Tuesday, November 20. 2007

On Strike Rapier's lack of respect for AWTeen and its Citizens

I had hoped that, by now, I would be able to write about Strike Rapier in a positive light. After all, he did get AWTeen's world services restored quickly and world population has increased significant week-over-week. However, I can't help but think that either DaBean or Matthew would have done an equal job in restoring world services. However, Matthew and DaBean would both have been superior Governors because both would have been considerably more helpful and forthcoming to AWTeen's Citizens than Strike Rapier has been.

Why is it that the AWTeen Caretaker position seems lately to always end up in the hands of those with excessive hubris and arrogance? While one could argue that JerMe and Dr. S developed their arrogance towards the world's population during their tenures, Strike Raper hit the ground running, chewing people out within hours of taking the position. In fact, over the past five days, the following statements are a fraction of what has been posted in the Activeworlds forums alone. First, DaBean offered a suggestion to Strike in regards to his testing a bot that constantly changed the world's attributes:

DaBean: Why not do that in markdev1?
DaBean: Very annoying here
[several lines omitted for brevity]
DaBean: Please do it in a different world. Formal request
Strike Rapier: request denied.

Here's another case. Chorus Line asked about having the Peacekeepers leave AWTeen:

Chorus Line: have we ditched them yet?
Strike Rapier: I think my life would be easier if I just ditched you.

And another, where Strike responds to a thread stating that GC is prohibited from participating in any AWTeen events:

Strike Rapier: Im the Governor ol boy. Right now my opinion is that you are not fit to represent AWTeen. So im not going to let you.

So this is how it is? "ol boy?" "I'm the boss, and what I say goes?" While Strike was never an expert in the public relations department, comments such as these cross the line into outright arrogance. Strike sure isn't going to make many friends if he tells them all off in response to simple, reasonable requests such as these. It not very difficult to be a little more polite when answering a normal question about bots, even if he chooses not to follow the advice. It's not very difficult to actually answer the question when someone asks about world policy. And it's clearly not very difficult to take two minutes to craft a decent response to someone who has just been publicly humiliated as to why he isn't allowed to participate in any committees. What ever happened to the concept of respect? SW Chris has previously commented that respect should be given unconditionally, and I completely agree.

As to the people who are being put down by Strike, why aren't you standing up for yourselves? You should be downright mad that Strike has the brass to think he is better than you are. Respond to his comments, and if it keeps up, talk with your feet (or teleporters).

The AWTeen leadership job can be done well while still upholding respect and common courtesy, as Chanty proved in the past. Strike's behavior in these circumstances is unacceptable for someone who is in a position of great responsibility. If he doesn't change his ways soon, the world will remain a joke to the rest of the community, just like it was under JerMe and Dr. Squailboont.

Posted by Brant in Commentary at 07:32

Thursday, November 15. 2007

Martin: unprofessionally representing Activeworlds, Inc.

I have a lot of respect for how Activeworlds, Inc. handled the last election, but actions this morning have caused me to question that respect. The voting was fair and honest, the results were announced publicly, and the schedule was followed as prescribed. Flagg definitely knows what he's doing, communicates well with Citizens, and he is a great asset to the community. However, one of AWI's other employees, Martin, has not been as understanding.

After the election concluded, there was some discussion in the AW forums about how to improve the political process after Strike's term concludes. Nobody was inciting "revolution" or even stating the current results should be changed. Instead, there was what many considered a simple debate of process and procedure on how to improve the elections system in the future. Several citizens even posted real-world examples of different types of voting systems, comparing and contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of each. There wasn't any hint that anyone considered the results to be illegitimate.

Then Martin inappropriately decided to end all discussion by locking threads of which he (personally) disapproved.

I've noticed Martin lock other threads needlessly before, and there seems to be little reason for his doing so. Nothing in any of the threads he has locked in the AWTeen forums over the past month has violated the Universe's content guidelines - unless suggesting that AWI might have room for improvement or joking around about polls are violations. It would be easy to understand if profanity were posted or lewd pictures were offered up, but the targets of his locking lack any consistency. Martin seems to have no problem leaving threads open where personal attacks proliferate and people seem ready to kill each other, yet he locks threads where actual constructive discussion is occurring. He also inserts off-topic and irrelevant comments randomly in many threads that contribute little or nothing to the discussion.

Furthermore, Martin's actions are in conflict with Flagg's own stated policies for ejection in AWTeen. Flagg stated that ejection was to be the only punishment for "misbehavior," and that banning from chat is not permitted. Here, Martin hasn't even warned anyone that he saw a problem with what they were posting, and then he locked threads to which many people were contributing, effectively "banning people from chat." In one thread, JerMe's post obviously angered Martin, so why didn't Martin send a telegram to JerMe and talk to him about the issue rather than overreacting by silencing the discussion?

I thought the idea of having AWTeen discussion boards was to have a place for people to discuss things without those in charge interfering? JerMe used to lock threads in his forums all the time, so Brock started new forums where he never interfered with anything anyone had to say - and Brock's forums became very popular. Now we don't have to worry about a Governor limiting speech, so we instead have to worry about abuse of power from AWI representatives?

Martin's actions are unprofessional of an AWI representative and are not representing the company in a good light.

Posted by Brant in Commentary at 09:35

Wednesday, November 14. 2007

What's next

Well, unfortunately, the news has broken that Strike Rapier won the election. I'd like to congratulate Strike on his victory, and wish him the best of luck during the coming months.

There isn't really much else to say. While I'm obviously disappointed in the result, I'm much more disappointed in the voting method. Flagg himself said that this election was won with only a plurality of the vote, and I have no doubt the results would have been different had a runoff been used. The results here show that the majority of AWTeen's citizens do not support Strike. I hope that Flagg seriously considers a runoff system for the February election.

As to me, you might recall that I had committed to writing this blog only for the duration of the election. Now that someone with opposing views has been elected, there no place for me in a Strike-run AWTeen, and my criticism would mean very little until the next election approaches. For now, I plan to focus my attention on a new Activeworlds project that I hope to propose next week. I reserve the right to write periodically, however, and to resume posting as the next cycle heats up after the holidays.

I wish Strike the best of luck in the months ahead. Hopefully, four months from now, AWTeen will once again be recognized as one of the greatest communities in Activeworlds. Live long and prosper!

Posted by Brant in Announcements at 07:25

Tuesday, November 13. 2007

Why DaBean will take AWTeen

Flagg has announced that the AWTeen election results will be published tomorrow, November 14. We're not completely in the dark about how the race might turn out, though, as exit polls have shown a close call. However, some interesting interviews have shown that additional forces are at work that I believe will lead to a startling upset in this race. After analyzing data from several sources, I predict that DaBean will be AWTeen's first Governor.

I recently labeled DaBean the "Ron Paul of Activeworlds." Just as Paul is experiencing a late surge in the presidential race, DaBean surged late in this campaign. Before the official list of candidates was announced, DaBean was polling with near-zero support in the straw polls. His campaign, with Kapara as co-Governor, seemed loosely defined and even more loosely organized. It looked as if he wouldn't have the slightest chance of even getting onto the ballot.

As the campaign unfolded, however, DaBean continued to gain more and more support until he surpassed even Matthew in the final poll. He still lags slightly behind Strike Rapier in that poll, but I predict that DaBean has managed to surpass Strike and will be announced as AWTeen's next Governor tomorrow.

Why would I draw such a seemingly off-the-wall conclusion? First, DaBean's rise in support has spoken for itself. Since there were no major events during the last days of the election, nothing indicates that the bottom would have fallen out from under DaBean's support at the last minute. On the other hand, Strike's numbers have trended downward over time. Whereas he took a large percentage of the vote in the first polls, Strike garnered less conclusive leads in latter votes. Likewise, there is no reason to suspect that trend has reversed, either.

Second, I interviewed twenty citizens in-world using telegrams to find out who they voted for. Surprisingly, the in-world numbers turned out much differently than those on the forums. In-world, DaBean garnered three votes for every two of Strike's, with Matthew receiving little support. When I probed further in an attempt to determine why the results were so strikingly different, I found that there was one nearly-universal answer: DaBean's work with AWNewbie was exceptional, and the citizens felt that he would contribute similarly to AWTeen.

How could the race have turned around so unexpectedly? Here's why:

Strike Rapier has been very active in the AWTeen forums, while DaBean has made few posts. Because this election was so non-political, saying nothing actually helped more than talking about the issues. As soon as someone made a post about anything of substance, it was immediately flamed out. Strike Rapier had nothing to gain, but a lot to lose. Strike Rapier was framed by some citizens over his handling of free expression and speech, and he lost his cool in the forums when responding. Matthew was also framed by his opponents as being inept and too young for the job, a stigma he was unable to shake. Even after the discussion died down, people who were just reading the threads were deterred away from both of the criticized candidates.
DaBean and Strike Rapier have extensive contacts elsewhere in the Universe, whereas Matthew's main contacts come from within AWTeen, a demographic already involved with the election. Because Flagg did not prevent people who have never visited AWTeen from voting, this election was decided by how high turnout outside the community was, not by the smaller number of citizens who were active within the AWTeen community.
The fact that DaBean heads a "Newbie" world helped immensely. Anyone who he assisted in the world is likely to know him personally and vote for him, so he likely took a large percentage of the new citizen vote.
Strike Rapier has a lot invested in Activeworlds, but he manages a number of other galaxies and Universes. Citizens of those Universes and Galaxies and solservers can't vote in AWTeen's elections, and they comprise a larger part of his social network.
As has been stated before, the Activeworlds forums are not frequented by everyone. DaBean's demographic of outsiders is unlikely to participate very actively in the straw or exit polls, and those polls have relatively small samples.
When DaBean is announced as the world's next Governor tomorrow, AWTeen will take a turn in a new direction. Even if he isn't and someone else is selected, whomever the eventually chosen Governor is will face immense challenges, and will have to work like he's never worked before if he is to be reelected.

Posted by Brant in Commentary at 08:38

Sunday, November 11. 2007

Runoffs, and what Flagg can do the next time around

Well, the endgame has arrived. I cast my ballot for Matthew earlier today, and there are only a few hours of voting for the AWTeen elections remaining. With the election drawing to a close, I thought it would be interesting to take a look back at the process while awaiting the winner to be announced.

The most striking detail I noticed was how non-political the elections process was. There was almost a taboo against asking or answering any questions of substance about the candidates' plans for the world. When someone did speak out, the candidates and a few other select citizens chewed the person out on the Activeworlds forums. Furthermore, anyone who chose to speak out against the "chewers" was derided either for "not having a life" or for "taking things too seriously." Well, "seriously," the community needs to have more of an open mind and be willing to discuss the issues that matter.

A large part of this election was a popularity contest. While all elections are popularity contests to a large extent, this one was overly so because no formal debates were held. Strike Rapier had actually called a debate at one point, but the scheduled time didn't work with the other candidates and the idea was dropped. The reason the debate failed, however, wasn't because the candidates wouldn't have been interested in participating in one. Instead, it failed because there simply wasn't enough time to host a debate. Heck, there weren't even really "campaigns," because I didn't notice any signs or E-Mails or anything else pushing specific candidates anywhere else than the AW forums.

Time is an interesting issue that was a problem during this cycle, and has the potential to cause additional issues in February if not addressed. In this election, there simply wasn't enough time for the public to get to know the candidates - especially for those Citizens who did not follow the AWTeen community closely and normally hung out in Alphaworld or elsewhere. I suspect that this group of "periodic visitors" has largely determined the outcome, especially since the Universe welcome message advertised the election. Had there been announced debates and a formal system of posting campaign statements, these voters could have become more informed.

Fortunately, the timeframe of the next election itself will ensure somewhat better planning. With the election date known three months in advance, candidates will be able to get better organized and run campaigns. But perhaps Flagg or someone else could organize a debate well in advance so that all of the candidates can clear their schedules and be available to attend.

Second, in the next election AW, Inc. will have to be concerned with the current Governor taking advantage of the system and manipulating it to his or her advantage to get reelected. For example, the current Governor might change the welcome message to advertise his or her own campaign, or to post signs near ground zero to the exclusion of other candidates. Manipulation of the system could be more subtle, as well. Simply posting names in one order versus another can heavily influence an election, as could having someone with PS mention the Governor's campaign. Because many people who vote in these elections don't visit AWTeen, they might vote for the first name they hear, and a public speaker would be a powerful influence. There would need to be sanctions against the Governor if campaigning occurs using world resources. Most organizations have similar rules prohibiting any candidate from using property owned by the organization for campaigning.

Third, voting should be concentrated into one voting day. Almost every other election across the globe is concentrated into one day, and for good reason: because campaigning doesn't have to go on to scrounge every last vote until the minute the polls close. There could be a major happening that completely changes the vote in the midst of elections week. For example, what if one of the candidates completely blows up and proves that (s)he was not attractive to a large number of people halfway through the voting? The people who voted would have no other option than to leave their votes as cast. A short voting timescale reduces the likelihood of this problem occurring.

But the most important change that needs to be addressed in the next cycle is that a runoff election must be held. A runoff system holds one or several votes until one candidate reaches a clear majority. One method of holding a runoff is to eliminate the candidate with the lowest total in each successive round. Another is to hold only two rounds, with the top two candidates squaring off in the second. The idea is that nobody can win unless (s)he wins 50% of the vote. Currently, a majority is not required, and a candidate can win with only a plurality of the vote.

In this election, I voted against Strike Rapier, not for Matthew. In the current non-runoff system, it benefits me to vote for

the candidate who is most likely to win against the person I hate, not necessarily the best candidate. In a runoff, it doesn't matter who I vote for in the first round, as long as I don't vote for Strike, because Strike would need a majority to win outright. There are undoubtedly others who also "voted against" candidates rather than "voting for" them, and it would be a shame if one candidate wins with 34% of the vote versus 33% for the other two.

In conclusion, this election went very well, but there are significant improvements that could be made to smooth the process in the future. Hosting formal debates, allowing more time for campaigning, guarding against abuse of power, limiting the length of voting, and changing to a runoff system will all improve the voting process and increase the legitimacy of the winner.

Posted by Brant in Procedures at 13:57

Friday, November 9. 2007

"Crusher" Strike Rapier: Unfit to lead AWTeen

Strike Raper expressed his displeasure with the use of free speech in the Activeworlds forums with several long tirades and a series of personal attacks. His recent behavior both in the forums and in the Universe itself clearly shows that Strike is not fit to hold the office of Governor, and AWTeen's citizens will benefit most from a responsible and open leader like Matthew or DaBean. It is in the community's best interest for everyone to ensure that Strike Rapier does not continue the tyranny that has brought AWTeen down into current broken state.

Believe it or not, I was actually prepared to vote for Strike until three days ago. He seemed reasonable, had somewhat good ideas, and was obviously a strong leader. He had a no-nonsense policy against vandalism and troublemaking. However, his behavior on the forums shows that his plan for AWTeen is just as flawed as AWTeen's most recent Caretakers'. His posts were relevant until here, where Strike crosses the line from disagreement to insanity:
I'm looking forward to if I win, Im going to crush all this political BS on day one.
"Political BS?" Isn't the political process designed to let people express their opinions and choose the right person for the job? How, exactly, is the community supposed to vote for the right candidate if everyone is expected to shut up and not ask questions? Dictators, not leaders, govern in this manner. Of course, when asked by Maikeru to answer the original question about the publication of chat logs and of AWTeen's meetings, Strike responded further:
I shed a tear for all those votes lost. I've got better things to do than go chasing single votes by changing my policies. If I lose over-all because of that, so be it.
It's a good thing that every real-world candidate isn't as concerned with losing votes as Strike is, because then we would have idiots running the real world.

Strike further demonstrated that he is incapable of managing a large world during an AWTrivia game yesterday evening (Thursday, November . While playing (and winning, I might add), he said:
Strike Rapier: anyone have a shotgun? or a tow missile... I want to fire one at Brants house
Such comments are not fitting of a representative of a community as large and prestigious as AWTeen. Certainly, Matthew and DaBean haven't made any personal attacks on any of their constituents, and none of AWTeen's previous Caretakers publicly disparaged other citizens by suggesting their house be destroyed. Actually, there was a school board election in my township in 1999 where the supervisor of the board was up for reelection. He had been a spectacular contributor to the district's continued success - but he lost the election because he said that a student should have been "taken out into the parking lot and shot."

Furthermore, Strike Rapier has previously stated that he does not see the need for all information to be made public in AWTeen. One could easily imagine a situation where a "private" "Core" meeting is being held and Strike uses bots to eject people who stop by, or to randomly teleport people halfway across the world. Without knowing what's going on in these meetings, people won't be free to criticize them. It is clear that AWTeen needs to place openness and dialog as one of its utmost priorities during this election cycle, and Strike has clearly demonstrated that he is not very interested in either. He changes the topic every time a meaningful issue comes up, and is out of touch with what the world needs to bring itself back from the brink of irrelevance.

Matthew and DaBean are both far better candidates than the "Crusher." Get out and vote to lend them your support!

Posted by Brant at 13:02

Wednesday, November 7. 2007

DaBean/FlyYukon: The Ron Paul of Activeworlds

DaBean/FlyYukon, while currently in third place out of the three candidates for AWTeen Governor, could draw a significant number of votes in this election. DaBean, unlike the other candidates, hasn't posted a detailed platform containing numerous paragraphs of text. Instead, he and Kapara have simply stated they would ask for community suggestions and implement whatever the community wishes to get done. While community input is a great idea, his lack of specificity and weak assertion of leadership could also be seen as a sign of weakness by the voting public.

First, DaBean's greatest strength is perhaps his recognition that the Peacekeepers are a worthwhile resource and that their help would benefit AWTeen. The Peacekepers have existed for over ten years and have developed a well-tested training system that hasn't resulted in any major incidents for a long time. Whereas Strike Rapier and Matthew propose to implement their own system of dispute resolution as soon as possible after election, DaBean proposes to leverage the PK's to provide training, and that's a step in the right direction. Strike Rapier and Matthew, on the other hand, fail to see the PK's as a resource, instead believing they are a hindrance to the world's development.

DaBean has also stated his policy towards openness and transparency. I don't believe it offers any advantage over Matthew's. Whereas I support the confidentiality of information about pending events or building projects where the goal is to surprise the public, I disapprove of withholding any other type of data, even ejection logs. DaBean opposes the publication of world ejection logs.

Fortunately, however, my arguments on public accountability and ejection logs may be moot. Recently, Flagg stated that all ejections must be submitted to Activeworlds, Inc.. Whether Flagg would release the information to everyone else is less clear, but the idea that someone is watching over ejections to make sure they are performed responsibly is a comforting one.

The biggest concern with DaBean's campaign, however, is the idea of "community involvement." At first, "community involvement" sounds like a great idea. After all, who wants a world run by dictators and bureaucrats? We've already had a world like that and don't need one like that again. However, the possibility exists for the world to move too far in the opposite direction, that is, towards anarchy. There will need to be some points where DaBean steps in and takes control.

Don't forget, however, that DaBean brings to the table valuable experience as one of the Caretakers of AWNewbie, a post in which he has done an excellent job. AWNewbie is a welcoming world that has become a significantly positive influence on Activeworlds. He certainly hasn't demonstrated weak leadership in that world, and DaBean makes up for many of his shortcomings in that he has a no-nonsense attitude towards world management. He doesn't want to organize any committees or have votes among committee leaders. Instead, he wants to empower users to manage their own affairs and work as a passive leader - the Ron Paul of Activeworlds.

Indeed, DaBean and Paul have many commonalities. Both are dark horses who present significantly different ideas than the leading candidates. Both want to limit the size of the government and let people live their lives, or in DaBean's case, to let people do what they want in AW without Governor interference. They both want to divide power amongst smaller entities (in Paul's case, the states, and in DaBean's case, the leaders). They are both fed up with the current system and push dramatic changes. And they both have the potential to become strong contenders for the position for which they are running, if they can convince people of the need for change.

In conclusion, DaBean has a lot of experience, but may have difficulty determining where to draw the line with his "community leadership" approach. If he can overcome this limitation, he may find himself moving up in the straw polls as the election draws to a close.

Posted by Brant in Campaigns at 12:53

Monday, November 5. 2007

The age of AWTeen's Caretakers

Eric (XelNaga) recently made a post in the Activeworlds forums regarding the age of AWTeen election candidates. The topic has stirred up quite a bit of controversy in recent days. Some believe that the world should be For Teens, by Teens, while others believe that older people will have more experience and be more suited to the job.

I subscribe to neither. Nobody should care how old someone is if the person does a good job.

To illustrate, imagine that someone is chosen for AWTeen Governor and has been in the position for six months. She has done an excellent job, earning the respect and admiration of everyone who visits the world. World visitors double under her Governorship, and the world sees events the like of which Activeworlds has never seen before. AWTeen's petty bickering and squabbling dies away, forgotten in the sands of time.

Then someone reveals that the Governor is actually 30 years old. She had never disclosed her age before.

Ask yourself truthfully if you would change your vote in the next election simply because you found out her age. Here's someone who has turned around a struggling community, and you say you're going to vote her out because she's older than 19? Come on.

It would be far better if, in this election cycle, people didn't even ask what age anyone is. A forum post was made last week criticizing Strike Rapier for being too old, and Matthew for being too young, all in the same topic!

I've seen people in the non-virtual world who are excellent leaders and are young, and I've seen people who are poor leaders and are old. Making a blanket statement such as "everyone 13 or under is too immature to run a world" ignores strengths such as the 13-year-old's energy and new ideas. Likewise, stating that someone over 20 is "out-of-touch" ignores that the person may have been privileged to be a supervisor in a paying job or have college education, which certainly must provide some benefit to leadership capabilities in Activeworlds.

I think what many people forget, especially on the older rather than younger, side, is that old people were once young people too. Our society seems to look at elderly people as, well, "non-people," as if they are from a different race, and that they are "out of touch" with the "real world." But if you talk to an elderly person and ask him or her about his or her youth, you'll hear all the same crazy stories as you might hear about today's young people. And while Citizens in their twenties are hardly "elderly" by any means, some of AWTeen's visitors still hold onto this notion that these older AW visitors are "out of touch."

In schools, the older students generally head organizations that are staffed by younger people, serving as mentors to them. In the entertainment industry, it's common for the star to be older than the intended audience. Take Hanna Montana, for instance, with tickets to concerts selling for up to $5000/seat nowadays. I don't know anyone who's 15 who watches the show, but Destiny Cyrus (who plays the lead) is that age.

AWTeen is a world that has long ceased to be for teenagers. It wasn't a world for teenagers as far back as five years ago, and it certainly isn't one now. It's time for the world's leadership to acknowledge that truth. The next leader should work on creating a world that appeals to both teenagers and adults, and the community should support this goal by ignoring age when selecting that leader.

Posted by Brant in Commentary at 10:52

Saturday, November 3. 2007

Strike Rapier: We need more information

Strike Rapier posted his "manifesto" before all of the other candidates in the AWTeen election, way back on October 21. Currently leading the polls, Strike seemed all but guaranteed a win in the election. However, with the recent announcement that GC had been eliminated from the race, Matthew appears to be gaining votes from GC and his supporters, shortening the gap.

Strike Rapier starts off well in his platform by stating that he would appoint two "co-Caretakers," Silverliner and s e V e n s. Both are good candidates for the positions, should they accept. Interestingly, Strike has chosen to limit his administration to two co-Caretakers, whereas Matthew has insisted on three people for the job. Having fewer co-Caretakers may increase the workload on the main Caretaker somewhat, but enacting such a policy also reduces the security risk of the Caretaker privilege password being divulged.

In my last post about Matthew, I didn't cover the issue of security at all, so I will comment on it here. Ever since Activeworlds 3.1 was released (or was it 3.2?), the Caretaker has had the right to issue a single command to wipe out all the property in the world. Whereas before that release the Caretaker had little more power than anyone else except the ability to set world rights and change the welcome message, now the Caretaker can destroy the entire world if (s)he so chooses.

Thus, Strike's policy of limiting access to the privilege password is a step in the right direction, although it does not go far enough. Ideally, he would limit use of the password to one co-Caretaker instead of two. Having one person with the password provides enough coverage for when Strike is offline, which in reality is almost never anyway.

That line of reasoning brings me to perhaps Strike's greatest strength - how often he is online. Strike Rapier said himself that he has a considerable amount of cash invested in Activeworlds in general, and thus has a financial incentive to see the technology succeed. With AWTeen one of the flagship worlds in the AW universe, Strike actually stands to make money from his tenure as Governor, albeit indirectly - because the more people that use AW, the more are likely to purchase his bots and use his services. He will be extremely motivated to improve AWTeen to its best possible state just for this reason.

On the other hand, the potential for raising money could also lead to a loss of focus. Strike could become distracted from AWTeen by development of his Eclipse Evolution bot or a number of other projects. He has said publicly that he sees himself as "a mentor to those below [him]." Strike plans to take a more inactive role in the governorship by letting his committee leaders run the world and by resolving disputes that rise up to his level. While not necessarily a bad approach, Strike needs to watch out that his time isn't taken up by other tasks because the world seems to be running "just fine." Tony M continued development of his bots while Caretaker of AWTeen, and we know how his online time was limited as well.

Also, Strike makes no mention of his position towards transparency. While some leaders believe that some discussions should remain confidential, others go to the extreme and reveal only what is necessary. Since Strike will be implementing a committee system, I am curious to find out exactly how the decisions reached in the committee meetings will be distributed to the public. The public has a perception that Strike is not open enough and continually manipulates events behind the scenes. Hopefully, Strike will respond to this post with a comment about his stance on openness and transparency.

Finally, Strike proposes to set up "city-zoned" regions in Eclipse Evolution. From what he has disclosed, the idea sounds impressive. However, Strike has not stated exactly who would have permission to define zones, and who would handle the numerous requests to do so. One could imagine that Strike will quickly become overwhelmed when everyone wants his or her build "city-zoned" if he himself implements the zoning. If he plans to allow anyone to create a zone, people could take advantage of that permission and cause vandalism. Either way, this proposal is a problem.

Overall, it seems that Strike Rapier simply needs to provide more information about many of his proposals. What he has stated is not sufficient for a user to make an informed judgment about whether or not to vote for him. Let's wait until Strike fleshes out some of his proposals more fully before making a call on whether or not he would make a good Caretaker.

Posted by Brant in Campaigns at 12:27

Thursday, November 1. 2007

Matthew: Covers the basic issues, but what about leadership?

With the deadline for candidate registration having passed, today I'll start by writing one of a series of articles reviewing each of the candidates' platforms. I've chosen Matthew first because he recently entered the race to replace Jaguar Hahn, who effectively had been running a campaign in absentia.

It is a good move that Matthew became the head of his own campaign, because his commitment to Jaguar Hahn's campaign shows that he definitely has the motivation to succeed at the AWTeen Governor position, and that motivation is sorely needed. However, his stances on several key issues leave one wondering whether he would be able to maintain strong leadership throughout his tenure as Governor.

One interesting stance that Matthew takes is that he would establish a committee system. While I have, in the past, proposed that committees are inefficient, they are not an absolutely ineffective method in which to manage a world. However, having committee leaders become members of a Core is a system that has been rehashed about six times over the past seven or so years. Each time, one of the Caretakers has tried to get it right, and each time the Caretaker has failed.

The reason the Caretaker has failed is simple - the Caretaker is ultimately responsible for what happens in the world. When the time comes for the Caretaker to overrule the committees' decisions, the committee leaders become angry and chaos ensues. One could argue that the Governor faces an even greater challenge in this area now - because while Flagg might have been willing to give the Caretakers a second chance before, the voting public will not be so forgiving. If the Governor fails to get accomplished what needs to get accomplished, AWTeen's citizens will have no objection to canning him in February, and this Core system that Matthew proposes is not going to help him out come reelection time.

It is easy to imagine a case here where Matthew wants to propose a new and innovative idea for the world but is opposed by his committee leaders. His platform does state that he is allowed to veto decisions, but it does not provide him the power to unilaterally enact decisions. Matthew will find himself in a bind - the public will be clamoring for whatever change he has proposed, but the committee leaders will stand firm, perhaps even because they themselves would lose their positions as a result of the change. There would be a "constitutional battle," although the only constitution in dispute here would be the one Matthew imposed upon himself.

Moving on to the other issues of Matthew's platform, his stance on harassment is strong. Matthew claims he will eject those committing personal attacks for one day on the first offense. However, some have questioned whether he would actually enforce such an edict, as in reality it is difficult to determine when to draw the line on questionable offenders who continually nag but don't quite cross the line. On this issue, I say that only time will show whether Matthew, if elected, would uphold this stance or whether he would cave in to pressure.

Finally, while Matthew states that he wants to bring AWTeen together to host a major event, he only lays out in his platform that "C P will return as major events manager, and will be expected to hire a team that will run at least one major event per every three months." C P is a good man for the job - but Matthew himself would be an even better one. For a candidate who has championed the cause of making a major event a priority of his administration, Matthew should not be outsourcing his most important goal. C P would be an excellent addition to any committee and should be offered a differentposition, but Matthew's reelection will largely depend on whether the event succeeds or fails, and as leader I would want to have full control of the planning process for my key campaign issue.

In summary, Matthew's platform has all the basics together, but falls short in a few key areas. Matthew's key shortcoming that shows in all three areas is that he is not taking, or may not take, ultimate control of his Governorship. It is great to work with the community and give everyone a say, but in the end, he will be the boss, and he will be the one running for reelection.

Posted by Brant in Campaigns at 14:59