioritization of what we

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can get into Frimble's pipeline has been a recurring theme in board discussions for some time.

- iv. Larger discussion about tech staff capacity and the status of the new tech hire
 1. aielen notes that MetaFilter has had a budget allotted specifically for an additional tech hire and admin hire, for months. Frimble is not supposed to be the only one working on code anymore. What is the status of these new hires, and when will this happen? What is blocking it? Both Loup and Jessamyn have access to a big database of potential tech hires (i.e. volunteers who were interested in working on code) compiled by the Steering Committee since last year.
 2. Loup says the hiring for a new tech staff has not been prioritized because Frimble has been doing training time. Loup believes this should happen eventually, and has been discussing this with Jessamyn. This is still a goal, but Loup can't confirm when it will happen and how it will be prioritized. The main reason for not being able to confirm a timeline/prioritization for this now is that MetaFilter LLC's current priority is to work with MetaFilter's lawyer on the company's general legal compliance issues. After these issues are addressed, MetaFilter will look into hiring these new staff.
 3. brainwane and aielen ask for an estimated timeline on when MetaFilter may begin the hiring process. Loup responds that they are expecting this may start in a few months and does not want it to drag beyond the 3rd quarter of 2023.
 4. brainwane suggests that the board add an agenda item for every month to check in with Loup to ask about the status on this issue (i.e. the staff hiring). The rest of the board agrees with this suggestion.
 - a. Action: The board will check with Loup about the status of the tech and admin hires, and progress of prerequisite legal/compliance research/work, for each subsequent board meeting until this item is resolved.
 5. Majick: this is more of the underlying organizational morass around labor and the fact that MetaFilter was not a traditionally well-run, corporate or organizational entity, and that's still coming together.
 6. Loup notes that when the transition happened, the previous business entity owned by cortex had to be dissolved and re-registered as a new entity by Jessamyn. At that time, the new entity was registered with the immediate purpose of formalizing Jessamyn's position as new owner of the site. However, Jessamyn and Loup knew from the beginning that this was more an interim/temporary action/structure, and that while they could potentially continue under that for-profit/LLC structure, this might also change - and that's what they were working through: figuring out what MetaFilter would look like, legally, in the long run.

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7. Brainwane asks: It seems for now the only coders MetaFilter has on hand are frimble and majick - is that correct?
 8. Majick says ostensibly majick does have some access, but emphasizes that for the most part majick is supposed to be in “pencils down” mode because majick is a volunteer, not an official employee - and thus is not supposed to be offering labor in this capacity while MetaFilter is still working through its legal compliance / labor issues with the lawyer.
 9. aielen adds that technically people are not supposed to be doing volunteer work for MetaFilter if any of this work falls under any of the paid staff’s job scope. So for example, if frimble’s job scope includes coding and frimble is paid for it, MetaFilter is currently not supposed to be having an unpaid volunteer that is also coding.
- v. Some discussion of the definition of the admin hire, trying to understand the role and need, why the input provided was not used
1. aielen also asks specifically about the status of the admin hire. Has this also been frozen along with the hiring of the tech hire? What is the current status on the admin hire?
 2. Loup says that the admin intended for a specific now-retired mod to take this role. However, this mod is currently no longer working with MetaFilter in any capacity now (this was confirmed recently). Loup says they would still like to move forward with the admin role and would like to publish a job description on the site and open this role up to the public for application.
 3. aielen notes that when aielen was on the Steering Committee, Loup asked whether the new admin staff role should go directly to this now-retired mod, to which a number of the Steering Committee advised opening this role to the community and public (by publishing the job description) instead of offering it directly/internally to this individual, given their history and some other issues. Tavegyl from the Steering Committee helped Loup draft a job description that was to be publicly posted.
 4. Loup acknowledges that while the Steering Committee helped Loup draft the job description, the main reason why the admin decided to stick to offering the job to this individual directly and internally was that the admin was in a hard position because of where they were at with this now-retired mod in relation to their personal circumstances and issues. Loup says “It was more than an operational decision. It was more of a decision of ‘how can we make this work for [the individual] in any way’.
 5. aielen asks whether Loup is saying that the admin tried to give the now-retired mod a job because of the now-retired mod’s personal issues?
 6. Loup says not exactly, and says that having someone with historical knowledge made a lot of sense for the role at that point.

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7. aielen points out that the new admin hire role does not need to have historical knowledge - they just need to have accounting knowledge for example, alongside a lot of other skills that the moderation staff specifically do not necessarily have because they were hired for moderation, not admin work. aielen expresses surprise that the new admin job position was offered directly to the individual in this manner.
8. brainwane notes that she is also dissatisfied with this information. It seems that during the period the Steering Committee was constituted, the SC provided advice that was ignored.
9. aielen asks for more clarification - is it correct to understand that the decision to offer this now-retired mod the role occurred even after the SC helped to draft the job description to be posted publicly? But this person will not be in the role of the new admin hire anyway, not because MetaFilter did not offer the role to this person but because this now-retired mod decided not to take up the role?
10. Loup replies there is a lot of context that Loup does not want to disclose as it has a lot to do with this now-retired mod directly. Loup says the point is that the admin hire has not yet happened, and part of the reason for the delay is also that Jessamyn and Loup have been working through the transition of not having a Steering Committee, and deciding what to prioritize. Loup states the requirements for the admin hire's job description will change significantly once Jessamyn and Loup know how MetaFilter will proceed as a company, because Loup believes the only currently relevant parts of the original job description would be tied to payments, managing Quickbooks and subscriptions. Loup thinks that all other tasks that would have been assigned to this role would be subject to change.
11. brainwane asks for examples of these other tasks that are no longer relevant and now subject to change.
12. Loup cites tasks such as compiling information, notes and reports; delivering these reports and interfacing between the Steering Committee, the admin, the tech staff and moderation staff. Loup believes these tasks and working structure do not exist anymore.
13. aielen says that the admin still needs this information to be tracked and documented, and someone should still be compiling these reports, regardless of whether the Steering Committee exists or not.
14. brainwane says she is not convinced that MetaFilter needs to wait to hire this admin role based on this reasoning. Brainwane states we already know what kind of skills this new hire would require; even if some of the individual activities change, the skills would be the same.
15. aielen says that even with the Steering Committee out of the picture (and to some extent the Steering Committee never should have been in such a hands-on operational role), Jessamyn the owner, being the owner, would

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be the one the admin hire would report to with all the compiled reports, accounts, data gathering etc. The role would remain the same, just that the person this new hire would necessarily interface with more would be different (i.e. Jessamyn rather than the Steering Committee).

16. Loup says that Loup has been already taking on this role, working with Jessamyn herself rather than adding on an extra person to the process.
 17. aielen notes that they understand Loup has been doing admin work, but this is precisely what the Steering Committee saw and identified as something that needed additional support: that Loup had a lot on their plate trying to do a lot of admin tasks, with some of these admin tasks/skills not necessarily in Loup's wheelhouse (e.g. numbers, financials, report compilation) - and that this was a lot of extra tasks and requirements on top of Loup's moderation work that were overwhelming, resulting in backlog and overload.
 18. Loup believes the scope of work has changed to the effect that the extra work has not been much compared to the work that would be involved in onboarding a new hire.
- vi. Questions about current admin work and whether it is happening in a timely way
1. In response to Loup's statements regarding the admin hire (scope, choice of hire, etc), brainwane says it sounds like there is a pretty specific problem where work is promised to happen in a timely fashion but it didn't and doesn't, even if the staff/executives have the information to do the work they need to do. Brainwane feels that everytime the board tries to ask Loup why something is happening or why something is not happening, the goal posts keep moving. Brainwane notes a lack of acknowledgement when things aren't working, and says the board only seems to find out about things/decisions made after they happen, as a surprise later.
 2. Majick agrees and thinks this characterizes what they see as well, noting that the board has seen things prior to the financial crisis that would have got lost just because the site had to reprioritize, and other things that were significant that have just drifted away. We can certainly go back and go through and quantify what all those things are, but more to the point, majick's intuition and impression here is that the goal posts keep moving. That is what's frustrating, and this seems to be the impression among both the site membership and board too. That the can keeps getting kicked down the road. And that's down to prior administration as well as this administration (which may be better, but not good enough).
 3. Aielen believes it's also important to reframe our perspective to view this as a larger structural, organizational problem rather than an individual-specific or Loup-specific problem. What could also be managed better here would be more realistic communication.

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4. Loup says there is a huge communication gap that stems from several things: not having a Steering Committee in the past months, the shifting priorities that Loup has been working on with Jessamyn. Because of these circumstances, Loup and Jessamyn have put certain things on the backburner including hiring. Loup says these things will eventually be re-prioritized, but the question is when. Loup says MetaFilter may begin thinking about hiring again in mid-June.
 - a. Action: Loup will schedule time with Jessamyn this week to discuss the prioritization of hiring for these 2 roles (tech role and admin role), to see when and how they would like to proceed. Loup will have an update on this no later than Friday this same week, and email the board this update.
- vii. Larger conversation about frustration with executive leadership at MeFi and expectation-setting
 1. Hurdy gurdy girl thinks some of this is alarming because it is what the general membership has raised before: things are happening, but we don't know about them, but then later we find out that "here is what's actually happening". As the BIPOC board we are feeling this but even more keenly, because we are supposed to be helping with this stuff but it is difficult to carry out this work without knowing the full picture. HGG acknowledges that while there are things that aren't for public consumption by the general membership and sometimes this makes sense, HGG still thinks there are some things the board has not been apprised of that are alarming because when the board does find out it feels that the board has been operating under some assumptions that were not correct.
 2. Loup agrees that this knowledge gap should be bridged.
 3. HGG suggests that because the board has limited time in the meetings, would it be possible to have some updates be sent more as newsletters to the BIPOC board. E.g. when Loup has something completed, could Loup send this update or deliverable out before the next meeting?
 4. Loup agrees to work on this, will begin working on the action items and questions from this meeting immediately after this meeting and report updates to the board.
 5. Majick emphasizes that hiring - particularly on the admin side - will help dig Loup out of their backlog/overload hole and help Loup meet the commits Loup has been making to the whole organization (including the BIPOC board and site membership). This would lift us all up and it would be a keystone piece. And making a technical hire would unlock a lot of backlog. We've talked about the length of the technical backlog before and we know there's a lot of stuff to do and only so much bandwidth on frimble's side. These have been urgent priorities for a long time and while majick acknowledges we've had to reprioritize and pivot

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multiple times over the last 6-8 months for really valid reasons, help is just what it takes to get through those reprioritizations. (This is precisely what the Steering Committee, and BIPOC Board, have been trying to do: help.)

6. Loup says a main reason why hiring was delayed was that the implementation and set up of new payment systems (PayPal, new bank account, Transferwise) have been prioritized over hiring because they would also impact the hiring. This was resolved and set up a few weeks ago, so now MetaFilter is in a position where it can move forward to work on hiring.
- k. Sharing what the finalized / official mod stance/agreement is for post deletion based on discrepancies brought to our attention by a user, and an explanation (if possible) of these discrepancies (*followup from meetings #15 and 11*): Loup, Thyme (after consultation with Taz and possibly the wider mod team)
 - i. Pending. Loup reports that they have not yet reviewed the documents that board members sent through email beginning February.
 1. Action: Loup will review the relevant documents/emails, and follow up on this through email, sending a statement to the board members before the next meeting (meeting 17).
- l. Reporting on the priority/difficulty re: having a MeFi subsite for BIPOC board to post resources, updates, etc.: Loup
 - i. Pending. Loup requests the board draft a list of requirements/content the subsite should have, so that Loup can present this to frimble and get a timeline/resource capacity estimate.
 1. Action: The board agrees to collaboratively work on this list asynchronously.
- m. Upgrading Slack plan: Thyme
 - i. Discussion of figuring out if it makes sense to either consolidate multiple workspaces (i.e. merge the BIPOC board's Slack with the MetaFilter admin's Slack) or leave them separate. There are cost concerns, participant management concerns, as well as data retention concerns.
 - ii. Right now the BIPOC board is on a separate Slack space / plan than the MetaFilter admin. Guests (e.g. SC and volunteers) that are currently on both the MetaFilter admin Slack and BIPOC board Slack may need to become paid participants should both workspaces merge. On the other hand, paid participants (e.g. staff that are also board members) that are on both the BIPOC board's Slack and MetaFilter admin's Slack would be doubly paid for should both workspaces remain separate.
 - iii. Suggestion: to pay for the existing separate Advisory Board workspace in the short term, while reserving a longer discussion on whether to consolidate workspaces for later.
 1. Action: Loup/Thyme to upgrade the existing Slack plan

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End of Meeting. Items below will be revisited at our next meeting.

1. Prioritizing future board work (e.g. user survey, MetaTalks review and analyses, content posting initiatives, data gathering, outreach, events)
2. Reopening discussion of soliciting/onboarding new members (noting brainwane would like to be replaced by September)
3. Frimble's progress on a tool for viewing mod notes in threads
4. Progress on flagging UX improvements
5. Data gathering for existing data
6. User-reported issues around MeMail harassment and moderation of POC content in AskMe
7. Developments with MeFi Events