

2018 NST Election Member Questions

A big part of the NST office is managing the big ideas for the org, including staff decisions for volunteers needed to implement. Some ideas are bad (read: more costs/harms than gains/benefits). But even good ideas can suffer flaws in implementation, which can make good ideas seem bad in their outcome.

With that in mind, please assess 2 of this current chronicle's big ideas--VIP point spend review/approval and DPotM/Worldbuilder review/approval/publishing.

** Are these good ideas? What do they cost/gain the org?*

I believe both of these ideas are beneficial. In the current era of this club MC has become significantly less important from a mechanics standpoint. VIP allows for anyone over a much shorter time to earn things similar to what MC used to unlock. It's available to everyone, which prevents the players who can attend conventions more often and spend real world money on auctions from 'cornering the market on cool'. It provides an exceptional diverse number of things that flesh out your character and make it more connected to our global story. The Worldbuilder/DPotM projects are necessary supplements to the VIP system. Not tracking who has spent VIP to be the former Prince of Paris during X time period would diminish the investment in VIP if someone isn't making sure that multiple characters aren't claiming the same thing. Together these two systems, while not required to enjoy the game, add multiple ways to become entrenched deeper in the shared chronicle. In essence it's like writing yourself into the canon of the story.

** If implementation of them is a problem (e.g., backlog), please explain **why**, to the best of your knowledge.*

Implementing these systems has been problematic at times, mostly due to backlog and understaffing. We've also had some technical glitches and RL hiccups involving the staff that have slowed things down.

** As NST, would you intend to keep/remove/revise/replace them?*

I would plan to keep all these systems and add to them. VIP is an important part of our club at this stage. Once we streamline the process and bolster the staff to prevent or limit future backlogs, adding to the existing system will provide a spike in volunteering, which this club needs.

** As NST, **how** would you address implementation of these for improvement of the game?*

With some focused attention and some additional staff hires we can streamline the process. By creating redundancy amongst the staff we can limit the risk of backlogs and provide a faster turnaround for our players. A more robust set of instructions and job descriptions for those involved in processing them, along with an expected timeframe for turnaround, can get rid of the backlog.

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Will anything be done to address the cliques / super friends team ups that seem to repeat through the Chronicles? IE - The same people tending to be in charge and major powers IC. High MC privilege.

No one should be told who they can and can't play with. We are all here to enjoy the hobby with our current friends and to make friends with new people. MC is a smaller metric on how to 'win' as it provides only a small XP benefit. However, it is often an indicator of how long someone has been in the club. And often people who have been in the club for a long time find themselves in the spotlight more often than not. We must remember that there are guidelines and expectations tied to each MC level. One of those expectations is mentorship. I believe mentorship should be rewarded and expected both ICly and OOCly. Working with the coordinator side I hope to expand recognition for those going above and beyond to mentor people into holding both IC positions and OOC positions that focus on storytelling.

One of the things I placed in my Mission Plan was a way to encourage Cooperative Story Driven Player Behavior:

- Encourage Cooperative Story-Driven Player Behavior
 - We need to reward those people who go out of their way to provide a fun and safe environment for other players even during situations that are often stressful.
 - VIP Awards for cooperative playstyle
 - Good behavior in killboxes
 - Self-correcting IC behavior
 - Good Death VIP
 - Characters that die and enhance the game can be awarded a portion of their VIP back.

On the opposite side of that coin I believe it has long since past the time where we hold players to the level of standard their MC dictates. Players who are active detriments to the game by unnecessarily hoarding IC power will be looked at and encouraged to 'share the wealth'.

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It is a widely held consideration (or observation for some) that our flagship/well-attended metaplot games have a tendency to seriously suffer in quality or attendance when a NST changeover happens, so continuity of vision and response is a concern.

Is it your intention to retain the sitting Masquerade and Apocalypse staffs if they wish to stay on during your administration?

I have no intention of removing any venue storytellers unless they want to step down. We are only a year into a Jihad-based chronicle where we will likely start getting larger glimpses behind the curtain. To drastically change the Masquerade storytelling staff at this point would be a huge mistake. Any issues (covered in later questions) that are present in the game can be easier solved with communication to the current staff rather than replacing it and starting over. Apocalypse, which is further along than Masquerade,

has a clear paradigm and even a system to measure our progress toward or away from the apocalypse, and removing or altering would essentially change the venue into something completely different.

I would like to add to each venue's staff. I feel that mentoring new players to be able to eventually feel comfortable and capable in applying for these high-intensity jobs is a necessary step to keep this club alive and well in the coming years. Often we get very few applicants for positions. And one of the chief reasons I hear is that the player doesn't think they have the experience to do the job. Hiring additional staff for each venue who can work solely on seminars and mentorship and what goes into national and regional level storytelling is vital to our survival.

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Where do you feel we are at in our different venue chronicles (using whatever narrative structure terminology you favor) and roughly how much longer do you think they should run?

I would like to see a minimum 4 year chronicle for Apocalypse, and Masquerade. I would like to check into the health of Space and CoD-X after they've been going for a year to determine how long those chronicles should run. I believe Apocalypse is roughly halfway through and things are beginning to ramp up, and we are seeing a lot of movement on the clock. Masquerade has started slow and I believe this year is going to be a big eye opener into what we meant by a Jihad chronicle and everyone is going to see a increase in 'pace of play'. The Blood Accords are a big thing in 2019, and to end the chronicle shortly after that would make their impact meaningless. As we did at the start of this chronicle, if all venues are the same length of 4 years then we'll have a staggered start to next chronicle, providing ample time to focus on the creation of each venue rather than try and create 4 new venues all at once.

The list of candidates for NST is all men. The RSTs are currently predominantly men, with 7 of 8 identifying as so. Historically this trend continues back to the clubs founding. A) Why do you think this is? B) Is this a problem; if so, what are your thoughts on how to solve it?

As much as we are a counterculture our club still in many ways reflects some of the deepest ingrained prejudices of society at large. Women gamers are far too frequently made to feel unwelcome, disrespected, and subjected to unwelcome stereotypes. I have heard from members who are women about issues from casual misogyny to assault. It is hard to be a woman gamer and I am sure it's twice as hard to be a woman gamer in a leadership role.

This is a problem. In the same way diversity is always an important focus of any group of people. As mentioned above I want to expand the national ST staff to provide more ways to learn about what happens on the national level. I believe this will provide the tools for more and more people to feel comfortable applying for positions. I also want to introduce or implement some manner of diversity council. As outlined in my application:

- Mentoring Program
 - Reasoning: We need to train more people to hold upper level positions.
 - I would like to see all venue leads hire an assistant who mentors people on how to run that venue. This person would handle workshops or presentations and also do quarterly Q&A sessions.

- AANST Outreach <insert venue>.
- Diversity
 - Reasoning: To be a direct link between the PACT and Venue Leads.
 - Hire cis-female and genderfluid/nonbinary ST Representatives for the ST Staff
 - These representatives would work with all members of the national staff to make sure plotlines, NPCs, and other projects are safe and non-disruptive to all members.

D&D is in many ways about problem solving, with that what is your favorite D&D/Pathfinder class and why?

I believe I have played every main class, even bard, at least once. More often than not, I almost always work rogue or ranger into my builds because of the versatility they can employ. But most often the group sits down together and decides on a well-rounded set of classes to not leave any detrimental gaps. Druid is probably my favorite class, specifically for its shape changing builds.

Course corrections can be difficult but are sometimes necessary for the health of the game. Do you foresee a need for a course correction and if so how would you implement the correction?

I foresee a few areas that can be improved in Masquerade. As the chief of staff for that venue that's not to say that we aren't already aware of the need to improve those areas and are working on them. I don't believe Apocalypse and Space require any course corrections. And I believe CoD-X is too young to tell at this point.

On a non-venue specific scope, the easiest way to identify the need for course corrections is to establish accessible, productive and scheduled means of communication with regional staff. Regional staff provides the most efficient way to discover systemic problems within the local games. If national and regional have established regular lines of communication we can respond faster to issues that may require a course correction. My goal would be for lines of communication to limit how often we get off course to begin with.

One of the course corrections I plan to address, which was discussed at MESCon with a majority of the RSTs and affiliates, is an adjustment to the XP system. Particularly by at least adding in AGR. Quite often we lose people who feel they can no longer contribute because they are behind on XP and the chronicle no longer possesses a reasonable amount of time to close the XP gap. I have a few other ideas that would need to be discussed with the regional staff before implementing.

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If elected, do you intend to appoint your assistant staff, or hold an all-call for members interested in applying for a national position?

I do not plan on removing anyone currently on staff aside from the NST chief of staff. If people retire then an all-call will go out for those open positions. As stated above, I do plan on adding positions that promote communication, diversity, and mentoring. And

all-calls will go out for those positions as well. The NST chief of staff is a unique position and I will appoint a person for this position.

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Thanks for running! We are approaching halfway through the Apoc and VtM chronicles and the 2.0 ones are just getting started. Not every member has approved of every decision of our aNSTs, but they have been the architects of the current metaplots. With all of this in mind, is your intention to keep the current aNSTs or do you plan to reopen all-calls?

I plan on retaining all venue aNSTs. It is impossible to make everyone happy. Not every chronicle is going to speak to each person who plays it. And at this stage in the game course corrections will be less disruptive than replacing staff. In the unlikely event those course corrections lead to a venue aNST stepping down, all-calls will be held with the understanding that we are over a year into almost every venue and course corrections from existing setting plans will be required. There will not be any earth-shattering changes to the ongoing storylines even if an aNST is replaced.

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1. *How neutral can you maintain in the face of pressure from your significant other, friends, and family in the organization?*

I have lost friends over this club. I have specifically lost friends over my decision to remain in this club because I believe in it. I attempt to reach out to as many people as possible, and I have added anyone who has requested it on facebook. I believe this demonstrates my ability to be reachable by anyone in the club on any matter, not just my friends. I believe in transparency in what I do as much as possible and will strive to not only be fair and neutral but to try and spoil everyone equally.

2. *How much influence does your significant other hold over your decisions?*

My significant other is a very local game-centric player and doesn't have any interest in influencing my decisions over the national setting. She does often correct grammar and spelling mistakes for me when I release things. She also helps me think through questions of diversity and ethics because she has degrees in sociology, history, and gender and race studies and is well-qualified to do so.

3. *How do you plan to minimize your significant other's involvement with the office, and the decisions you will make if you are elected?*

Because she has the above-mentioned degrees, I will and have asked her opinions and guidance on how to implement more race and gender diversity. Outside of these areas she has no interest in influencing my decisions and prefers local involvement over national involvement.

4. *Can you confirm and support that your significant other will not influence what you do as the NST if you are elected?*

My partner influences my life on a daily basis. That is the point of being a couple. To expect anyone not to reach out for advice from someone they live with wouldn't be feasible. However, as stated, she has no desire to influence the national storytelling staff outside of ensuring my documents are well-edited.

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What are your thoughts regarding setting enforcement via NPC's? If game mechanics favor enough PC's and their ability to oppose the setting, should NPC's "bring the hammer" to reinforce the setting? Should player agency take priority and change the setting? Where do you strike a balance?

Setting enforcement is very tricky. The STs have a duty to put forth a consistent setting in line with the documents that were written and delivered to the players. However, that does NOT mean that all player agency counter to that setting should be ignored or squashed. Before any ‘hammer’ is brought to reinforce the setting, there should be communication with the player(s) to understand their motivation. And also to inform the players on the setting design. Are they misinformed, or not understanding the setting, or are they actively trying to push against it and create change on a large scale? The next step of that communication should be how best to allow for player agency and setting to work together and evolve in a way that benefits the collaborative story.

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Is there a place in the MES for one-shot games? If so, how should the NST's office approach such a task?

The NST office is beholden to the established setting and chronicles we currently offer. One-shot games can have a place in the club. But since they are outside the currently offered setting it wouldn't require the attention of any current venue leads. The NST office would/could be available to provide guidance on hiring staff, or to provide additional support to a regional one shot game.

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Given the primary role of leadership and management the NST position has over the varied venues; what are your plans for moving these venues forward? Are you planning larger setting changes? Are there plans to replace/adjust current ANST staff across the board, or any venue in specific?

There are no planned changes to alter our current settings in any venue. It is not my intention to fire any of our venue leads or any of the staff they have entrusted. I do wish to add to their teams in the following way. I would like to appoint an AANST Outreach for each venue (Masquerade, Space, CoD-X, Apocalypse) to help mentor new members or veteran members who would like to learn how to become storytellers on a regional and national level. This position will hold workshops and projects periodically, most likely quarterly.

Specifically my plan to move these venues forward is to meet with regional staff as soon as possible to find out the issues their regional games may be having. By bringing these issues to the national staff we can then develop a comprehensive plan of both solving these issues and establishing better communication to prevent future similar issues.

What are the aspects of each venue you enjoy and conversely which aspects (if there are any) that you would like to see changed?

Masquerade has always been about the metaplot, the canonized history, and the lore. Apocalypse is usually my go-to venue for ‘teamwork’ playstyle in which we put aside differences to fight together for survival. Space is rather unique, and I'm looking forward to delving into the crafting system. I'm particularly fond of the quest system which my VST calls the job board. CoD-X intrigues me and frustrates me at the same time. In the past we've had difficulty trying to maintain separate NWoD venues. Accord did a great

job at bringing all the splats together for a reason but certain things were lost or diluted by having such diversity. I see CoD-X having the same problem.

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What will you (prospective NST) do to create a welcoming environment and accessible plots or NPCs for neurodivergent or neuroatypical players? We have a not inconsiderable presence in the club, and are not alone among folks who may have trouble processing auditory stimulus, recognizing body language or unspoken social cues, or face other hurdles in accessing plots.

A specific example of this could be as recently as MEScon, where a national NPC was instructed to only speak in cryptic, vague ways to PCs, with no given alternative. We've come a long way in making the org more accessible to many people from many walks of life: what will the NST's office do with you in it to create an accessible game with regard to non-allistic players?

It would be beneficial to the club as a whole and the NST office specifically to create a advocacy position for club members with sensory or other issues. I also advocate for creating similar positions for people of color, people with different sexualities and gender presentations, and other people whose identities, experiences or conditions cause them to need additional help accessing games to the fullest potential.

As a club we must be fully welcoming and understanding. We also need to encourage people with different needs and abilities to advocate for themselves and become leaders within the club. The leadership of the club hasn't been as diverse as it should be. And current leaders can have the best intentions but may not be part of that demographic and can't speak to it from firsthand experience. That's why empowering someone to be their own advocate as much as they can be is so important.

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What is the biggest challenge facing the club in your opinion? How do you intend to address that problem?

Communication, Perception, and Transparency. My mission and vision for my role as NST is focused on communication and structure. My vision is to create a solid foundation of transparency and communication from Top to better empower Regional and Local storytellers. My mission is to create numerous projects, hire new people into new positions, and utilize more resources to make my vision possible.

You cannot build a house on a shaky foundation. That foundation starts at the venue level and continues from regional to national. Monthly reports aren't cutting it. We need to establish regularly scheduled ways for all storytellers to communicate to provide a shared and unified experience for the players.

Once we strengthen lines of communication up and down the chain we can begin to work together to make our club stand out. We need to modernize and streamline our current processes like reporting and social media presence. We need to make ourselves more appealing. We should celebrate this hobby publicly so when others find our social media they see us having fun. We need to communicate to prospective members just as much as to our current members.

Once we begin planting the seeds for growth we need to prepare for that growth. We need to make a conscious effort to teach new members how to be good members, and how to

take care of not only themselves but each other. This will secure our future for years to come. We don't do enough to educate new members on how to volunteer on the ST side. There are far too many people who might not even know how regional and national work together to provide a shared experience for the club.

In order to achieve that we need to have structure. We can't just do things like we've always done. We need to lay the groundwork for repeatable success. This means developing, testing, and sticking to repeatable workflows. A lot of what we do each year is done over and over: conventions, new ST hires, appeals. Having documented workflows for convention leads on how to document, store, and report their work saves convention leads time and effort. Having a packet for new ST hires saves them time and effort in looking for things. If we remove hurdles and streamline busy work we allow our STs to concentrate on what they volunteered to do: tell stories.

Finally, and possibly most important, when all the above is working as intended then we should be able to publicize our successes to our members. Our members should recognize when we are doing well. And even if things go awry along the way, our members should see that we are all here to tell stories together.

Do you intend to be more hands on with the games or do you intend to delegate management of the games to your ANST?

My intention is to allow my venue leads to manage their venues. Course corrections and communication will be the main focus of the NST staff outside the venue staffing. I will be available to provide assistance to any of my staff should they need it.

Would you rather have invisibility or flight as a power? Why?

Invisibility. The typical pretext this question is usually asked in doesn't provide any additional benefits to flight. And flying without a plane around you would be really dangerous. The pretext provides that invisibility would allow your clothes to be invisible but not anything you picked up. Without going deep into the self-actualization vs. shadow aspect of the psychology of this question, invisibility has more diverse applications. If anything, invisibility would help with immersion while playing my Nosferatu.

What is something you regret doing or not doing in your time in the organization? What was the lesson you learned?

I regret not making more alterations to how the previous Sabbat chronicle ended. When it was made known the chronicle was ending early I attempted to rush out the remaining plot kits and the overload made the ending of the chronicle slightly comical, which was not the intention. This has definitely taught me, along with many other lessons, that sometimes less is more. I also regret how long it took me to learn to delegate. When I was hired to take over as ANST Sabbat I was so excited to be running my favorite venue I forgot I had a team more than willing and capable of doing work for me. I've learned since

then to communicate and develop team-based workflows that allow for faster and more efficient (and diverse) output to our players.

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If elected, how will you as NST deal/include/relate to the Regions of our club that you are unfamiliar with?

In my year one plan, by September 2018 I want to have met with each RST staff to discuss communication, perception, and transparency issues, and bring those issues to the venue leads. Each region has distinct characteristics and goals. For example, every region has its own favorite venues, styles of play, and history which give them a unique identity. Fostering and embracing that identity is important. By meeting individually with the regions I can establish a dialogue to incorporate each region into the national framework while still allowing the region to remain unique and special.

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Can you tell us how you'd deal with a situation where a majority of RSTs disagree with a decision of yours and how you think that situation should be handled by the NST's office?

I think the communication between the NST and RST staff is one of the most critical pathways in the club. I think the first step to any disagreement would be taking a step back. This allows the NST to speak with his staff and the RST to speak with his staff and perhaps even the members in his region. Obviously this extensive of a process can't be expected to be followed on every decision or nothing would get accomplished. Once all considerations were weighed if the RSTs still greatly disagreed and as a majority, I think it would be dangerous to go against that consensus. If I felt strongly about something and had at least a minority support from the RSTs and chose to side against the majority a transparent and communicative explanation to not only the RSTs but the players would be released to explain my actions. RSTs that disagreed with me would not be mentioned in any way unless they wished to be.