

Rules And Regulations Committee Minutes

April 8, 2024

Present: Allison Thomas, Chairperson, Danielle Piascik, Board Liaison, Nina Miller, Charlotte Dumford

Absent with Notice: Claudia Rayner

Ms. Thomas called the meeting to order at 8:10 pm EDT

Ms. Thomas informed the committee that the Board of Directors has tasked the committee with rewriting the FHANA grievance policy. The Board has decided that the organization should have such a policy but has identified certain problematic issues. As it stands, the current grievance policy can be too easily weaponized to punish people with differing opinions and to delay or even prevent administrative processes/actions.

Specific areas to address:

What constitutes a grievance?

What should be excluded?

What kind of redress can the filer request from FHANA?

The grievance needs to include:

Details on the proper format for grievances.

An outline of the specific damages.

Statement of the desired reparations.

The committee discussed the question of what constitutes a legitimate grievance. It is important to determine if the grievance is a legal issue. If so, FHANA does not have the authority to adjudicate.

FHANA does have the authority to address abuses of power by Board members, executive or administrative staff, or other members given apparent power by the Board within the organization. FHANA can also consider conflicts of interest, fraudulent representation of FHANA, and breaches of confidentiality.

The committee maintains that disagreements on policies or opinions, interpersonal problems, and anything involving legally defined issues are not suitable grievances.

Ms. Miller discussed creating steps to take before filing a formal grievance:

- 1) Try to resolve yourself
- 2) Report first to office or to your regional BOD member (depending on member's comfort level with the person in those roles)
- 3) Ms. Thomas suggested providing a specific form that the member must fill out

The hope is that these steps will give the member considering a formal grievance time to "cool down" and think if this is truly a grievance before initiating the formal process. Again, the committee asserted that the grievance policy is not to punish people we don't like but to redress wrongdoing.

The committee discussed the grievance policies of other organizations for comparison. Ms. Miller asked if others have such form. Ms. Thomas performed a brief online search and discovered that USEF, the Gypsy Vanner,, and the Haflinger organizations do have such forms as part of their grievance processes.

<https://vanners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GVHS-Grievance-Procedure-and-form.pdf>

<https://haflingerhorse.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/GrievancePolicyCodeofConduct.pdf>

In summary, all require the person's information, a brief statement of the dispute, and the remedy being sought and can include any supportive attachments. The Gypsy Vanner organization has two types of grievances: the informal complaint and the formal grievance.

Some forms include statements for the filer of the grievance to check to insure understanding of certain standards, rules, and consequences.

Language this committee pointed out as being of interest included:

“I understand the process and once the grievance is filed I will refrain from discussing publicly in person or on social media”

“I understand the filing of a frivolous grievance may result in negative consequences”

The committee noted that some organizations charge a fee to file grievances which is refundable if the grievance is decided in the filers favor.

The committee briefly discussed whether issues of animal welfare should be handled under the FHANA grievance policy. Ms. Thomas reminded the committee that animal welfare has legal definitions that may vary from country to country, state to state, etc. This discussion can be continued at a later date if desired.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm EDT.

Minutes prepared by Charlotte Dumford