

FIC Board Meeting Minutes

Los Angeles EcoVillage, Los Angeles, CA

November 4th – 7th, 2005

Opening:
Facilitator: Craig
Minutes: Miaya

Fred brings in the energies of the 4 directions. Shares a song: Rainbow Trail.

Jenny facilitates the story necklace ritual. Shared stories of past Org meetings at Sunward Cohousing, MI in fall 2000, Christ Church of the Golden Rule, CA in fall 1995 and Ganas, NY in fall 1990

(Note for future agenda making: Bead ritual took close to 25 minutes.)

Housekeeping: (Lois)

Agenda Review: (Harvey)

Go round of names and where folks are from.

Update on Initiatives (Laird)

Large financial trouble spot has been the Cmag. Production team is a good one, but sales have not been what covers expenses. Increasing our revenues is what the group would like to focus on not cutting cost since Cmag is almost bare bones already.

The present focus is to overhaul with targeted donations. This will take a fair amount of Lairds time. The Vermont donor has sent money (\$7,000) in June and another \$7,000 in a year and another \$6,000 has also been pledged. Cmag will be placing a two year on going ad in UTNE. Also have new color covers and \$150 to pay for front cover photos. Also, a photo archive is being created to have better photos to use for the magazine. New digital cameras are creating better photo images and communitarians are willing to donate photos. The future might hold a Web based catalog of photos that can be easily accessed. A promo mailing for funding this project happened last year at NACSO. The mailing did not get the response we hoped for.

Diana Christian is freeing up more of her time by moving the advertising responsibilities for ads to Patricia Green. Diana can focus on other things for the magazine that include improvement of the look.

Unfunded at this point:

Mailings

NASCO

Push to get Cmag, Dir4, Communities video/CD into Libraries

Bookstores and health food stores who carry magazines

Funding travel to bring together folks to critique and see how Cmag can be improved.

A subscription drive

Discussion

Nancy discovered that articles she had written for Cmag are for sale on Amazon. ACTION: Someone should check on how AMAZON is doing this? How did they get permission? Does FIC get a cut of these sales since they were the original publishers?

Donor proposes to increase compensation for those working on Cmag. This is the first time a donor has asked for a specific group to get a rate increase within the Org. If we did this, it could be hard for the FIC to maintain a pay increase. Maybe a one time bonus is more realistic. What will the bonus accomplish? Many question for Personnel Committee about fairness of designating donation for bonus a specific area within the org, instead of spreading it among all the staff. Many of whom have some hand in the distribution of Cmag. Determined that this is a BD level policy. Asking that Personnel take this on and present a proposal of how to deal with this. Personnel asks for input from others such as Tony and Laird who have been involved with the Cmag.

Discussion:

Is the donor wishing to have a ongoing relationship with the Org or is it limited to just Cmag?

PROPOSAL: The Bd authorizes OS & Personnel to jointly decide what, if anything, to include in a funding proposal in support of Cmag for staff bonuses, taking into account what's in the best interest of the whole organization. If OS & Personnel decide to include bonuses in the funding request, they will further decide how that money will be distributed among staff.

AGREED

2005 Budget (Tony)

Facilitator: Ma'ikwe

Minutes: Miaya

Profit and Loss sheet presented.

Income side:

Bookshelf doing well. Lower event sales.

Cmag numbers looking low, but only two issues. Lack of distributor sales.

Development doing well. \$12,000 in membership dues. This is very good.

Dir3x all sold.

Dir4 : Hoped for an earlier spring release. Didn't get out until September 2005

Communities Video/CD sales stay relatively even.

Ad sales on the web site are creating increases in income.

Expenses:

DIR3 expenses higher than expected.

DIR4 will show a profit by the end of the year.

Web site has higher costs and some people are being paid to do Web work.

Nuance of the accounting system.

Each product area is assigned a certain cost for the labor. Each becomes a portion of the office expense.

Profit loss of \$2,356 so far.

We're doing more projects outside of our budget like a Directory Endowment Fund, Cmag donations, etc.

Online directory

From IRS point of view looks like we have a profit of \$20,000.00. Money is actually ear marked for other costs in our budget.

Interest for Endowment can go into our operating budget.

Specific program areas:

Bookshelf: Coming up short in event sales. Have not yet done the NASCO event. Will adjust for next year. Management costs have been kept lower. Trimming the titles list to be more in tune with our mission.

Cmag: Wholesale sales: Distributor sends out Cmag to bookstores what doesn't sell is credited back to the distributor. We get notice of this 9 months later. Expenses for the these magazines are still coming in and causing some problems in the accounting.

Subscriptions showing lower this year. Hoping subscriptions sales will come up with the release of Dir4.

Selling plenty of back issues.

Ad sales doing well. Some of the billing for past ads are coming in thus showing increase in revenues.

Budget for the magazine has been trimmed in the past. No more trimming suggested at this time.

Other Page

Auction income lower than expected. Had fewer auctions.

Selling contact info to other orgs is also down.

Video showing loss due to accounting issues. Cost of goods will be spread out as the sales continue. Sales are pretty normal.

2006 Budget:

Good news. Budget for 2006 will have a positive outcome with Cmag having the only possible loss.

Based on assumptions that sales will stay strong across the board.

Bookshelf: Event sales will be doing a cohousing event to add to the revenues of book sales.
Hard for FIC to compete with sellers like Amazon.com

Cmag:

Could be more conservative on the budget. Difficult to speculate that back issues will continue to be strong or ads will continue as they are at this time.

Ongoing Ads in UTNE should create some change. Hope that subscriptions will rise.

Ad rates going up in the magazine. 10% increase across the board. Been quite a while since ad increases were implemented.

Loss of cohousing mag did bring Cmag more hard print advertisers.

\$10,000.00 loss estimated at this time.

Consensus Books

Area where we make good money. Costs for publishing is low. But we're not selling that many.
Create links to other groups that promote the books.

Development

Grants for Cmag under Development. Expenses not as high as last year.

Directory4

Presales: several hundreds and another couple hundred after the first printing. Directory sales at 900 for the year. No directory updates will be published. Folks can go to IC web site for community updates. Directory now online.

Office

Office labor costs continue to drop. Shift in what is being sold. Less turn over in office staff.

\$2000.00 in budget to fund the online store or the web site in general. Web site has been self supporting. The Store is now part of the web site and will need up keep.

Other

Auction revenues lowered to two in the next year.

Projected budget of net gain of \$700.00 for 2006.

Areas that need to be flagged for further discussion later:

Development to follow up on the community memberships. Craig Ragland will speak to Laird about this.

Income from regional and local groups. Voluntary admission charge collected at regional gathering by Vince Bates. He also is making a request of \$100 from FIC for materials.

West coast event to happen a year from now. Event committee will meet to talk about this while we're here at LAEV.

Reports (Laird)

Facilitator: Ma'ikwe

Minutes: Miaya

Development: Questions and comments

Will there be an endowment fund coming out of the work? \$400,000.00 is the desired target. \$250,000.00 would give \$15,000.00 a year to do Directory work and the other \$150,000.00's interest would be for the web site work, etc.

Direction of Development. Appreciate grassroots elements. Research other major donors and not spend all of our time on grassroots endeavors. Identify major donors. How to identify these major donors?

Until now we are working with those we know. Asking people in the FIC circle to identify others outside the circle willing to make donations. No cold attempts have been done. Development is a part time endeavor limited amount of energy for pursuing groups that we have no connection to. A few opportunities have come up that Laird sought out but came to no positive outcome. Is there a way to create a flow for the members of the FIC to contact Development about possible donors.

Remainderman trust opportunities? Ellen Duke and Laird will speak at lunch time. Ellen knows a lot about this.

Membership also covered by Development. Membership package benefit is pretty thin. Very few incentives for communities to become members. Create a more compelling membership package.

Can choose to do no membership and rely on donations only.

Laird is open to having Membership/Development emphasis on membership benefits. Committee will meet Monday afternoon.

Oversight

Is OS feeling overwhelmed by work load?

Not a feeling of this within the OS group.

A lot less time is being spent on interpersonal dynamics, lately.

Members of the Bd have been more active on conference calls for the last few years, which has been very good.

No site chosen for the Spring meeting yet.

Exec Secretary

Inquiries by media are tracked for future use by the Org. No web site where articles are archived about communities.

If Wisconsin or Minnesota, Missouri may become back up plan. Possibly Sandhill and/or Dancing Rabbit.

Personnel

Electronic request for evaluation/feedback about Lairds work will be going out through email. Money designated by donors for specific projects will be worked on by Personnel committee. George would like to be part of the Personnel committee.

Print Directory manager/ borrowing authority

Questions?

What improvements will be implemented in future Directories both in hard copy and web?

Tony open to feedback about errors that folks spot.

Open to a committee to consult with about future directories. More as an advisory committee and not one that made decisions.

ERB committee also on board with future editions.

Latest directory is streamlined . No resource section and articles trimmed down from previous articles.

Mostly community listings this time. And how to make contact with communities.

Communities on web site have been posted with a date of last update. Tony used those in Directory to get a sense of whether community is still viable. Many communities are vibrant but not web savvy and so didn't respond to Directory request for updates.

Communities have been warned that they will be dropped if they don't update their listings.

Tony is looking for input about what to do with communities that have not updated in the last five years.

Some folks feel the interface with the updating is too cumbersome.

Web site gives continued updates of communities. Tony sends periodic emails to communities asking for updates. Emails may not seem valid to some. No funding is in place for someone specific to do this update work.

Tony would like to request he be named ongoing coordinator of the Directory work.

AGREED

Monetary support for the web

Have small endowment. And some savings from the web weavers?

All web development or the store or the directory only. Tony would like it to be most general. In budget Tony placed 2,000.00 but feels this is very token amount. 10,000.00 would be a better and more realistic sum to do the work sufficiently.

Web site and Internet has become key medium for fulfilling our mission. Recognize that \$10,000.00 is asking a lot. Web area has been self supporting for years.

Where should the money be earmarked for? (\$2,000.00 which is in the 2006 budget.

Money spent mostly for conceptual design, graphic changes, new features, software when needed. Money spent primarily for labor to have someone do the work to update and upkeep the web site.

Could earmark the first \$10,000.00 of the endowment for the web work.

Can money be made by hosting and managing other groups?

Can be very time consuming and could be conflict with our mission? It is a revenue stream, however.

Web site could be used to create regional access thus making data more available to people in a certain region. Could be financially supported at the local level to bring local info together for seekers and regional networkers?

Pilot project of the regional groups would be good to see if revenues could be brought in.

PROPOSAL: Shift in the concept that web site has to be self supporting. Is the ORG willing to support the web site financially?

AGREED

Tony suggests \$2,000.00 for this year for web work.

Discussion

\$2,000.00 is not enough to do all the work that needs to be done. Web site and Internet becoming more and more valuable to get FIC work /mission done.

BD encourages that Development do more fundraising to fund the ongoing web work above the \$2,000.00.

PROPOSAL: \$2,000.00 allotted in the 2006 budget for ongoing FIC general web site work.

AGREED

SUGGESTION: Writers of the reports please sign them so that others can converse with report writers outside of the meetings.

2006 Budget (Tony) (see revised report)

Approval of the amended 2006 budget.

AGREED

Facilitator: Tony

Minutes: Marty

Strategic Planning (Laird)

Goals of bringing community to the larger culture and serving our core constituency were the topics we left off with and we'll focus on the second for this session.

What will we be doing in the next 5 years to fulfil this core part of the mission.
Brainstorm with expansive but not “fanciful” ideas:
Identify a cadre of skilled and motivated event coordinators.
A community updatable and online document db.
Improve the awareness of community members of FIC and its goals and functions.
Regional and local networking events.
Regional and local efforts in support of the larger org.
Ways for a seeker to learn about community through soft methods, e.g., stories that exemplify issues. Methods of values clarification using examples of existing communities.
Robust program of technical assistance.
Cmag fully on line with opportunity for people to add to stories and linked to other org resources – as well as a print version.
Global team that can respond to violent conflict worldwide.
Active and effective marketing efforts.
More transparent and easier engagement with org and internal workings
Every North American community knows FIC.
Website that is more accessible with updated regional and local communities activities.
Cmag is still operating and is in the black.
Increased membership.
Membership benefits include cmag.
≥1500 current listings in db/directory.
Clear indications of which communities are forming or established or defunct from a process that is more than self reporting.
Self funding communities db and directory.
Fully funded endowment for directory.
Host another international celebration.
Support of resource exchange between communities.
FIC University teaching the skills of community.
Larger, more active business loan fund.
National community healthcare system.
Community legal support system.
Can we condense this to a few themes?
Financial solvency
Directory improvements
Ease and accessibility of information
New categories of information on community
Increased local and regional activity
FIC brand awareness
Wider culture awareness of communities movement.
Events
Cmag improvements
Support intercommunity connection
More focus on website for conveying information
Support systems for health, safety, legal, financial aspects of communities

What are the highest priorities?

Expand and improve web presence and access.^[SEP]Online directory improvements, ease of access, cmag on line, new categories of info.

Financial solvency

Support for ICs^[SEP]connections^[SEP]systems – health, legal, safety, financial

Awareness of FIC/ICs

Events

Cmag

Regnet

Are any of these areas less vital than the others?

Are awareness and support for ICs key areas or is it something that will be a byproduct of pursuing the other initiatives?

Can we prioritize the focal areas?

1. Financial sustainability
2. Expand and improve web presence and access.^[SEP]Online directory improvements, ease of access, Cmag on line, new categories of info.
3. Events, which include local, regional, national/international, but focus primarily on regional, partnered events. We need to balance the potential for outreach with the potential for risk of being a lead organization.
4. Cmag
5. Regnet
6. Support for ICs -- connections^[SEP]systems – health, legal, safety, financial
7. Awareness of FIC/ICs

Financial sustainability becomes an overriding factor in considering what areas we need to focus on and the direction of that focus.

There is a question as to the value of supplying legal, and other technical assistance to community and how much benefit the org would realize.

The support needs to be defined as to what would be effective. Some of this function is served by development of the website.

We need to come up with a plan for how to analyze each area and what the next steps will be for each of the areas.

Facilitator: Caroline

Minutes: Miaya

Personnel (Jenny)

New members joining Personnel.

Caroline and George are put forth as new members of Personnel.

AGREED

TASK: (Jenny) These two above names will be added to the Personnel Committee list.

Coho update (Raines)

Betsy and Raines coedited the Fall Cohousing issue of the Cmag.

Senior cohousing coming to USA. New evolution of cohousing here in the US.

Renewed organizational push happening. Web site reconstitution, allow more interconnection and communication amongst members, plus plenty of media attention lately.
Shares several new books of interest to community and cohousing.
National conference is being spoken of. Nothing firm.

FIC Spokeperson (Laird)

OS recommending official spokespeople: Fred, Jenny, Bill and Marty.

People to speak to media and represent the FIC at events. In addition to Laird, Diana C, Geoph, Harvy and Tony.

OS recommends the following people to be added as spokespeople for the FIC: Fred, Jenny, Bill and Marty.

AGREED

TASK: Info concerning spokepeople contacts shall be placed on web site.

Regional Networks update (Raines)

Ongoing creation. Lotus and/or Geoph will continue to reach out to all sections of FIC to pull together info for regional groups.

Directory and web site Endowment Authorization (George)

Include proposal as George has it written. Check email from George with proposal with alterations.

AGREED

Discussion

In emergency Bd can ask monies to be dispersed for other purposes within the org

Endowment Investment strategy

Establish an investment fund for the endowment fund. What are the constraints? What ideas does the Bd have?

What is acceptable risk?

How liquid will the fund be? How much does the Org need from this fund?

Mutual funds, operate like a stock but they fluctuate. Investing "green" is profitable these days.

What is acceptable risk?

Investment managers do not suggest risky stocks such as penny stocks. There will be fluctuations in the investment and must be ridden out in the long term. Over ten years not day to day holdings.

Org fund would need 7.5% CPI(sp?), so as not to lose principle and be able to fund certain activities within the org.

7.5 return is not a high risk situation.

Investment team would manage the fund making sure that monies brought into org thru

Development and earmarked for Endowment fund would be distributed to the principal so as to create more growth and some towards more liquid aspects.

Equities

Managers need permission to move, sale, trade, etc., so as to keep investment fund strong and growing.

Discussion

George watches 100 year trend in the market. Not intimidated by small turns in the market.

Understands when to move investments.

Socially responsible stocks may not meet the orgs standard of ethics.

Advisable that Org not paint itself into corner as far choices of investments. There may be some companies that we would not be 100% in alignment with.

Create screens so that we come as close as possible to being in alignment with our vision/ethics as a group.

Devaluation of the dollar? If USA dollar collapsed whole world economy would suffer. USA is a goliath. Monies can be moved to another country if need be, if things really went out of control in US economy.

Bonds and CDs are very consistent and safe. Return is known at time they are purchased.

Select a range of long term mutual funds. Not seeking liquidity at this time. Going for growth purposes.

Investment committee would like the Bd to give criteria for them to look at different managed equity funds. Once a quarter they will look at the investments to see if they are doing what was intended when they were purchased.

PROPOSALS

BD buys into purchasing in the mainstream stock market (equity funds)? Are we comfortable with this way of investing donations earmarked for the Endowment fund?

AGREED

George and Bill have stepped up to be the team to carry forth this committee. Dan also joining this team. They will be the Endowment management team at this time.

AGREED

Is the Bd comfortable with the risk that has been outlined 40-60 split that George has outlined?

At this time team asking for a band of 70/30 equity. Band will be 40/60 equity at later time. More flexibility at the beginning while fund is being created. Goal of earning 7.5%.

The % range of equities will be kept no less than 40 and no more than 70. ---AGREED

Facilitator: Harvey

Minutes: Miaya

Regional Networking/Membership or Raines' Amazing Synergies

Laird and a caravan of communitarians go to Burning Man. "The Ultimate Trip." Starting at Twin Oaks and winding it's way to the west coast making sure to stop at burning man, City gathering at Eugene, and NICA (9/8th and 9th in Seattle area) conference in the NW somewhere.

Songaia potentially hosting the Board meeting. Still in planning aspect.

Bond building experience for all who board the bus. Regional map becomes 5 mile art piece to be set up at Burning man and thus ritually burned on the final day before bus heads west.

Events Comm will create budget and submit to OS before next meeting.

Next steps for Strategic Planning

Cmag next steps in line already

Regional Networkers will continue to create their five year plan.

Web site

Next step:

Committee to create a five year plan to be proposed to the org.

Craig, Tony, Raines as Convener, and Vince will be on this committee.

They anticipate having something to present at the next board meeting.

Events

Next step:

Harvey, Miaya, Caroline, (Bill and Peggy) with some connection with Regional networkers. Will present something at next board meeting.

Financial sustainability (set aside)

Next step:

Committee to draw up five year plan to create sustainability in our finances.

Finance committee:

Support for IC's (Health, safety, financial, etc)

No interest for creating a committee

Awareness of spreading FIC/IC's to outside culture.

Looking at it organizationally, marketing/promotion.

EVALUATIONS

Strategic Planning on Friday

P- Directive facilitation

P - More tangible progress built on previous work

P - Flowed well

P -First closed session experiment.

N- leaving follow up until last day of meeting.

N – Bring back the together the strategies.

Evaluation NVC

P - looking at outside facilitation every so often is good

P - NVC a positive and well suited to ORG. Built on skills org already has.

P -Triage idea was good

P -Dovetailed well with other trainings FIC has had

P- Excellent timing. Appreciations to Geoph and Lotus for making it happen

P-Very accessible training technique

P-Positive energetic presentation kept peoples interest

N- Puppets need more introduction
N- Alan could have been given more history of the dynamics of the group
N- Hesitancy to practice NVC outside of session
P-Great role playing by Tony and Laird
P- Clarity about heart of the teaching. Not enough to just do the work. Must have an intention to connect.
N-Individuals too busy to actually practice techniques
N-Weaving of workshop with Board meeting was clunky
N- NVC specifically not what group needs. Group has good communication skills for the most parts. Attitude change may be needed by group.

Meeting as a whole

P- great food
P joyful way the food was presented
P ease of flow between outdoors and indoors
P enthusiastic and gracious hosting
P- Singing
P meeting in urban space
N- space issues, traffic parking challenging
N – fewer children and space more challenging because of urban setting
P – high quality attention and participation
P arriving at community w/o a car
P a lot of laughter
P-Arriving with a car
P-Good participation of new BD members
P-Caroline back in the fold
P -Magical flow esp when Raines had his hat on.
N -Street noise and helicopters
P -Commitment to bicycle
P- Access to internet and airports
Suggestion: read mission statement to the group each day
P -Regional connection on Wednesday night
P-Laird freeing up time as others take on tasks

Closing bead ritual. Tony Sirna picked a bead to represent the releasing of Directory4 in print version. He chose a solid blue bead.

Lois Arkin picked the bead for the fall 2005 Organizational meeting. A fish representing the waters that run underneath LA EcoVillage.

