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Timetable for RFI responses

Submitted by: Kathleen Comerford

9/24/2009

Question:

What is the timetable for a response to a Request for Information? Does the SEC have a responsibility to inform those who submit RFIs whether or not the request is actually addressed?

Rationale:

This morning I was informed by my colleague, who sits on the Senate, that my 9/3/09 request had not been addressed. I had, of course, checked the RFI site often to see if there was an answer to mine and to others submitted at the same time. I was under the impression that the SEC had a responsibility to reply in one way or another to the RFIs; yet the web pages with the requests from me and David Seaman remain as they were when we submitted the RFIs. What is the reason for this silence?

Response:

9/28/2009: Michael Moore, Senate Moderator has responded to Kathleen Comerford’s Request for Information in the following way:

Nothing exists in the Statutes of Georgia Southern University or in the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate regarding Requests for Information. The following information comes from the Faculty Senate Orientation Handbook:

Requests for Information:
When, Why, & How
A “Request for Information” may be submitted to the Senate, at which time the Senate
Executive Committee will decide (1) whether it is within the purview of the Senate, (2) whether it should be pursued by the Senate, and (3) if it meets the first two requirements, how best to seek the information.

(1) The information sought must be relevant to elements of two or more colleges, or to the university and its academic community as a whole.

(2) The information sought must not be readily obtainable through less formal and involved means applied by the submitter, such as a simple phone call, email, or internet search; and must be of sufficient import to warrant the investment of Senate attention.

NOTE: Even if these first two criteria are met in a strict accordance to the letter, the SEC may decline to pursue an RFI if in their judgment the intent is or the outcome will amount to prosecution of a largely personal agenda on the part of the submitter.

(3) The SEC may refer the matter to a standing committee, but more frequently the Chair will contact whoever seems most likely to be able to provide an answer; often, this will be a high-level administrator.

If either criterion #1 or #2 is not met, the SEC will post that response to the RFI on the Senate web page. If the SEC has gathered the requested information to the best of its ability, that information will be posted as the SEC response to the RFI on the Senate web page. Sometimes the response will first come available via an oral report at a Senate meeting either by the Moderator or by the SEC’s source(s), often a University administrator.

“Requests for Information” often are submitted when the individual is not in a position to know what source to approach or access for an answer; when SEC access to upper-level administrators is the best means to facilitate an answer; or when formally, collegially, and publicly asking the question seems the best or only means of garnering the information.

“Requests for Information” should be just that. They should be questions, and should be professionally, succinctly, and collegially phrased. The questions asked should not be phrased so that they appear to be rhetorical, i.e. not phrased so that it appears the questioner already knows (or thinks he/she knows) the answer and is using a question format largely or wholly in order to make a statement.

Statements, including background information and data – such as how long the issue
has existed, and what other avenues to an answer have been unprofitably pursued – that have led to the RFI question(s), can be included in the Rationales section.

This is what we have on RFI’s. In answer to your questions: we do not have a statutory timetable for responses, largely because we cannot always control the response times of those we go to for the requested information – some things take longer than others; when a response is delayed, though, this is usually mentioned in the SEC report, and we try to post responses as soon as they are available. There is also no requirement that the person submitting an RFI be personally and individually informed that a response is ready; often the response first comes in the SEC report at Senate meetings (sometimes from the Moderator, sometimes from another person present), and a broadcast announcement is made to the Senate list. For items submitted as RFI’s that the SEC determines do not fit that venue, a statement to that effect will be posted.

Many thanks to former Moderator Marc Cyr for his hard work on the Faculty Senate Guide.

RFI on September 24th from Kathleen Comerford on Timetable for RFI responses. Moore responded as Senate Moderator and added information in the Faculty Senate Policies and Procedures about requesting information.