

From the RVC:

At the meeting of the American Mensa Committee last spring in San Diego, we created a Governance Task Force to examine the way American Mensa is run and recommend any changes they thought would improve things. A couple of motions regarding our corporate governance that came up at the meeting were referred to this Task Force. At our fall meeting in Fort Worth, the Governance Task Force, composed of the Executive Director, four current members of the AMC, and five other members, and chaired by Eldon Romney, our former National Ombudsman, officially submitted its report.

When we created this Task Force, we had hoped they could examine the issues and make a number of concrete recommendations for specific changes, but as the Task Force members began work, it quickly became apparent that their charge was too all-encompassing to be reduced to a neat set of proposed by-laws amendments. An extensive e-mail survey, as well as random interviews at the AG this summer, made it clear that our members' preferences in almost all areas were so diverse as to defy any attempt to reach consensus. The report eventually turned out to be an examination of the issues, followed by some suggestions of possible options. Nonetheless, it was a huge job, and the final product will be of great help to the AMC in considering what directions we should take in confronting some of the global issues of governance that will be coming before us in the next year or two.

The report contains some recommendations for startling changes in our organization. The question for the immediate future is whether the AMC will embrace the possibility of radical restructuring, or whether everyone will dig in and start defending their own "turf". The safe decision, when confronted by the possibility of radical change, is always going to be opting for the status quo. Those who push for change will inevitably be the scapegoats if the new way of doing things produces unfavorable results. Those of us not blessed with clairvoyance cannot promise that the new way is better than the old, only that it might be. Clearly, the obvious response to that premise is "yes, but it might not". Over the next year or so, as this AMC and the next one struggle with the huge implications of the Governance Task Force report, be thinking about your own appetite for change. Do we need massive restructuring of American Mensa in an attempt to increase efficiency and effective delivery of services, or would you prefer incremental tweaking of our current organization, in order to capitalize on what we do well and slowly improve areas where we are lacking?

Over time, you'll be hearing from me or my successor regarding specific reforms that are likely to come before the AMC. The particulars will differ from case to case, but be aware that the overriding issue is as described above. How do you feel about it? Give it some thought, and let me know whether you lean toward "hope and change" on the one hand, or "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" on the other.

Roger Durham