



Spongebob: Bikini Bottom's

Troubles

Crisis Committee

CD: Mac Fabens

Letter from CD

Hello! My name is Mac and I'm a Junior majoring in International Studies and Economics. I started Model UN in my first year of college and have gotten increasingly more involved with the team here, especially by CDing for our conferences. I hosted the Homer Simpson committee last ENMUNC and am excited to be leading another committee based on a cartoon, I promise they're always the most fun. In this committee, my hope is that everyone will take on the weekend with a healthy mix of silly and serious. We are in the world of Spongebob, so pretty much anything is possible, but we're also thinking about issues real and dangerous enough to us that they should be thought of as real issues to solve. I encourage everyone to be very creative in their crisis notes and directives: if there is good justification for an action and the note asking for it is thoughtfully written, it will probably be granted. Try thinking outside of the box to solve the problems Bikini Bottom is facing!

I hope you all enjoy living in Bikini Bottom and are excited for a fun weekend. Good luck and I'll see you all at ENMUNC V!

Sensitivity Statement

The content of the works guiding *Spongebob* may present delegates with sensitive topics, given the context of ocean pollution, global warming, and epidemics. Any delegate who displays blatant disrespectful or harmful behavior, or who continues to make other delegates uncomfortable after receiving a warning from the CD, chair, or a staffer, will face appropriate consequences as outlined by the ENMUNC V Conduct Code. In the *Spongebob* world in which this committee is set, it might be in some character's nature to make harmful statements or represent harmful stereotypes, but you will not be penalized from deviating from your position to maintain respect.

Furthermore, from a general ENMUNC V standpoint, we expect all delegates to conduct themselves in a professional manner and to be respectful to staff and other delegates. There will be a zero tolerance policy for any discrimination based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, religion, or political beliefs. Should you encounter any discrimination please contact your chair, CD, or a member of the secretariat to address and handle the situation. Furthermore, pre-writing, unauthorized use of technology, or using AI software is strictly prohibited.

Your crisis director and chair want to first and foremost prioritize your well-being. If at any point the contents of the committee or the actions of another delegate make you uncomfortable, you are encouraged to send a note to the dais and step out of the room as needed. This extends to any needs you might have over the course of the committee; we will never penalize you for eating a snack, drinking water, or taking a quick restroom break. We are here to support you, and we hope that you will grant us the same respect we grant you.



Introduction to Committee

In this committee, delegates will play characters in the popular show Spongebob. Most characters will be accurate to the show, but some will necessarily be made up or inspired by the show so that everyone can have a character to play. While reading the background guide, please keep in mind that not everything will be fully accurate to the show. Where it's possible to reference Spongebob or keep details exactly how they are in the show, I will do so. However, much of the background guide will deviate from actual happenings and instead create a scenario that could happen in the Spongebob universe. The goal of this guide, and committee, is not to simulate Spongebob. Rather, we're using Spongebob as a stage to explore the problem of plastic pollution in the oceans.

This committee takes place in Bikini Bottom, the fictional setting of the Spongebob show. While Bikini Bottom is not a real place (to the best of our knowledge), it is located near the real life location of Bikini Atoll, a group of islands in the Marshall Islands.¹ The Marshall Islands are a group of small low-lying islands located in the middle of the Pacific between Hawaii and the Philippines, and are currently under threat of disappearing from climate change.² Our location makes climate change and warming seas particularly important to this committee.

The city of Bikini Bottom is an underwater city that is home to many forms of aquatic life, such as fish, sponges, starfish, crabs, and more. It is a city with a population between 500 and 2 million,³ with no exact estimate due to the lack of a census. Bikini Bottom has most of the infrastructure that a mid-size city above land would, such as hospitals, schools, automobiles, streets, law enforcement, and government. There is a royal family that rules over the entire ocean, but they rarely interfere with



¹ https://spongebob.fandom.com/wiki/Bikini_Atoll

² <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/06/opinions/sutter-two-degrees-marshall-islands/>

³ https://spongebob.fandom.com/wiki/Bikini_Bottom

Bikini Bottom in impactful or assertive ways.⁴ The real power comes from the governing town board, which is the committee. The government is split into two parts: the judiciary (the dais), and the town board, which has no leader but is responsible for lawmaking, executive decrees, and so on. Town board members are not elected, they are simply appointed-however, citizens of Bikini Bottom can vote to remove any town board member by a 60% popular vote. Effectively, the town board has complete control over Bikini Bottom.



One important power the town board has that citizens do not know about is the ability to contact the non-sea world. The town board can send messages to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Bikini Bottom is a permanent observer state in the UN, though they have yet to actually send an observer to any

⁴ https://spongebob.fandom.com/wiki/King_Neptune

General Assemblies or meetings. Still, the resource of one human contact with a significant reputation might be useful for the town board to wield collectively. Individually, characters may choose to write to above-sea humans if they have good justifications or strategies for doing so. To do either of these things, delegates should specify at the top of their note or directive by printing "intended for the outside world." Because the citizens don't know about this power, the town council should use it wisely to avoid making deals above the citizens' heads, or without their knowledge.

A final note is that citizens of Bikini Bottom don't have the internet, or iPhones. Members of the board have this technology strictly to contact the outside world, but should delegates want to reach any members of the town they must do it in person, using rallies, letters, posters, and non-technological devices.

Background

Recently, plastic litter has been strewn about Bikini Bottom. Everywhere residents look they see another plastic bag, container, or fork slowly floating down from the surface to the bottom of the ocean, getting in everyone's way, making the town look messy, and occasionally trapping people with plastic bags on their heads. This plastic pollution has also been accompanied by a spike in hospitalizations from

across town, with residents feeling fatigued and nauseous, many so intensely that they can't continue life as normal. Nobody has proven plastic to be the cause of this mystery sickness, but it only appeared in town after the plastic started floating down.

So far, most residents have been confused by the plastic and sickness, and are continuing life as normal while being slightly annoyed at the plastic's presence. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of the town is vocally anti-plastic,



and some local volunteers are organizing plastic-collection drives, where they walk around collecting the plastic and then put it into a large cage. These cages full of plastic are then placed in public places with the goal of shaming the plastic, in hopes that it will prevent future plastic from falling on the town. These efforts are a temporary fix, and most of the residents involved in plastic collection drives are calling on the town board to take extreme action to prevent the plastic from falling.

Another ~15% of residents have begun making use out of the plastic. They are collecting bags and using them to catch jellyfish, utilizing plastic forks to eat, and even attempting to make bicycles out of recycled plastics. This has given way to a large informal market of residents who are taking the plastic and turning it into useful items, which are often sold to other residents for reasonable prices. This small group is also becoming increasingly vocal about the plastics, though they are very pro-plastic and argue that it is being judged too harshly. Some are even rumored to have started "plastic farms," where they plant plastic in the ground and cultivate it similar to other crops. It has yet to be seen if this can be replicated, but the few pioneer plastic farmers have shown that plastic can indeed grow other plastic.



Source of the Plastic

Aside from the plastic farmers that are now trying to cultivate the plastic, it's well known that the source of the plastic is from humans above the sea. Much of the plastic comes in "plastawaves," randomly occurring events where a huge cloud of plastic floating on the surface of the ocean will block the sun as it passes over Bikini Bottom, and then a few pieces will float down to the bottom of the ocean and pollute the town. It is thought that these big clumps of plastic form overtime due to humans' negligence in handling their waste, and then drift around the sea aimlessly. Some Bikini Bottom residents are beginning to believe that a god controls the plastawaves, swearing they've seen eyes and coordinated movements in the sky when the waves are present. Most write that off as a silly conspiracy, though. In line with real life, the three biggest brands whose plastic floats down to Bikini Bottom are Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and Nestle.⁵

Other Events

Residents of Bikini Bottom

are also beginning to feel the

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https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uq__c=&uq__a=&ved=0AOvVaw016yadLwSHUhl41MGpf2P1



effects of climate change, principally due to the gradual warming of the oceans.

Warmer waters are causing quite the chaos for Bikini Bottom—some residents love it, and some are in grave danger because of it. Many of the species living in Bikini Bottom can't handle warmer temperatures and have been physically really uncomfortable because of them, while others thrive in warmer waters and are happy it's finally warming up. It will take 40 more years of warming at this rate for anyone to die because of warmer temperatures, but some residents are concerned and calling on city leaders to cool the water. There's also a threat that the plastic will mix with warm water and microplastics will leech into the water, so that every time residents breathe they are breathing microplastics. This hasn't been substantiated yet, but is a possible reason for the sickness going around.

A second threat facing the town is that of human scuba divers. Bikini Bottom is quite an interesting place for human observers, who have started showing up increasingly often to scuba dive and swim around Bikini Bottom. There are multiple aspects to this problem. For one, the humans are humongous and really frightening for the residents of Bikini Bottom, who usually hide inside for the duration of the visits. Second, they tend to bring plastic when they visit: one diving company deposits 3 plastic bottles on the outskirts of town per visit. Thirdly, residents are

confused as to what the scuba divers are even there for. A separate diving company seems to have a mission to save turtles and repeatedly drops turtles off at Bikini Bottom, but the turtles are left without a home and usually struggle to get on their feet. Residents would ideally like their town left alone by humans, but there's no clear way to make that happen. One idea is a huge bubble around town, but critics point out that humans could just poke the bubble to find Bikini Bottom again.



State of Committee

Currently, the town board is being tasked with fixing the only significant challenges Bikini Bottom has seen in the past century. Residents are quickly being divided-plastic or no plastic? Warm or cool water? The population of a normally peaceful town is being asked to pick sides on how they manage their local environment, having very real effects on some residents' health but not on others'. Besides having to come up with a solution to environmental crises, the board also needs to warn off potential human invaders that are coming to town for sightseeing. The town board has sweeping power over Bikini bottom, but needs to find a way to tackle these problems, some of which are larger than them.

Questions to Consider

1. How should Bikini Bottom handle the new plastic pollution problem? Should it be grown in farms or collected and put in cages?
2. How can the town board cool down the water? Is it even necessary?
3. Many of the problems the town faces are external-can Bikini Bottom continue its lonely life under the sea or should it engage diplomatically with above-ground countries?
4. What can be done about the sickness spreading around Bikini Bottom?

5. How might these problems threaten the future security of Bikini Bottom?
6. Does the plastic pose an existential threat to Bikini Bottom, or are other issues more important?
7. How can the town board keep the town unified with the increasing polarization caused by warming water?



Character Dossier

1. Spongebob Squarepants

Spongebob is a do-good sponge who lives in Bikini Bottom and is the main character of a human cartoon adaptation of his life called "Spongebob Squarepants." Many humans who keep up with his show are big fans of his personality, but don't know that he's real. Spongebob hasn't capitalized on his fame and keeps to life within

Bikini Bottom, though he would likely be thrilled to find out he has a huge human fanbase.

2. Patrick Star

Patrick Star lives under a rock and tends not to preoccupy himself with the scene in the town. However, lately he has been very fascinated by plastic and started collecting it. Humans often stop by his house and look at it very intently when they are touring Bikini Bottom, often picking it up and placing it back down. He's slightly annoyed by it, but doesn't really seem to mind that much.

3. Gary the Snail

Gary lives with Spongebob and is usually thought to just be a pet, but actually has a huge sophisticated organized crime syndicate operating in Bikini Bottom. Gary is the boss of the group, which often steals food from restaurants in huge televised heists that consistently outsmart the police and net huge rewards. Most of the town doesn't know about Gary's double life and his crimes are nonviolent, but his power over the group is unquestioned.

4. Squidward Tentacles

Squidward is an octopus and friend of Spongebob and Patrick. He dislikes working at Mr. Krabs' restaurant and has recently started farming plastic, believing it is the future of Bikini Bottom and looking to capitalize on its existence. He doesn't

know it, but Squidward is the #1 plastic grower in Bikini Bottom in terms of volume, currently growing plenty of plastic bottles, bags, and utensils for later use.

5. Eugene Krabs

Mr. Krabs is the owner and operator of Krusty the Krab, a popular fast-food restaurant in Bikini Bottom. He's seen less customers lately because of the mystery sickness, and some are even blaming his food for the symptoms. Despite this brief hiccup, it's still acknowledged that he has a large fanbase of customers who will continue coming to his restaurant and eating his food without questions. He is definitely the authority on food in Bikini Bottom.

6. Sheldon Plankton

Sheldon Plankton is the owner of a rival restaurant to Mr. Krabs' called the chum bucket. Nobody is ever seen in the chum bucket, but the technology inside is extremely sophisticated and even leads some to wonder whether Sheldon has higher-tech machinery than he lets on. Plankton is one of few species' who will thrive in warmer water.

7. Karol Plankton

Karol Plankton is actually a machine, with unparalleled access to human technology and internet. Karol spends lots of time browsing the internet and keeping up to date with the latest human obsessions online, but mostly keeps to herself and

doesn't really share what she finds with others. Still, she is well equipped to get in touch with the human population.

8. Sandy Cheeks

Sandy is known around town as "the inventor" because she really has the mind of an engineer. Anything Sandy sees, she can make something out of, including plastic. Sandy has been making plenty of new inventions with plastic as of late, and is sometimes recruited to make specialty items for the sake of the town, such as a statue in the town square or replacement parts for broken boats.

9. Mrs. Puff

Mrs. Puff is a pufferfish and local boat school instructor. She enjoys the thrill of life and usually keeps herself busy driving boats fast for fun, but lately she's become preoccupied with the warming climate and is turning into an advocate of keeping the water cool. She has no plan to do this yet, but is the leader of the biggest advocacy group that's pro-cool water.

10. Pearl Krabs

Pearl Krabs is a whale spearheading the plastic collection campaign, owning 14 cages of plastic herself (3x more than the next biggest owner). Pearl has been an unspoken critic of plastic so far and is the leader of the Plastic Enforcement

Agency, a volunteer group of 300 residents that collects plastic to imprison in their free time.

11. Mermaid Man

Mermaid Man is a local superhero known for walking around singing, and his voice is mesmerizing enough to make a career out of it. He has frequent concerts in the town square and critics say that many are often hypnotized by his voice, though he has so far used it to spread peace, love, and positivity.

12. Barnacle Boy

Barnacle Boy is another local superhero who's more famous for huge stunts. Lately, he's declared plastawaves his mortal enemy and often swims to the surface (a feat few others can accomplish) to pretend fight the plastawaves. He has yet to defeat them, but is continuing his crusade and actually growing very popular amongst the anti-plastic crowd for his bravery, even soliciting donations from them for his help fighting the waves.

13. Perch Perkins

Perch Perkins is best known as Bikini Bottoms' resident news anchor, and most residents trust his familiar face as a news source. He recently had his weekly airtime hours slightly reduced due to his making a statement that "warmer water would actually be like, way more, like, yknow, like, comfortable, right guys?" but the

comment actually granted him some more personal popularity, even whilst his hours have been slightly cut.

14. Larry the Lobster

Larry the Lobster is Bikini Bottoms' strongest resident, and has gained a following mainly by showing off his strength and sharing tips for getting strong with others. He often holds rallies where he picks up large items to impress the crowd, and has recently become a huge advocate of a natural diet. One could assume that this makes him unfriendly to the plastic floating around, but he has made no statement on that yet. By crediting his strength to natural foods and medicines, he has certainly alarmed some of the doctors of Bikini Bottom.

15. Old Man Jenkins

Old Man Jenkins is a confusing character, but one that doesn't let anyone else define him. He is the best voice for elderly fish in the town, being elected as their representative and generally acknowledged as wielding their collective vote. Old Man Jenkins has recently opened a retirement home plastic-farm, allowing the residents of his retirement home to enjoy farming once again. Nobody knows what he uses the plastic for, but it is a very popular activity at the home and the plastic it produces is continuously disappearing.

16. Mama Bass

Mama Bass is the mother of 23 young bass and a frequent advocate for investing in objects that will benefit young children of Bikini Bottom, such as healthy food, parks, and schools. But beyond this, she also runs a large self-help publishing company with a big following amongst Bikini Bottom residents. Books range many topics and are often successful, hitting top-seller lists easily and being well-received.

17. Lady Upturn

Lady Upturn is Bikini Bottoms' closest thing to a capitalist magnate, owning the Upturn's department store and running it ruthlessly. She has reaped high profits from this department store and is the main supplier for most consumer goods, but has recently grown worried about the movement to recycle plastic due to its potential to hurt her business. Still, she controls most of what Bikini Bottom has access to.

18. Gill Bass

Gill is a builder known for having constructed over 30% of Bikini Bottom, and runs a conservative contracting company that prioritizes local building techniques such as pineapples. He often wins prestigious contracts from the town to build infrastructure and public spaces, and is quite popular and successful in his endeavors.

19. Taco Cat

Taco Cat is the owner and chef of the Kibble Club, Bikini Bottom's only Michelin-rated restaurant. Taco Cat is known for making delicious widely-appealable meals, but has recently seen business drop due to the unknown sickness. Regardless, the Kibble Club is well known for catering to Bikini Bottom's better-off population.

20. Eddie the Eel

Eddie is Bikini Bottom's #1 hit artist, often hosting huge concerts and heard playing on the radio. Eddie was recently involved in some controversy due to his song about Plastawaves, called "Recycle Meeeee." It's not clear why people are mad because he didn't actually say his views on plastic during the song, but it hasn't put too big a dent in his monthly listeners on Seaweed Music.

Works Cited

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*Because this committee is fictional and based off of Spongebob, delegates can't do much helpful research to prepare. If you are unfamiliar with Spongebob, you can look at the Fandom Wiki or watch the show. I suggest that more work goes into understanding the challenges I've created for Bikini Bottom and brainstorming crisis arcs, rather than researching Spongebob.