VATSIM Board of Governors'

Meeting Minutes

24th September 2011

<u>Agenda</u>

Old Business

- Pilot Ratings Document - Kyle
- VA Events - Flo
- VATSIM Survey - Roger

New Business

- Links Manager - Roger
- Access to Cert and NDA's - Christoph
- Membership Retention - Jim
- Server Migration - Christoph
- New Developments - Wade

Other Business

- General discussion on CoR and CoC
- Report from Peter on EC matters

<u>Call to order</u>

Terry Scanlan called to order the regular meeting of the VATSIM Board of Governors' at 21:10z on 24th March, 2011 online via TeamSpeak.

<u>Register</u>

Terry called the register. The following persons were present:

Florian Harms (FH)
Kyle Ramsey (KR)
Luca Benelli (LB):
Steven Cullen (SC)
Terry Scanlan (TS)
Roger Curtiss (RC)
Jim Johnson (JJ) – left meeting at 22:29z
Christoph Neukirch (CN)
Peter Nielsen (PN)

Apologies:
Norman Blackburn (NB)
Jeff Turner (JU)
David Klain (DK) - Dave attended the start of the meeting but due to communication difficulties at the airport was unable to partake in the meeting.

Steven holds Norman's proxy.
Terry holds proxy for David, Jeff and Jim (if required)

Total votes available – 11

<u>Approval of minutes from last meeting</u>

Previous minutes not tabled. – Approved by BoG vote and distributed **10th July, 2011**

<u>Old Business</u>

A. <u>Pilot Ratings Document – Kyle</u>

KR stated that following previous feedback, he has significantly reworded the ATO document and is still working on the P1 document whilst simultaneously approaching the finish of the VFR documents. The documents submitted earlier are now posted on the pilot training website, one being the ATO definitions and the other the P1 requirements. KR invited feedback on the documents in relation to anything that may need changing. TS asked if there were many more ATO's coming onboard, stating that from the VATPAC area he sees them working at bringing pilot training online, via Moodle documents. KR answered that VATSUR is coming onboard and he knows of several VA's. He has recently approved vACC Portugal (the course in Portuguese which will be of benefit to members in the South American region) and Virtual South West as new ATO's. KR went on to explain that it seems to take about a year for an ATO to get a training program in place from scratch, and he expects that around a year from when we announced the Pilot Training Program we will see a wave of ATO's come through.

B. VA Events – Flo

FH stated that VA events lists will happen once we have the new website online; FH estimates the new website will be live by the end of the year and it will have new features such as VA's to be able to log in and post their event details. FH continued saying that it will require some complex administration work, but it will be worth the effort. TS asked FH if the event notification system would mean members would opt in to receive an email notification of an event, which FH replied in the affirmative. It was the plan for the current website but due to difficulties with the last web server it was not possible to implement. RC stated that when testing a previous xml solution for VA events the VA's stated they did not want to have to list events twice, FH answered that it is entirely up to the VA if they use the system and list their event. FH went to say that things like this will still need to be discussed.

C. VATSIM Survey – Roger

A copy of the old survey was obtained which will be used to reference to. KR sent out a request for feedback, which resulted in limited responses. The project is going to be a larger undertaking than first thought with the survey needing to translated into other languages and a thorough study of the results. The question that has come up, what was the result of the last survey, where the results used was it of any benefit. FH stated he remembered that there was feedback and we need to contact Richard Jenkins (RJ) as it was under his control. FH was going to search his PC for a copy of any feedback he may have. TS asked that with the current discussions of membership retention are there questions we can use to flush out what new members wish to see from VATSIM when they hit the connect button. RC responded that there is no reason we cannot, at this point the survey is wide open to what we can ask, and they are looking at the old one as a starting point but are not locked in to using it. RC continued in response to FH saying that he had something indicating the results, but he wanted to know was anything done with the results, was there any action as a result of the survey responses. TS suggested we take that question to RJ.

<u>New Business</u>

A. Links Manager – Roger

RC stated what brought this about was a problem with the system, every week he gets a notice from them saying the FTP uplink has failed, he tries to reset it, it does not work he has worked with their

representatives and who claims it is something in our webserver, FH insists it is something on their end and we are at a stalemate with them, and the fact that the system is old the idea is to move it over to the new server and bring everything in-house. KR stated that he had those messages when he was dealing with links manager and when he looked into it; it was a functionality we were not using so it did not matter, and KR never got around to turning off the annoying email alerts. KR advised that Joel is the person to contact on that system when you're having a problem with it.

RC asked FH if the plan was to bring this all in-house. FH said yes. This would eliminate another foreign system that was not very configurable. We will be able to set this up into Typo3 (Our CMS system).

B. Access to Cert and NDA's – Christoph

This topic was combined with CN's other topic of Server Migration. CN said the server migration is almost completed with old servers being shut down in about a week. There are still a few small issues to resolve, things like links, data feeds. There are some very complex queries to the database that will need to be reviewed, some strange queries.

TS asked that the minutes reflect the Board of Governor's appreciation to Christoph, Florian, Richard and Dave in the momentous task of moving the server. This task has been done extremely well and in a timely manner. Well done.

TS moved to the topic of NDA's stating that we should as George (GSM) to clarify who is needed to sign a NDA and under what circumstances because at the moment when access to the Cert or parts of Cert is given we have required an NDA, but now GSM has said in some instances this is not required. TS asked if CN had signed an NDA. CN stated that he has to sign an NDA at this time. CN said after some discussions with GSM that anybody accessing the voice library or the FSD will have to be NDAed, and maybe he will have to sign an NDA, but a different NDA because he has access to all Cert data via his full access to the servers. CN is still not sure for now as he has not any further from GSM. For development, we will switch to another approach, CN will set up a development Cert that will not have access to live data, so anybody involved with the development of Cert or anything like this will not have access to the live data, so no access to any member data. He discussed an idea with Wade Williams (WW) to develop a central development infrastructure WW agreed this was a good idea. This will be the reason CN will be NDAed in the future as they want to create this on the main server, with a version control system on the main server, where the source code of FSD and maybe ATC or Pilot clients will be located. This will be provided to any volunteer who is willing to provide VATSIM with a Pilot or ATC client project to improve the VATSIM experience.

TS asked if CN wants some follow up with GSM or to leave it as it is on a case by case basis. CN said that he will email GSM, RJ, DK and TS with the thoughts regarding the central development infrastructure, with WW involved.

CN said that with Cert development he has started with localization and a translation page starting with the UN languages and additionally German. He has been a little stuck in the last two weeks with the server migration, but the development will go further in the next few weeks. JJ asked if CN was aware of the issues being discussed in RJ's email regarding members being stuck in the wrong regions and if he knew why it was happening. Some members were being assigned to the Asia region but then to the VATUSA division. CN speculated it could be happening when members move regions; they update the region but not their division. He has no idea how this happens and if it is not really urgent, he would leave it on the current state and invest the time in the development of the new Cert. PN asked if Cert was tracking the original sign up region. CN stated he had no real idea, he was speculating on the reason. TS suggested we can take this up on the email list, and address the excel list that RJ sent around.

C. Membership Retention – Jim

Due to Jim needing to leave the meeting early, this topic was mentioned first in New Business. JJ stated that much of this relates to what we have been discussing in the email list in that we need to make it as easy as possible to get online if you are new member and try to find ways to stop people from leaving or to make it as easy as possible to reactivate. JJ stated that apparently there had been some complaints regarding the amount of time to be reactivated, JJ stated that almost anyone can get it done within 24 hours, but most websites should allow members to reactivate themselves, which is one of our top priorities at the moment. JJ then asked CN if the automation process is something that can be done now or needs to wait for the Cert rewrite. CN replied that he is working on a new sign up page and was looking at automating some of the membership activities such as email and region change and reactivation. JJ stated that it all sounded good and it was good if the members could have a self-service type centre where they can get these things done quicker.

JJ went on to explain the second part is about stream lining the membership services, about giving the best resources to members both old and new. He stated that there is a lot of duplicated effort between the central VATSIM membership and the individual divisions, and what he would propose is to look for a way to bring those together with the central membership team focusing on duplicate accounts etc. and the divisions appointing someone who will focus on their new members giving the new member a point of contact in their division, someone they go to with questions about setting up clients, becoming a controller etc. The appointed person could also go through relevant records performing the data audits for that division. Trying to streamline this process will be a goal of JJ over the next few months. The problem is bringing everyone onto the same page; the current ticketing system has a limit on the number of users that can be added. JJ wondered about integrating that function into the new Cert as well. TS asked what is the most general inquiry that he gets, what keeps the team busy with menial tasks that cannot be automated. JJ answered that it was reactivations which is the most requested action as there is no automatic process currently. Other top issues include lost password, email account change or forgotten ID number.

CN suggested that instead of integrating the ticketing system into the new Cert, that a new system called OTRS be utilized. CN also stated that the current system is an old out dated version that cannot be updated currently. JJ stated he liked the idea of going to a newer open source system, especially if it gave us more functions and more logins.

SC asked JJ if a member account is deactivated is this done automatically or is it done by a team member manually. JJ stated it is an automatic process, although he is not sure who controls the interval for the process and in the past it was done less frequently than it is currently. JJ was going to bring this up on the email list. SC then said that the next part of the questions is, is it worthwhile to stop deactivating accounts until we can implement the automatic process of reactivation. JJ said that maybe a question for web services or Cert; he knows there was a reason for it either something to do with NOTAMS or server space. CN stated it is to keep the size of the database for FSD server down. SC stated that that was fair enough, if there are valid operation reasons. TS asked JJ when an account is deactivated it is not removed from the data base, but is it counted in the active membership, when we look at total membership we talk 100 of 1000's of members does that include deactivated members. JJ stated that when we talk about these types of numbers it is looking at all accounts in the database, suspended, deactivated etc. LB stated that we do have the number of active members he records active members that have come online in the last 24 hours, week, month or year. TS thanked LB.

D. Server Migration – Christoph *see section B*

E. New Developments – Wade Not present, TS to ask for an email list update.

<u>Other Business</u>

A. General discussion on CoR and CoC

TS started discussions by mentioning the previously emailed discussions on proposed changes to the CoR and CoC as suggested by GSM in relation to declaring emergencies. There was a great discussion on this on the email list it appears to be quite a simple change, it is not adding a new rule, it is further clarifying the rule and taking out the grey areas, where it is implied there must be an Air Traffic Controller providing the service, to actually describing that in the rule B8. GSM proposed "Pilots are permitted to declare in-flight emergencies only when under positive air traffic control. If there is no air traffic controller providing services to the pilot and surrounding traffic, declaring an in-flight emergency is not permitted." TS continued to say that slight amendment will not be notice, but it gives us more authority in saying you only declare an in-flight emergency when under ATC control, otherwise on Unicom you might make mention of your declaration of an emergency, but you do not have any authority to tell people move out of the way and let you land first. TS stated this was the intent of the change and then asked for comments.

FH agreed saying that maybe line 2 should just say emergencies in uncontrolled airspace are not allowed. PN agreed with the changes. RC stated that he thinks that the possibility of declaring an emergency should not be precluded just because there is no active controller, if they are in an actual emergency situation. TS answered stating that wording prohibits declaring the emergency on Unicom, RC responded saying he thinks pilots should be able to make the declaration on Unicom; with the understanding it might not be accepted. The aim not to preclude somebody declaring the emergency, but preventing the abuse of the situation. CN then asked if you declare an emergency on Unicom, to whom are you declaring it, there is no ATC to handle the request. RC stated it depends on the nature of the emergency, if you need to return to the field after takeoff you would be asking other pilots to yield to you. TS stated that this was the scenario that this discussion emanates from where the pilot declared an emergency and demanded the other pilots to get out of his way.

SC and JJ suggested to take the matter to a vote, to which TS agreed.

The vote was called to approve modification of CoC rule B8 to include Pilots are permitted to declare in-flight emergencies only when under positive air traffic control. If there is no air traffic controller providing services to the pilot and surrounding traffic, declaring an in-flight emergency is not permitted.

The vote was called by TS and seconded by JJ.

The motion was carried with the votes recorded: 10 for, 1 against.

B. **Report from Peter on EC matters**

Meeting moved into executive session at time 2211z
Executive session ended at 22:39z

EC members to be added to Pilot Training forums

<u>Adjournment</u>

Terry Scanlan adjourned the meeting at **22:39z**. The next meeting date is to be advised.

Minutes submitted by: **Steven Cullen – VATSIM Vice President Communications**

Minutes approved by: **BoG vote**