Front Desk Responsibilities

Compiled by Matthew Pompeo, Inventory Officer, 2014-2016

Introduction

As a member of the inventory subcommittee, you may have found yourself responsible for maintaining the inventory of “Check-outable Items” behind the front desk. The intention of this document is to summarize important responsibilities and to communicate best practices to expedite their fulfillment. You are responsible for all check-outable items, except vacuums and garden items, which typically fall under the jurisdiction of other inventory officers. If you happen to be responsible for these items as well, see the relevant documents in the Wiki.

Responsibilities

1. **Reporting Lost and/or Damaged Items:** If a resident reports an item as lost or damaged, the front desk staff will input this information into the database and the inventory subcommittee will automatically receive an e-mail. The status of the lost/damaged item will be visible to all residents on the Ashdown website (http://ashdown.mit.edu/frontdesk.php). Once an item has been reported as lost/damaged, it is your responsibility to investigate the damage and/or replace the item. If the damage is easily repairable, then by all means proceed to do so. For example, sometimes the metal rods in the clothes drying racks will come undone and need to be screwed back into the frame. If you cannot repair the item, then consider replacing it.

2. **Replacing Lost or Damaged Items:** Using your Tax-Exempt Amazon account (see the document in the Wiki entitled “Reimbursement for Amazon Purchases”), purchase the new item and input the cost into the Inventory Budget on Google Sheets (important!). When it arrives, unpack it, hand it to the front desk worker, and make sure they understand that it will replace item XX that is currently marked as “Lost” or “Missing.” Please strive to complete this process in a timely manner, especially for frequently used items like the clothes drying racks, mop, carts, etc.

   Certain items/services may not be available from Amazon, for example I had to get the FD tennis racquets re-strung at a City Sports in Boston. In these cases, keep original receipts and do not pay tax. For detailed instructions, see: http://ashdown.mit.edu/officers-reimbursement.php.

3. **Purchasing new movies, board games, video games, tools, and household appliances:**
a. **From the Inventory Purchases Solicitations List:** There is a link on the Ashdown website ("Inventory Suggestions") that allow residents and other officers to suggest items for the front desk. When they submit this form, the inventory subcommittee, the Operations Chair, and AHEC will receive an e-mail. Once a month, AHEC will review these suggestions and you will be prompted by the relevant authority to purchase items that have been approved. **UNTIL YOU ARE CONTACTED BY AHEC AND/OR THE OPERATIONS CHAIR, DO NOT ORDER ANYTHING FROM THIS LIST.**

b. **From direct communication with a resident:** From time to time, residents will e-mail ashdown-inventory with requests for movies, games, etc. Typically, for inexpensive items like these, you have the authority to purchase the item without first seeking approval from AHEC or the Operations Chair. However, you ought to be mindful of our budget constraints. For example, if a vacuum has just been reported as damaged and there are $50 remaining in the budget, defer to the officer in charge of vacuums before purchasing any non-essential items.

c. **From your own judgement:** If you find yourself thinking, “Gosh, it would be really awesome if we had this item available for check-out,” please do residents a favour and purchase the item! If it’s inexpensive, no permissions needed, being mindful of budget restraints as above. If the item is moderately expensive, please do discuss with your colleagues in the subcommittee and the Operations chair for input before purchasing. If the item is very expensive, there are two options:

   i. **Propose the purchase to the Operations Chair and/or the AHEC officer responsible for Operations.** They will discuss and get back to you. If it’s worth it, the possibility exists that the purchase will be made by AHEC directly via the Will Fund or the Fun Fund. Purchases made with these funds do not deplete the inventory budget.

   ii. **During the next budget request cycle, propose the item as an expense for the subcommittee.** If your new budget has been appropriately enlarged, then proceed with the purchase. If not, see i. above.

4. **Yearly front desk cleanout:** Once per calendar year, AHEC will request that the subcommittee clean and catalogue items behind the front desk. Since this is a major responsibility, it will be fulfilled collectively with all members of the subcommittee. Your task: export the database to an excel file (http://ashdown.mit.edu/frontdesk.php -> Ctrl-C followed by Ctrl-V into an excel sheet; since you’re a future reader, you may have some fancier tools at your disposal to do this. Two new columns: Status and Location. Fill in this info for all items then submit to AHEC. If items are not found, list as “missing” and let the front desk staff know. Done.
5. **Managing Budget Requests for the Subcommittee:** At the beginning of each term, AHEC will request that each subcommittee submit a projected budget for expenses to be incurred during the upcoming term. While this is not officially your responsibility, I have found this to be the optimal arrangement since you will be making purchases more often than your colleagues and hence will be more conscious of our financial needs.

Regardless of how AHEC instructs you to submit the budget request, I always create a tab in our budget Sheet entitled “Term XX Budget Request.” Here, I will make an itemized list of projected expenses for each segment of the subcommittee inferred by previous spending patterns from recent terms. Typically, expenses are higher in the Fall and Spring terms since the house is more full and there tend to be more events during these terms. Once you have completed this draft, send an e-mail to the subcommittee requesting that everyone review the projected expenses *related to their responsibilities*. When your colleagues approve, submit to AHEC. Try not to be too heart-broken when you get less than requested.

Link to the budget sheet (all previous budget requests are still there, but have been hidden to reduce clutter): https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KbsC6fOqGOTm05Fo1JrGbPcrrlJuRGXk9M75RyFMfPs/edit?usp=sharing.

**Tips and Tricks**

1. **If you end up taking charge of the budget, which I recommend you do,** remind your colleagues to input their expenses into the budget sheet as often as needed. This will make your life much easier at the end of the term, especially if your treasurer needs you to submit this information to him/her.

2. **Don’t be afraid to say “no” to purchase requests.** From time to time, a resident will request an item that, while potentially useful to them personally, would not be used by other residents. Politely thank them for their suggestion and decline to purchase providing your rationale. Often, it’s worth having a discussion with your colleagues to make sure you’re not being unreasonable.

A useful example was a recent resident request for a hair-dryer. We were not convinced such an item would (a) be used frequently enough; or (b) last long enough to warrant such a purchase. Hence we declined to make the purchase until other residents expressed a desire for a community hair-dryer. Now that residents can request items on the website, you won’t have to personally deliberate silly requests like this very often. That’s what AHEC is for 😊.