

FIC Bd/Org Meeting Minutes

Liberty Village Cohousing

Frederick, MD

Nov. 6-8, 2015

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Oversight Pre-meeting

Time-sheets for Staff: Christopher is already doing it. Sky is planning on it. Roshana, McC and Kim K are already doing this. Kimi, Chris and Yulia are not. We don't want to upset existing staff. Have it as an expectation going forward.

Laird's role going forward: Agreed to Award Committee. Board? Events? Development?

Arthur Morgan Community Solutions: Laird is now on the Board. They ran down their assets. Board rubber stamped what Faith and Pat were doing. Hired an ED, who started asking questions. Board stepped up, tension with Faith and Pat, who then stepped out. Some delicacy and hurt feelings. Board is now acting as a Board, but is behind the curve and running out of money. They've got a major donor, who is also donating to DR, and Laird is working on him.

Lost Valley contract for Spring mtgs: Want certificate of liability insurance. \$150 compensation for their organizer. Want a deposit of \$300. This is upping the costs; we're going to look at other options.

Balance sheet clean up: Laird, Christopher, and Sky will do

Fri Nov 6

Board/Staff Relationships/Communications:

Sky reviewed notes from May. Discussions involved hiring/firing, and that the board should approve the 4 top positions: ED, Business Manager, Cmag Editor, & Development Director.

Let's address Email Fatigue - we default to include more people, but board receives too much

Most staff concerns will come through Business Manager, before sharing with Executive Team.

Communications should go through ED before going to Oversight, before going to board.

We can update the job descriptions, or for now just have a policy document outlining this.

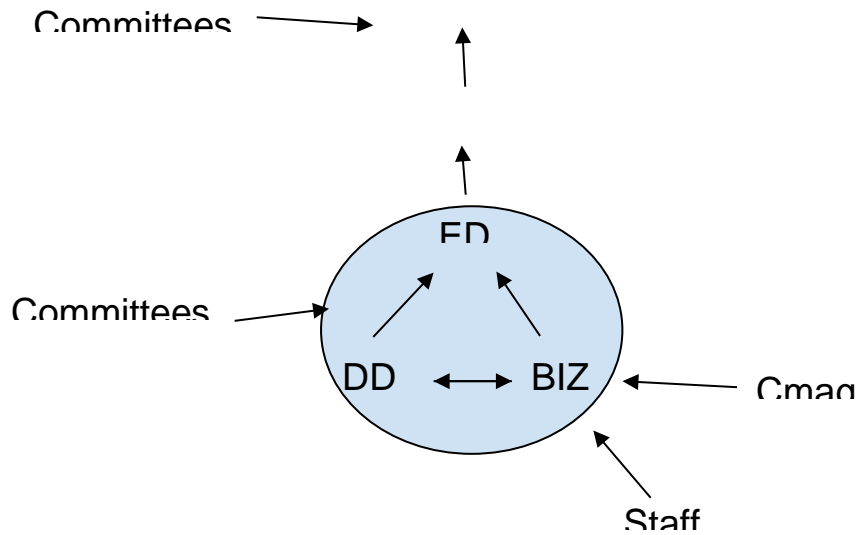
Personnel Committee: Board member and ED are standing members, pulling in other staff or Board as needed/appropriate (minor staff under other major staff), or potentially delegating a whole different group altogether. Overseeing process. Keepers of the Job Description and conducting evaluations. Harvey will continue for now but is interested in handing it off.

Continue with twice yearly reports going to Board. When we set up ad hoc committees be clear about who they're reporting to.

Use RSVP and FYI in subject lines

Base Camp
Slack

Sky will work this up into a comprehensive proposal to bring back.



Web ties with GEN:

This is like what we do with Coho US. GEN wants to draw data from us for their website. We need to synch fields. Doesn't seem like it would swamp our boat or any other downsides. We'd get some money to implement if the grant GEN put in comes through; will re-apply for the grant in Spring if they don't get it. Possibility of building in ongoing compensation for our web person labor. Christopher is working on this on their end. Will happen eventually even if they don't get grant. We may need to standardize for all other organizations, which is probably doable but might be challenging.

Decision: Yes, move ahead.

Supporting Statement on the Rights of Nature:

Read by Laird from Alberto Ruiz. Using AVAAZ as a platform.

<https://www.avaaz.org/en/>

Decision: FIC will sign it.

Presenting Kozeny Award to Alberto:

He can't come to the US. Send someone to Mexico next year? Send him the plaque and have someone else present it? We're interested in sending Sky for an event in April at his community but not sure we have money in the budget. We'll work on creative financing and see what happens.

Identity Statement

(1:30 - 3:00pm)

Facilitator: Harvey

Presenter: Sky

Minute Taker: Cynthia

Sky and Maikwe charged with writing new identity statement:

- Sent out the first round for feedback and got some responses
- Recently sent out the latest draft
- Question about how to proceed > reading out loud to the Board and collect feedback

Comments and Feedback about:

- "Communities of all kinds":
 - Some communities don't fit with our values
 - Perhaps changing to "communities that share the above values" or "cooperative communities"
- Geographical "focus at this time":
 - Too flighty (Laird), also want fluidity (Maikwe)
 - Add the word "primary" focus in U.S. and Canada
 - Concern about resources to work outside of North America
 - Perhaps we expand internationally in the future
 - (Aspire to do more internationally?)
 - Agreement = include "primary focus at this time"
- Objectives:
 - Great job!
 - Listed in loose order
 - Idea to use document for self-evaluation, tool to find strengths and weaknesses

- Can share amongst intentional communities info and resources, not just from outside
- Definitions:
 - Some grammatical changes
 - Should we be concerned about phrase “all kinds of communities”
 - Just delete “all kinds”
 - **Note: A big shift was created to say that we are celebrating other organizations that are working with broad community, FIC is focused on intentional community**
 - Not everyone agrees
 - Laird: What we are learning in communities can be exported to communities everywhere - that is our focus and our social leveler
 - Concern about “our focus is intentional community” (Laird)
 - Cynthia proposes “sharing the lessons of intentional community broadly”
 - Cynthia proposes “However, our primary focus is learning and sharing the lessons of intentional communities in order to create cooperative culture.”
 - Laird sees our value as a movement in learning and teaching the lessons that communities can teach, specially in the social dimension
 - Creates an important distinction and niche focus for our organization, so we can better collaborate with other organizations
 - Let’s clarify and measure the specific contributions of communities (maybe we are not ready to do this in the document)
 - Consider removing this entirely, redundant
 - Cynthia sees it as a powerful place to have such a sentence, creates a strong statement that defines our relationship to other organizations
 - Harvey: Let’s make a stronger statement about “We are committed to playing a role in its promotion.” Share our lessons here!
- Organizational Values:
 - Laird concern about “Justice” - too much judgmental and accountable connotations
 - Cynthia proposes the word “Equitable” - some favor, Maikwe doesn’t know
 - Maikwe speaks to the historical context of the word and its value as edgy and activism oriented, wants to attract minority groups by using their language, wants to create a container for all groups
 - Chris’s says that justice is “othering”
 - Chris proposes “diversity” - Sky doesn’t like it
 - Cynthia looked up the definitions of these words: equitable, justice, social justice and economic justice
 - Social justice? Could be favorable and all inclusive - agree to make the change! Yay!
- Social Ills
 - Some small changes but mostly agree
 - What do we mean by “right relationships”? - buddhist connotations, not “a right relationship” but “being in right relationship”

- “economic disenfranchisement” - change to inequity, oppression, exploitation
- Maikwe - not all communities address oppression
- Sky - we’re talking about our work, not all communities
- leave the economic disenfranchisement and add another bullet as above
- Audience:
 - Harvey promotes to change “seeking cooperative culture” to “living in cooperative culture”

Sat Nov 7

Coho US Intersections

Cross-Board members (they want a Development focus). Maybe have a liaison relationship between a Board member on each Board.

Aging in Community conference May 19

Cohousing Open House, Sat. April 30th. Possibility of expanding this to all communities. Maybe this year help them promote and then look at doing something bigger in 2017.

Marketing trades: Christopher is working with Alice

New Economy Coalition

Proposal to apply to join the coalition. It’s free, no requirements to engage. Vote in their Board elections. Access to their platform. Sky and Marty are happy to monitor information and look for opportunities.

Decision: Yes, we will apply to join.

School of Living

Interested in collaboration:

- SOL and the Twin Oaks Communities Conference
- Applied twice for USDA farmer training grant. Turned down but gotten positive feedback and ranked as high priority. Is there a way FIC could help strengthen the proposal? Permaculture and land-access training.
- Partnering on grants in general
- Partnering on education, workshops, with Goddard and Gaia Ed (who are already partners)
- Contributing articles, possibly sponsoring an issue of CMag
- Cross-linking Board members, communication liaisons, like with Coho US
- Legal structures. Being a resource.
- Youth initiatives and activities

Sky happy to work with them around the Com Conf. Talk about this separately.

We need a contact with SOL to direct inquiries about Land Trusts.

Land access. Can we support SOL in connecting young farmers to land? Possible grant proposals. Use our contacts to ICs that are doing serious farming where people can learn.

We can teach about how to integrate farming into a community economy.

Food justice. Food security. Food sheds. How ICs can support this stuff.
We can share written content that SOL produces.

Sky and Karen as the EDs will stay in touch.

Goddard and Gaia Ed

Goddard is non-campus, no grades, no tests. Independent study. Very conducive to students living and studying at ICs. Students who enroll at Goddard can get credits for Gaia Ed programs. Karen here to make personal connection with FIC in part as a new player with GENNA. Not sure how to partner but seems like there's potential.

FIC could cast a net to see what ICs would like to have students. What is that asking of the community? Work best with ICs that have existing programs for people there to learn, but could also be a basic resident type exchange with the student paying rent or however it works at that community.

Database/platform of communities that have conducive programs, or other resources. What communities do we have connections with that have things to offer that we can be directing people to? This could be about a lot of different things.

Events

Hosting
Sponsoring
Bookshelf
House parties

Youth Ecovillage Summit

Happened the last two years. Cynthia and Nick want to keep doing it. Maybe do it in conjunction with TO Com Conf. Could have it start before and go after. Could have a youth space at the conference.

Communify [Your Town]

One day unconference - open space gathering where participants generate the workshops/discussions. You can seed it with some big names and polished presenters. Did an event in North Carolina in conjunction with FIC mtgs. Did Community Gone Viral in SF with a foundation. Recently did Communify San Diego (got various communities involved; worked with MeetUp groups). 70 some people came. Replicable. Get people on the ground to do the leg work. Help with outreach and logistics. Local and regional focus, capacity building on those levels, easier stepping stone to the national level.

Webinars

Possible membership benefit plus fee/subscription. Could be veteran communitarians, or bring in big names, maybe a mix. Also work with a mix of more mainstream (landed) topics/perspectives and radical (emergent). A big focus of this is to get more people on our email list, expand social media reach.

Big inter-org event

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1no5xGoz8N7xd5yH0zJjbQi_LMlg3ONeaAG3f9CG0ieo/edit?usp=sharing

Something with a bunch of partners focused on a lot on collaboration between organizations and supporting organizations in their work

Intentional Community outreach with music and art

Something more like a festival, maybe day event.

Community Open House Day (weekend)

Maybe in conjunction with Earth Day. Have a webpage with info about all the different things happening in different cmties. Get a certain number of cmties on board before pitching other cmties. Make sure we have a certain number in a given region before we move forward. Support Coho in getting the word out about their event this year and work towards an expanded thing for 2017.

Tour de Communities, online video series.

1 hr video "tour", once per week. People sign up to go on the tour, contribute to ideas for questions. Two person team traveling around.

Social Media Director

Have a paid position for doing social media. Likes the name Director of Sharing, but not attached. The idea is to post things on our blog and then share through social media to drive traffic back to the website. There's so much stuff out there that we could be sharing with our audience that would be attractive and useful. Could be done in conjunction with the theme of CMag. Also, making eNews less commercial.

Director of Sharing as name? Concern from Tree about misusing the word sharing, that this is just output not mutual sharing. Sky concerned it isn't descriptive, and people mostly won't even see the job title. Social media maven? But it could be about sharing other people's content too, and could be soliciting content that we'd then share back out.

Blog posts

Facebook

Twitter

Other social media

Video updates

eNews

Start position at 20/mo, at \$10/hr, or \$2400/yr, which is currently built into the 2016 budget.

Sky thinks it could be great from a development perspective, to help promote different programs.

Question about value of contacts, how much depth or substance to the connections? Need to find ways to use metrics where we can.

Should we be using this for a Development Director instead? Should that be the priority? Ma'ikwe advocating for that. Marty points out this isn't enough for that position anyway. Sky planning on picking up a lot of development stuff and has this and a development assistant

(\$1000 in the budget) to help build up the development program. General support for this idea, just weighing priorities. Looking at this as a pathway towards a more robust development program. Also note that it'll be difficult to build up to fund a big position if we keep spending modest surplus on other stuff.

Decision: Yes, we are approving the creation of this position at the rate agreed.

Name? Social Media Coordinator? Manager? Maven? We'll figure it out later.

Identity Statement (continued)

- Programs:
 - "empower their values" changed to "manifest shared values" (concerned about the appropriate use of the word empower)
 - Concern about "brand" and its commercial implications > we removed the word
 - Still some questions about how to use the screening process (weighing the points vs. sequential ordering)

Response to the ENA/ENC Mediation

- Russ requested a report from the mediation and is now requesting FIC's comment on our satisfaction about the process/outcomes
- Sky: We could write a simple response saying "yes"
- Laird: Wants to wait and see how successful/sustainable the changes will be
 - Russ's concern about the 2014 budget causes us to hesitate
 - Let's write back that our approval is conditional based on future performance
- Christopher is being asked by Russ to address his concerns and evaluate ENC's finances
 - Christopher is concerned that his recommendations won't make Russ happy
 - Sky also concerned that this will put FIC in the middle of the dispute
 - Marty: Let's acknowledge Russ's concern but share that the Council will now process any further issues
- Sky: Christopher's response was perfect and he is done
- Laird will write a response about the mediation process and Harvey will sign
- Nick: NextGENNA's perspective is that FIC is handling the situation well and we also hold frustrations and concerns about how Russ may be holding the group back

- Laird suggests that Sky reach out to Lee to work with him about making a complaint about Russ to the ENC Board (maybe Nebesna?)
 - Decision: Laird will respond to Lee's email with Sky and Maikwe cc'ed

Future Meetings

- Lost Valley continues to raise price to host meetings there in April and Macino is unable to do a weekend during our current May 20-22 dates
- Cynthia is unavailable during the weekdays until June
 - Maikwe unavailable the first weekend of June
 - Decision: Let's ask them about early June
- Fall meetings at La Cite in Canada
 - Some concern about dress code - Cynthia explains some of the reasoning for no jeans and professional attire required at the community
- Maikwe: Concern about not having meetings where the staff is concentrated
 - We consider the Spring 2017 meeting at Dancing Rabbit

Oversight Committee Composition

- Meet two additional times a year
- Position Composition as established years ago: Treasurer, ED, three Board Members, and someone representing personnel
 - Ideally six people, but have always been able to fill these positions with less
- Significant increase in time commitment
- They are the legal representatives of the Board as a whole (signing contracts) between board meetings.
- Sky's ideas for change: sees value in the Oversight continuing
 - Wants certain perspectives present, not necessarily need the above roles filled
 - Seems fitting for our new flow of communication through the ED to Oversight
 - Question about whether Christopher needs to be on the Oversight
 - Distinguish between Christopher bringing ideas directly vs. considering what comes up for Oversight consideration
 - Preference for Laird to not be on Oversight, although Sky would like him to be on the Board
 - Maikwe would enjoy being on Oversight, but feels it is too much with travel, emails, time, and costs at this time

- Concerns about the high travel requirement - perhaps we can use online meetings? Lower barriers
- Decision: Maikwe will be a more active Board Member within the Oversight email list (invitation to comment) and wait until the spring to see if she wants to officially join
- Laird sees value in face-to-face meetings and is open to experiment with online meetings (lack of depth and ability to handle interpersonal dimensions)
- Laird will step off oversight after today's meeting

Board Expectations and Costs

- High financial costs to being a Board Member - what are we going to do about it?
- Laird: We have debt, money is tight, and we have at least some travel subsidies in place now
 - Where would the money come from?
 - It is a valuable thing to try to fund
- Maikwe: Let's encourage the Board to personally fundraise for Board development
 - Some members already contribute to the costs in this spirit
- Pitching to donors the idea of supporting young energy and leadership within the Board could be highly attractive

Website Feedback

Changes in the website have been largely complaint driven and we'd like to be more proactive.

More videos, more pictures.

Making interaction with the website more entertaining.

The effort to redesign the directory questionnaire will help.

Interactivity is more difficult than editing the content and making the interface more attractive.

"How to use the directory well"

We can schedule chat times or something equivalent to invite active dialog and interaction.

We should first work on the elements that are easier to be effective in.

We need to designate responsibility to keep various pages updated.

Figure out which are the most important pages and address those first.

There are design elements such as a revision to the navigation bar that would make the interface more accessible.

There should be fewer options on the drop down menus with further options downstream.

Look at the pages from the perspective of what we want folks to do from that place.
Increase the use of good images.

Design with awareness of who is visiting which is largely people who need to be educated about what fic and community are.

How do we make decisions about changes?

Can we authorize a team to make changes?

We have design criteria that we'd like to follow to create consistency in the look for the organization.

The design guidelines need to be clarified and use them or bring suggestions for changes as needed.

There are pages that are seriously out of date that need attention.

Evaluations

Plus

Facilitating and minutes were good. Skyping Ma'ikwe worked well once we got wifi.

Solid work done, productive; focused, enthusiastic, engaged

Spacious

Good configuration of people; worked well together

Good age balance, and balancing of new ideas and wisdom, respect for both, healing between the generations

Good job of new people asserting themselves and being respectful

Lots of humor and laughter

Good interaction/contact with host community; nice that they were taking turns providing meals

Good agenda planning

Smooth

Nice to have Karen and Deborah from School of Living and Gaia Ed/Goddard

We're handling the transition from Laird to Sky with a lot of grace

We've handled a successful transition of bringing Christopher into the organization and are seeing the benefits of this success.

We give and receive feedback well. Hold each other well. Hold space for people to have outbursts sometimes and let it be or work with it. Hear things without being touchy.

Delta

Check back with Kassia about how it went for her. Money arrangement was unclear and awkward. Check with people about accommodation needs. Hosts didn't know when people were arriving. Confirm attendance and arrival times earlier, depending on needs of hosts.

Not having wifi and flip chart at the beginning.

Lack of celebration, even in little ways

More ceremony, group building

Sorry Pamela didn't make it; missed the connection with Transition Towns

Later Committee

Volunteer Coordinator:

Something we want. No existing job description. Inreach Committee did this to some extent, maybe there's an old write up of that committee, but it's an artifact. Sky will draft a job description.

Next Conf Call:

Friday, December 11th at noon Eastern

Spring mtgs:

Need to figure this out ASAP. Sky will prioritize figuring out if Groundswell is an option and look for others if not. We need to tell Lost Valley ASAP if we're backing out.

Bookstore at events:

We can't count on Laird schlepping books any more. We want to keep Bookstore operating out of Missouri. Need to figure this out on a case by case basis.

Process Consulting webpage:

Tree wants to not be maintaining this anymore. Interested in doing something more dynamic. Marty is considering picking this up, and maybe do more with it. Could do or find someone to do a free 30 min session for inquiries. Need to be sensitive to inclusive/exclusive dynamic in establishing something of an FIC consulting team/body. Maintain the by-region listing of consultants people can contact. Maybe establish a finders fee for work people get through being on the consulting team. Marty will think about this and check back