

VATSIM Board of Governors

Q3 2013 Meeting Minutes

Oct 18, 2013 2000z

Open Meeting, Record Attendance and Proxies

Opening Business:

Record adhoc votes since last meeting - Kyle

Old Business:

- * Regions Update - Peter
- * Pilot Training Update - Pan
- * VA/VSOA Update - Roger
- * Membership Update - Jim
- * Supervisor Update - Jeff (report from Steven)
- * VP Development, Web, and Marketing Replacement Update - Steven
- * Client Development Update - Kyle
- * ATC and Pilot Hours Awards - Kyle

New Business

- * Founder's Feedback - Steven
- * Vienna Convention Update - Steven
- * Foreign Language Barriers Proposal - Pan

Other Business

- * Questions from Members - All

Close Meeting and Adjourn

Attendees:

Roger Curtiss (RC)

Peter Nielsen (PN)

Steven Cullen (SC)

Pan Lalas (PL)

Luca Benelli (LB)

Guest: Justin Freidland (JF)

Apologies: Jim Johnson (JJ) proxy to PN, Jeff Turner (JU) proxy not listed, Kyle Ramsey (KR) proxy to SC, Norman Blackburn (NB) proxy to PN

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 20:12z by SC

SC recorded there was one ad hoc vote since the last BoG minutes:

Votes for the motion:

To approve the minutes of the BoG quarterly meeting of 27 July, 2013, as emailed to all BoG members, for general release and publishing on the VATSIM website.

Proposed by: Kyle Ramsey

Voting closes: 14-Sep-2013

Kyle Ramsey	FOR
Steven Cullen	FOR
Jim Johnson	FOR
Peter Ingerslev Nielsen	FOR
Pan Lalas	FOR
Roger Curtiss	FOR
Luca Benelli	FOR

With 7 votes for the motion, and 0 votes against the motion was passed.

Justin Freidland Interview for VP Marketing – SC –

- 30 years in journalism, started in radio, moved to TV, worked for ABC
- Realtor in NYC area, passion for flying since a kid, sky diving
- In FS since the wire frame versions first came out.
- Joined VATSIM in 2008 as a pilot, moved to ATC in ZNY, now DATM
- SC – Want to see VATSIM taken to a broader audience, do you see yourself being able to help us drive in that direction.
 - JF – Sees the ability to move this story forward. FAA is seeing the power of FS more and more so that is a natural audience to expand.
- PN – What about internal marketing to hang on to members we have already?
 - JF – Agrees we need to have more outreach to existing members. Newsletter is a possibility (he is a writer by trade). People like to see themselves and their regions in print. Pilot Training benefits need better promotion.
- RC – If we give you the position, what would be your first steps?

- JF – Start by learning more about the background of the organization in order to best be able to write about Founders, BoG, membership in general, then sit back and look at that to find the stories and how to advise this board on how to move forward.
- PN – Does your background lend you to focus more on Communications rather than Marketing?
 - JF – Communications has been my life, marketing is also a big part of it and is intertwined.
- PN – How do we sell VATSIM internationally to a younger market?
 - JF – My kids are young adults and so many young professionals entering the journalism field, gives me a good grounding in working with these young people. Most of these people, even teens, want to be treated as adults. VATSIM already does this well, because you are a pilot, or a controller, no age is implied in that.
- PN – Given the past issue with our hack, how would you have communicated the issues differently?
 - JF – Hackers destroy everyone's fun, getting out front and early is the right approach, nothing is gained by withholding what is obvious to everyone.
- SC – Thank you for those answers, I think we have a good idea of your capabilities from your answers and your resume. The BoG will have further discussions and we will contact you soon.
- JF left the meeting.

Region Update – PN -

- Entered Executive Session at 2117z
- Out of Executive Session at 2150z
- PN – EC meeting next week, was delayed due to CTP.
- Traffic in Mexico has increased after some leadership changes.
- PN left the meeting at 2157, quorum is broken and no votes can be held. (Note: PN lost power and was able to rejoin the meeting almost 30 min later)

Pilot Training Report – PL –

- Caribbean ATO has been reopened.
- ATOs with P5 ratings coming on line
- We have 42 ATOs active now. Pushing P4/P5 into more ATOs. ATOs think the P4/5 ratings are a heavy load for them. One idea from ATO input is to split the

ratings further into three instead of just two. Testing on the P4 rating takes about 3 hours to take the check ride which is hard for ATOs to administer. Breaking it down into smaller steps might be a way to relieve some of the overhead for ATOs to deliver the ratings.

- SC – Move to ask PL to present a new rating plan to the BoG for a vote. Seconded by PN. Vote called: For: LB, PL, SC, PN, RC. None against.
- We need to promote the ratings more than we have in the past. Fly ins directed to people who have the ratings or complete a rating during the event.
- PRC team down to five people. Would like to extend an invitation to the membership to bring in more writers. NOTAMs are problematic with blacklisting, but the forum and the web front page are certainly opportunities.
- The current administration tools on the web are woefully inadequate and am anxious to get traction on changes with the new web VP.
- Non-English issues – RW is not VATSIM, we need more flexibility with local facilities to attract local speakers to their local airspace. Creation of a glossary that translates the most basic phrases in the more popular languages to enable more ability to fly worldwide. Not looking for a CoC rule to enforce English but perhaps a tool that enables non English speakers to be able to receive and understand these basic commands and respond appropriately.

VA/VSOA Report – RC –

- Inputs already given previous regarding web space development.

Supervisors – SC –

- Adding 3 new Sups now, about 10 in the queue. SAS is functional but needs to talk to web guys about bug fixes to make it better. Planning to add new Sups for the next 5-6 months.

VP Development/Marketing Update – SC –

- KR has talked to Wade, Ross, and Mike Evans to create a development team/panel to help advise us and help us find resources who can work on products members desire. Wade declined (but remains a strong and very helpful resource for us) so still looking for a third strong member of this committee to help guide us and find resources for member tool development.
- Justin will be put forth to the BoG members this week for Marketing VP.

Pilot Client Update – SC –

- Team continues to move forward

- Ross is in development a simple client as well that is getting good reception.

Founder's Feedback – SC –

- No formal feedback from founders.

New Business

- SC urges BoG members to attend the conference by signing up online to secure your reservation.
- ATC and Pilot badges; KR has the original list and will be getting an updated list from LB, screening out those already awarded and preparing awards for both ATC and pilots. Pilot banner is being developed in the forum, two designs submitted so far.

Member Questions – SC -

KR compiled the list of questions from members in the forum. SC and KR did a first pass at answering them and asks all other BoG members to take a look and see if you can refine, improve, or otherwise make sure the answers are correct to the best of our knowledge. Once done we will vote for them to be included in these minutes and posted.

Other -

PN returned to the meeting after his power outage. Discussion about how to incorporate the language issues into CoC. BoG needs to show leadership on this issue and partner with the EC to find a solution. SC will push it in the BoG email ring.

Meeting was adjourned at 22:35z per SC, seconded by LB.

Member Questions and BoG Responses:

- What is the board's position in regards promoting ICAO vs FAA as the international standard on the network, given that the majority of members are outside FAA influence.
 - The BoG would like to support both formats. Work is underway now to provide a 'translator' as the FAA format is hard coded into the current clients. Future clients should be able to support both.
- What are the plans for promoting membership in VATSIM, particularly given the decline of FSX?
 - Hiring a new Marketing GOV with a solid understanding of how to effectively promote VATSIM to different audiences
- As mentioned in my post in the Vienna thread, "Are there plans to offer a stream of the conference seminars for those of us who can't make it for whatever

reason?"

- The plan is to provide a live stream of discussion groups, ie “The future of Flightsim” and the “BoG question and answer” and any other segment that we can manage to stream, but it will also depend on the equipment and infrastructure available to us once we get set up. I am sure that we will also record each presentation and make them available to all members at the end of the conference.
- I sent a request in for permission to use the VATSIM logo in a banner for a Q&A panel and/or booth about VATSIM at an upcoming local convention in November. Any further information on this?
 - Permission was granted, separate email sent.
- What is our outlook for a completely revised/rewritten VATSIM server code, some kind of VATSIM 2.0 ? I think we can agree on the fact that we really need to make a big leap forward to keep this baby, our baby, going! No progress means decline and eventually "death".
 - It is on the wish list once we get a Web Development GOV seated and acclimated. However this would be a huge undertaking and won't get started without a clear plan to get it finished and that the results make the pain of undergoing the interruptions during development and implementation worth it.
- Is a new CERT/member database on its way as well? Since Thomas had to dedicate all his time to his new real world job, nothing has really happened, it seems.
 - Same answer as above.
- What about a centralized web-based tool that can create sector files, Euroscope extension files etc.? We do have a tool that could easily be used for the entire world, to bundle resources and avoid "inventing the wheel over and over again". All ARTCCs/vACCs would be able to customize and use it. It would save a lot of time for a lot of people around the world and it would help areas with no or few members of staff to develop their airspace.
 - This was answered in the forum by knowledgeable individuals
- One important thing: a centralized navigation portal on vatsim.net for our pilots! All pilots would be able to plan (and important their own flightplan routes) and then submit their flightplan (pre-file), including an option to book these flights on VATBOOK right away.
 - Very difficult to implement and maintain since the resources worldwide are not the same nor always free. If someone wants to step up and be the owner of such a system we'd be happy to talk to them and offer web space to do it. Contact Kyle.
- Please have a look at the bug in our flightplan pre-file website/script: if members

try to submit a routing that is longer than x characters, the website does not accept it, although routes of this length can be filed through Squawkbox and FsInn. Especially for our longhaul folks this is a nuisance that should be corrected.

- We have looked at it and Luca and Steven have discussed making changes, but it comes back to if we change this here.... what is going to break there. We will need to wait for Web Dev GOV (Which is not as far off as many think ;))
- When is VATSIM going to take technology seriously? As he points out, web development has gone next to nowhere in several years. VATGOV6 is like being the drummer in Spinal Tap. We've not had a serving VATGOV5 in months, perhaps over a year now. VATSIM appears to be waiting for the perfect candidate (both technically and ideologically) and while this happens the network decays.
 - We take technology very seriously and are looking for the talent to push the platform forward. The search never really stops even when we have people in these roles we encourage them to bring in assistants and form working parties, but members need to realize that these positions are not just glorified titles and come with high levels of stress and great demands on the incumbents' personal time and sometimes people just realize too late that they don't have the time to be able to provide for their families and real life commitments and provide the level of services the position demands.
- Why does VATSIM not open VATGOV5 and VATGOV6 up to general applications? While I understand that The World's Greatest Client Software Development Team Ever(tm) magically appeared, why does the BoG not open up technology positions to general membership, especially given their consistent inability to fill them?
 - The Founders, after having had a few close calls with individuals who did more damage than good, prefer to vet these positions internally. They are always open to the entire membership, but we aren't going to post them. If you think you are qualified and wish to be considered, or know someone else who is, contact Steven.
- Are there any firm steps taken to tackle the continuous problem of "drone" flights which act as a demotivating factor for ATC, especially in less popular airspace?
 - Supervisors aggressively look for unattended connections. If you know of one, use the .wallop command to alert on duty supervisors and they will deal with them. If you have specific questions you can always contact Jeff directly.
- What is being done to attract more of those flying offline or for other networks
 - Hiring a VP of Marketing with the skills to lead us toward these goals. And bringing new pilot client(s) to fruition.
- New members have difficulty getting online because there are too many steps they need to take and information on getting online isn't clear. Will the BoG consider creating and prominently placing a web page on the main .net website

explaining what members need to do to get online

- Yes , for new VP Web to work.
- And will the BoG consider a centralised membership and training management solution, so that members don't have to spend additional time signing up with individual divisions, which wastes precious time they could be spending online?
 - While the BoG would consider it, especially the training part is really within the realm of the EC, so if you have a solid proposal to be considered, contact your RD. The VP Web position would be the way we'd integrate the entire VATSIM web space for single log ins, etc.; stay tuned.
- And finally, on membership retention, what "challenges" does the BoG believe VATSIM offers existing members who have achieved all the ratings and who are looking for some motivation to stay with the network, given the apparent decline in pilot standards?
 - What is the measuring stick for this apparent decline in pilot standards? ATC in some places has become quite realistic and it is here that you will hear many of the complaints about pilot standards originate. The VATSIM PTD is looking at ways to reduce the number of ATOs that simply offer basic services or services to its own members only at the same as trying to find ways to get the active ATOs to move forward in providing more of the pilot ratings such as P5 or P4. A member holding all pilot rating might consider becoming more involved in this expansion of ATO services.
- I know I'm beating the dead horse here, but isn't it time to re-open the ideas of accepting donations?
 - We have no plans at this time to consider taking cash donations from the membership.
- While we're discussing issues such as donations, I think it would also be worth discussing the potential benefits of VATSIM transitioning to a community governance model(like every other online organization, from Linux to Wikipedia).
 - There are no plans to consider a different governance model at this time.
- A question I would like asked of the BoG are what are the current short term and long term objectives they hold for the network? What is the vision for ongoing improvement? What is the big picture vision the BoG have for VATSIM by 2015 (2yr) and 2018 (5yr)? What efforts/systems are being implemented today to make this vision realistic and achieve these goals?
 - Good work for a committee of BoG and EC to develop now that we have reached a level of stability that will allow for it. Thanks for suggesting it.
- It's a fairly regular occurrence to see a group of pilots (presumably founders) flying online together using various "VATGOV" callsigns. Why are they always where there is no ATC coverage? It would be nice to see them take part in various events around the globe rather than hide out in central Africa.

- I have seen them in areas that are covered with ATC, so I don't think 'always' really applies. Also, Founders use VATSIMxx callsigns while BoG members use VATGOVxx callsigns. As Steven responded in the forum, not everyone uses these callsigns for various reasons; Kyle never uses it for flying.