

A Proposal for Minicon 48

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We propose to run a convention called “Minicon 48” over Easter weekend 2013, March 29-31, with Joel as chair and Matt as vice-chair.

As you know, Joel has already signed a hotel contract for this convention (oops), but no guests of honor have been invited. We are hoping for a speedy approval so that we can begin inviting guests.

Here's what we mean by “chair” and “vice-chair”. Joel and Matt expect to make most decisions together. However, Joel will have priority in case of disagreement. If a decision looks like it needs to be made quickly, Joel can make it without consulting Matt, but Matt is supposed to consult Joel unless it is a very minor matter. Since Matt lives in Chicago, much of this will happen remotely. Fortunately, Matt and Joel are happy talking on the phone a lot. Matt hopes to be able to attend around half of the concomm meetings in person by taking Megabus red-eyes up to Minneapolis.

The Con

We plan for Minicon 48 to be a rather similar convention to the last string of Minicons. We propose to hold it at the Bloomington DoubleTree (Sheraton (Radisson)) and for it to be an all-volunteer-run convention with the usual assortment of activities and no significant shift in policies from previous years. We tentatively plan to invite one author GoH, one artist GoH and one fan GoH.

Budget

Here is an outline of our projected budget, based on Minicons 46 and 47:

Income:

Memberships: \$18000
Profit on t-shirt sales and art show: \$900
Misc: \$100
Total: \$19000

Expenses:

Hotel, including GoH rooms: \$3500
GoH travel: \$1600
(We plan to invite two out-of-town domestic GoH and assume each will bring a partner)
Badges: \$800
Hospitality: \$4500
Publications: \$1200
Room parties: \$700
Misc: \$1200
Total: \$13500

Grand total: \$5500 profit

We're pretty sure that this profit is bigger than required under Mnstf bylaw VI.4. We would like input from the board as to what our requested profit is so that we can adjust registration rates and/or spend additional money as appropriate. We are anticipating that the relevant section will be bylaw VI.4.b, that the club should be shooting to lose \$1000 in 2013. In this case, we think the Minnstf budget looks something like this:

Meetings + storage locker + PO box and other misc: ~\$4000
Profit target of the fallcon : -\$200
Subtotal: ~-\$4200
Amount Minicon 48 should make: ~\$3200

This would mean we have \$2300 to play with. One obvious thing to do would be to lower registration rates. Since about $\frac{3}{4}$ of our ~450 members pre-register, dropping all our pre-reg rates by \$5 would cost us about \$1700, under the pessimistic assumption that lower rates do not net us any new members. We would be disinclined to lower the at-the-door rates, since our current prereg:at-the-door price ratio is already quite low. With a final pre-reg rate of \$40 and at-the-door left at \$60, we'd still be well below our historical average ratio of 1.7. We also plan to further lower the student and kid rates with respect to the adult rate; since we do not have many members in either category, the most this could cost us is a few hundred dollars, leaving us still around \$400 above our guess at our profit target. We can use this simply as a cushion or it could go towards more/better food in the consuite or more outreach as seems prudent based on our membership numbers.

Organization

We have both been somewhat frustrated of late with the lack of organization and communication among the concom. While putting together the Minicon 47 PR2, for instance, several Minicon 47 department heads could provide almost no information about what their department was planning to do, or simply didn't attend any meetings or reply to emails or phone messages.

Relatedly, we feel like a number of our department heads view Minicon as a pre-existing entity which they are working for and can plug into at the last minute, rather than as a whole of which they make up a part. This is a bit distressing, because there is no "core" committee other than the chairs; the committee is made up of department heads, volunteers in their departments and a few unaffiliated members. For some, this is due to lack of experience in fandom – for instance, Matt McMillan (gaming), who is the subject of a campaign by Matt S to say "we" instead of "you" when referring to the concom. For others, it's – we assume – due to having been around a long time and thinking that everything has already been figured out.

Also relatedly, there are a good number of things that happen at Minicon by magic, i.e. no one knows who is in charge of doing it, but it somehow gets done anyway. (For instance, how do badge clips arrive at the con? Who makes the registration forms?) This is simultaneously really cool and terribly stressful.

We are planning a two part strategy to attempt to unify the concom and promote better communication. First, we would like to add some structure to the concom meetings, in which the first half hour (measured from when most people get there) is reserved for 1-minute department reports and for vital matters that the committee should know and/or discuss, with rambling and brainstorming being right out. Following this, our ordinary rambling incoherent structure can proceed as usual.

Second, we would like to (re?)introduce the idea of "divisions" as an organizational structure between the chair and departments. This is a popular idea among conventions these days, so it seems worth a try. In our implementation, there would be around 8 division heads, each with a few departments and/or separate tasks under them. Instead of scheduling concom meetings as we do now – on days when we more-or-less blindly think are good for most people – we will schedule them in consultation with the division heads and expect that each division head attends all the concom meetings, or if that's not possible, appoints a representative to attend, or at the very least, submits a

detailed written report of progress for each meeting. Depending on division heads' schedules, these meetings many end up being on weekday evenings and so less convenient for other concom members, but if we can achieve better representation from all our departments, we think it's worthwhile.

Following is a tentative map of our divisions. Boxed words are divisions. Dotted lines show a very partial list of interrelations between divisions/departments. (Note in particular that while the programming division needs to understand the schedules of several other departments, not every department with a schedule is part of programming.) Tasks in the wiggly cloud box are those that don't seem to fit under any division. Since volunteers is a department that doesn't seem to fit anywhere else, it is currently its own division. We might change that. We also will probably relax the concom meeting attendance requirement for the hospitality division until January or so.

