

FIC Org Meeting Minutes
May 13-15, 2009
Camphill Village at Kimberton Hills
Kimberton, PA

Opening Circle

The bead ceremony, a tradition now at org meetings, followed by an opening song.

20 years ago, spring, 1989 at Shannon Farm Cmty in VA. Highlights of some of the key people and projects were remembered.

15 years ago, spring, 1994 at Stonehaven in San Marcos TX. It was a few months after the “Celebration”. Held in a retreat center, this “very social” meeting had a large attendance.

10 years ago, spring, 1999 at Coe College in Cedar Rapids. Held in a non-community university setting, topics such as e-commerce, wages for staff, personnel reviews and other hot topics were on the table.

5 years ago, spring, 2004 at Highline Crossing in Littleton, CO. This was the consecration of the Bead Ceremony. While our org meetings lately have been smaller in attendance, there is a dynamism and energy that is strong.

Drawing three Tarot cards: 1) the past 2) the present and 3) representing underlying currents were drawn.

1) “The Magician” – an energetic symbol, a sense of moving out of a previous layer of skin, a metamorphosis. Some viewed the image as symbolic of a lot of action in different directions, shedding of the old, all four elements present, and exploration.

2) The present – Strength: Integrating the disparate, surrounded by the natural world, grounded, lots going on, images of unusual allies and relationships.

3) The underlying currents card will be read at the closing circle

Getting the Work Done

Laird has been the main administrator for a while.

Laird’s FIC time

- Writing
 - Newsletter (comes up with 50% of content)
 - Publisher’s Notes
 - Good Meetings
 - Personal and FIC content of blog
 - Marketing copy

- Org Meeting reports (Laird wrote 7 this time)
- General correspondence
- Task Monitoring
 - Does this on behalf of Oversight Cmtee
- Drafts Oversight Cmtee interim meeting agendas
- Edits OS conf call minutes, and Early and Later Cmtee mtg at Org Mtgs
- Development
 - Broad View
 - Major Donor Cultivation
 - Directory Development (Endowment)
- Inter-org Relations
 - Laird is the main inter-org player
- Handling Critical Feedback
- Press Inquiries
 - This area has picked up recently
- Developing Board Prospects
 - Most active in identifying and cultivating board prospects
- ERB
 - Along with Deborah and Tony
- Attend other Org Events
- Site Work
- Centerfield

What does Laird want to keep?

Laird wants to keep: publisher's note, good meetings, blog; development; handling critical feedback, press inquiries.

Not crucial on marketing copy, task monitoring, editing OS minutes, Development (yes and no) site work, Centerfield.

Laird is a great networker and a great public face for the organization.

Is the newsletter critical?

Newsletter is important to development efforts. Other orgs have an email newsletter and then do an annual report.

Exec Secretary should do: Task monitoring, Oversight Cmtee agenda, editing OS minutes, inter-org relations, attending other org meetings, publisher's notes, and centerfield.

Core exec secretary duties are 1-1.5 days a week.

Laird should be a key player in development efforts, whether overseeing or doing the "ask" as opposed to managing the development efforts.

Are their things that can be taken off the list? Others could handle? What can Laird let go of?

Events stand out as income potential for FIC and interest Laird quite a bit.

Laird estimates that 2/3 of week spent on FIC.

Tony FIC time

- ERB
- Board
- Liaison for print directory
- Finances
- Web site
 - Email lists
 - Aliases
 - Server maintenance
 - ENews
 - Development of new features
 - Updates
 - Ad revenue
 - Board videos
- Press inquiries
- Tech support
- Cmag website (to be released, work still needed)
- Community buzz (dormant)
- Office liaison

Tony has core knowledge of organization that allows the board to trust him, allowing him to do the web area on his own; would be more management involved if someone else did it. How long would it take to bring someone else up to speed on what Tony does? A few months, but a major liaison role would be needed.

Cmag web site: Tony is 3/4-through developing the new site that is integrated through the store and to our existing site. Cmag site could be done by team, with similar look and feel, but functionality could be compromised. Tony would need about 1/2-time over a three week period, potentially 40 hours of work, that can't be done piece-meal, must be done in concentrated, longer periods of time. Tony wants a peer, someone who has significant training experience.

What is the best org support for Tony's role? What could others do to get work off Tony's plate. How do other organizations manage this? There may be a description done, so it could be circulated.

TASK: circulate and possibly update job description for Web job.

Larger topic: filling roles to achieve the organization's mission.

Completely rethink how the work is done. Restructure the Organization.

Do we have a mission statement for events? Part of our mission statement speaks to events. If we are looking outside our circle, the more direction that could be given, along with a loose leash, would be helpful.

Events Team Leadership

Ma'ikwe is stepping down as event coordinator after this weekend.

Ma'ikwe identifies 3 key staff roles: primary coordinator, publicity and marketing, sponsorships development.

There are also other less key roles that could be filled more easily.

Ma'ikwe is willing to work in the program creation role.

The thought is that the publicity and marketing role would be more org-wide oriented and would need local help for a particular event.

Committee meeting identified the following questions:

How do we attract and keep qualified staff?

What is the relationship between events staff and the rest of the org?

Does the market want events? If so, what kind?

Where are we with the upcoming Bay Area event – spring 2010?

One large event per year could be a manageable expectation.

We have previously talked about having a major event every 18 months and rotating them between 3 identified locations. However 2 of the 3 locations are not identified.

Do we want to rethink the events cycle?

Using local people for publicity/marketing/sponsorship seems to be more productive.

The previous plan didn't make it through one cycle so we can easily rethink the objective.

We could see certain locations, such as Seattle, the Bay Area, etc, as potentially consistently productive locations.

Having a regular cycle, such as 1 per year has budget advantages and maintenance of staff advantages.

It would be better for us to be looking into the future and deciding where our meetings would be for at least a year in the future.

If we are returning to the same places on a regular basis, we can use local people in the different locations.

People in key sites who are not FIC regulars require more oversight and orientation to the org.

Is it more efficient to have a primary coordinator who moves to the next site, or to have a primary coordinator who would be site specific?

We don't need to decide now if the person who does the next event will be the right person who will coordinate future events.

We can make that decision based on the experience of the event.

With a candidate in mind it seems we should pursue going forward with the event in the Bay Area in spring, 2010.

We can explore how John Stroup can fit into the area of publicity/marketing.

Laird is also involved in marketing and we could expand his role to include a focus on marketing for events.

We should look at the upcoming experience of the cohousing conference in Seattle to see if their attendance is consistent with historical levels.

On the other hand our event would draw on local people while the coho conference depends on people traveling to the event.

Financial Review

Corrections from previous years: Geoph's video fund at Sunrise CU has been added to the FIC accounts.

This year: \$5,000 budgeted income for Art of Community in Bay Area, California; that will be less, closer to \$1,000 income for the event here at Kimberton Hills.

Cmag subscription income is at 36%, close to the 4 month target, but subscriptions are lagging behind this time last year. Expense management for Cmag is in line, but income is still a question.

Directory income is slow. Dir.5 editions will be obsolete when .6 comes out around September, so we are looking for a donor who will buy remaining .5 for placement in libraries.

Web site ads are not available until we can develop some ad design capacity. And Tony has not billed for his web services, so expenses listed are lower than actual.

The new 2nd video sales have been good, carrying 1st video sales up, too, along with Dir sales.

\$5,000 auction income for the deleted Bay area event will not be realized.

Currently, cash flow is quite low – having trouble keeping up with current bills, because we are spending money on Dir.6.

The 2009 budget shows an \$11 net income projected at the end of April, with a big 'but.' The events here at Kimberton Hills, and at Twin Oaks, are still planned. But the projected high dollar event in the San Francisco Bay Area has been cancelled, eliminating several \$1,000 of income budgeted for 2009. \$2,000 will be eliminated from the auction budget. The events income budget will be reviewed for probable reduction later in the meeting.

Finances Follow-up

Tony has adjusted the budget figures in response to updates, reducing projected income by \$3,716. Net income is now (\$10,581). This year, there is no cushion. This means we will have to delay some payables, including bills from Tony for web management, and from Twin Oaks and Sandhill. We are borrowing \$3,500 from the Art of Community account to satisfy cash flow needs.

Can we cut expenses? Several possibilities for budget reduction were considered in some detail, but no budget items were cut. Laird pointed to the 5th wheel trailer that Geoph left FIC, which could sell for \$6,000. We need an E-Bay &/or Craig's List operator to help us sell Geoph's trailer. And Laird will continue his fund raising activities, with some very good prospects in process at this moment.

Cmag Financing & Marketing:

Accounts receivable for the summer have not been billed yet. Cmag is at 33% for the year, right on target! The budget was reduced for this year, projecting continued depressed ad revenue. Subscriptions are at 1700. Sell thru from distributors – two large and four small, which cover the US and Canada. Cash returns are slow because they do not pay until after they return unsold copies. Latest sell thru report is for winter issue.

The New Paradigm Community at \$1,077, and Chuck Durrett's Cohousing Company at \$990, are the only two ad clients seriously behind.

We have 49 display advertisers, with about 1/3 of them in each issue.

Whole Foods has been our target to recruit for new display ads, but they do their ads on a regional basis that we do not fit with as a national magazine.

Whole Foods suggested that we need to expand our media kit. For that, we need a new media survey. A reader survey should go on our website, which gets 2,000 visits each day. But, we will not put it into the print copy of the magazine.

We are updating our reprint packets, including ads, which would be available primarily by downloading PDFs.

John Stroup, Cmag's Business Manager, would like to print extra copies for placing as free copies at the NASCO Institute and other large gatherings. This will be done if we can develop targeted financing for it.

We will continue to solicit sales from independent, informal distributors who pay up front at a deep discount.

The Nominating Committee report

It was noted Jenny and Fred's terms were expiring. The committee will be exploring filling those seats. Marty, Ma'ikwe and Harvey are the committee members. Ma'ikwe will be stepping down from Nom Com. There is not a lot of work being part of this committee.

Oversight will look at the composition and function of the Nominating Committee, and the Board, when it gathers in August for the interim mtg.

Board Selection

The terms of two board members are expiring – Jenny Upton and Fred Lanphear. Jenny has agreed to stand for another term. Fred cannot. This will give FIC seven board members, one above minimum.

Development Report

Laird's priority over the last six months has been focused on major donor maintenance. We lost our development assistant, so Laird has spent time doing all of that work himself. A new development assistant is now in place. But, contacting new major donor prospects has been slowed by that.

The SF Bay area viewing of Geoph's 2nd video by Rains had about 60 participants, but did not result in much income for FIC.

Personnel

Personnel would like to propose to the board that Marty enter the ERB in place of Laird. Agreed: Marty will be on ERB and Laird will step down. Laird will be removed from the email list.

TASK: Marty will introduce himself to Deborah Altus who is a member of ERB, and not present at this org mtg.

TASK: ERB will choose a new convener.

Norbel Credit Union

There is an interest in finding out what the FIC would want from Norbel, and learn more about Norbel's capabilities and product offerings. What kind of things do you see the movement needing? Are there collaboration options, options within existing structures, opportunities to create new structures.

How would you qualitatively rate the type of cooperation available, options available?

Nothing that is known would suggest that the needs of the IC movement can not be met by Norbel. Is there anything that Norbel wants from FIC? Construction loans may not be available for large-scale projects; cannot loan over 10% of the portfolio.

Does the FIC want to open another account somewhere else because it is costing \$5 a month for a business account. Money market has a \$2,500 minimum. Other account minimums are \$100. We have four accounts, there may be consolidation options for sub accounts. While there may be free checking options, fees could come to those accounts, including fees based on minimum balances and transactions.

DECISION: Accounting team has the authority to consolidate accounts. Does the accounting team have authority to open new accounts? Service and convenience should be paramount. If everything is neutral, stick with Norbel.

Staff Appreciation

Please sign the card for Kathe, in recognition of her service in the Missouri office and efforts on behalf of Bookshelf. Ma'ikwe needs to be recognized publicly for her work on events.

Laird is making efforts to meet new staff while on his travels. When Caroline left the board in the past, she was presented a figure of a woman flying, which lives above her bed and reminds her of her connection to the board and the organization. There could be a tangible gift to symbolize the recognition. It's the small things that mean a lot.

Logo Color Palate Review for All FIC Publication

The board reviewed the color palate recommended. The web site is already color coded, using more colors than the recommended palate. Cmag also has concerns about the colors. Graphic design cmtee will be consulting with Cmag and website staffers, anticipating possible changes in the color palate.

Review needs in minutes – What do we need in the minutes?

It is hard for some to review for specific issues/decisions, etc., in our current minutes. Could we implement some sort of indexing solution, starting with this session, based on key word,

so that finding things is easier? Could we use software? Is this a good use of time? Could we have indexing done inside the movement? Could we use Twin Oaks, or another contact? This is a need as we look back at our history.

TASK: Jenny will contact McCune to feel out Twin Oaks options.

Critical Comments or other Questions that come to McCune:

McCune sent a message with quite critical comments about cohousing to the “all” e-list. Many folks responded, some of them rather defensively. Laird is proposing that critical comments about the FIC or other such cases be treated more carefully. Two options are that the question is dealt with internally by the FIC, or that the question is routed thru Laird or Tony for collection of further information and collating into a coherent response. It was recognized that the animated conversation on the “all” e-list had a positive aspect.

AGREED: McCune will route critical questions/comments to Laird for either answering or further routing.

TASK: Laird will inform McCune about this decision.

Fair Housing Law

Washington State has notified FIC that we are not in compliance with Fair Housing law. There is a basic federal law that may be added to by state law (but not subtracted from). This has extensive implications for our print Directory, and has somewhat less effect on web listings. Tony & Harvey are working on changes in the questions to bring them into compliance.

TASK: Tony will send out to the board the boilerplate for the Fair Housing blurb in the directories for comments.

TASK: Tony will field return questions/comments from communities and route them as appropriate.

Frequency of Electronic Contact

McCune began sending the ENews weekly. Quite a bit of care has been used in protecting and correctly using the ENews list. Notice was given in an email about the switch, which gave the option to opt out. No break in integrity on how it works, no complaints received.

The list of communities’ email addresses is not given out, even internally. We do not contact online shoppers at our stores about anything except their purchase.

Is it appropriate to use these lists to sell ads for Cmag?

Mail other lists (not eNews) to encourage them to sign up for eNews.

Could we use the communities’ lists for events, or advertise in Cmag? Maybe 4 times a year?

eNews: 1 a month is bookshelf, 1 a month is magazine, 1 a quarter is about advertising...

Group is open to occasional contact with eNews list to encourage deeper involvement with FIC/promotion. Maybe up to once a quarter. Tony will check with McCune to gauge his concerns.

Twitter & Facebook

Explanations of Twitter. Is there an interest in Twitter for the org? No. For individuals, or the magazine? Yes.

Facebook explanation by Ma'ikwe. How to update, "friend" and so on. How it can be used for networking, fundraising, etc.

Two elements: people who are active in FIC could have their own pages to promote their own work and FIC; second, should FIC have an official page. Ma'ikwe has some enthusiasm to partner with someone to create an FIC page. Raines may have energy in a sporadic way? What do people do on an organizational page? Events and discussion boards. The wall is where people post things; you can control it. In any case, folks will use it as a portal, to see what's going on, and to see who else is involved.

We could use this to have a list of friends for whom the FIC events would be relevant.

Ma'ikwe will collar Raines to create a page for the organization. NOTE: Group is giving editorial control to Ma'ikwe and Raines, if he is participating in this project.

Camp Hill Communities Network Potential Connections with FIC/Other Communities

The Camp Hill network includes over 100 communities around the world, starting in Great Britain and the USA and including Russia, Thailand and other countries around the world. The Camp Hill network is aware of the wider community network, and has ongoing personal contacts with other communitarians, especially in Britain and the US.

Eleven Camp Hill communities, with 40 million dollars, 400 care-giving members, and about 400 more residents, will be meeting in this area starting tomorrow. Primary long-range concerns are retirement funding, recruiting enough new care-giving members, and developing academic, degree-granting programs that are community based, so that course work is available in all Camp Hill communities.

Tom Pierson is present for the afternoon, so we will take some time to talk about FIC/NASCO relations.

There was a previous conversation about incorporating some FIC information in the NASCO newsletter which is every 2 months. Tom brought that conversation to his board and received support. His idea is to plan ahead as to which issues to use.

There was also conversation about how to introduce NASCO members to opportunities in residential communities.

NASCO has been investigating self-insuring for property insurance and suggests FIC explore something similar and then see how the 2 orgs could collaborate.

We talked about fair housing laws. The NASCO board is concerned about how the 2 orgs can challenge each other to be inclusive and democratic.

There is some concern with the FIC board being self-selected rather than through democratic process. It is unclear to NASCO as to how the FIC board is created.

Many of the NASCO members are urban based as opposed to FIC being largely rural based. Exploration of developing a relationship with NASCO investment resources.

The development group has about 15 board members, the primary org has 20 and there are about 50 total that FIC would be relating to.

So developing programs that all the parts of NASCO could relate to, such as leadership development, would be the best route.

There is interest in strengthening the relationship generally including having a FIC track at their conference in the future.

From the FIC side:

NASCO members are getting their first taste of cooperative living in an inherently temporary context.

Interest in developing leadership for the org and NASCO is comprised of young people.

FIC has been exploring the “community where you are” question and we are curious as to how NASCO related to community outside their coops.

NASCO is pretty devoted to community in cooperative environments.

They have an activist membership, which is reflected in Institute attendance – those who are not activist don't generally attend.

There is a segment in intentional cmtty that is outreach oriented and interested in creating principles of community outside land based intentional communities.

Social dynamics are the strength of FIC.

US Social Forum, June 2010 is an opportunity.

Weds night conversation: Challenges and Opportunities in Economic Hard Times

Laird did a blog series on community responses in hard economic times and Cmag is going to use this as a theme.

During depression, philanthropy went up. Don't assume we can't raise same as or more money. Recent experience with Dems in the Obama era was that, when local party daily volunteers phoned and asked for \$5-10 on cold calls, they were very successful when thorough (calling everyone). Inquiries seem to be up, maybe by 50%, but don't have a sense of panic. FEC cmties reporting full.

Directory has gone from 800 listings to 1,400 listings. In the last 2 months we have had over 100 new listings added.

People do seem to be looking for community more. That said: DR isn't getting a panicked vibe in its inquiries. Doesn't seem to follow an age demographic. Local responses to economic crisis talk at Truman State packed the room in January. FEC thinking about trying to start a new FEC cmtty; what can FIC be doing? Iron is hot—how do we strike? Most cmties aren't full, but a lot of folks seem to be starting new cmties. Is there a new round of pioneer energy? Some patterns seem to be permanently changed and others come and go.

Don't think there is much deep lifestyle change: more adaptation than revolution. In Eugene, homelessness has doubled, which is creating problems. They are trying to figure out how to do a tent city, which could be a kind of cmtty.

Challenges/opportunities for movement

Challenges

Falling retail sales so falling income

Not ready to respond right away

Might slow down our growth

We are not immune in cmtty; knowing the economic status of each other (how many live on inheritance versus dependence on the outside economy)

People join cmtty less out of social motivation and more out of fear

City, county, state budgets suffering might affect our ability to deliver services in cmtty

Opportunities

New economic paradigm (less reliance on money, more cooperative culture)

Relocalization movement (food, currency, less travel)

Did coop movement resurge during depression? Union organizing did

Growth as more people's lives touched

Vulnerability equals opening up

Create infrastructure improvements to meet potential challenges

Non-money centered economy gives us a competitive advantage when cash is hard to get

Barter

Surge in starts means they'll need help and we can fill that need

Sharing and joint ownership is a good way to get needs met, but need social savvy

Squatter culture... how does it relate to cmtty?

Aging population may create community

Urban resettlement (transition towns)

Matchmaking with older folks moving into younger people's homes for care, financial help, etc

Growing need for local organic food

Localizing because travel is more expensive (both work and shipping products)

Green builders, facilitators, etc have huge hunger for it

Ideas for solutions

Pamphlet for folks who are now sharing housing and how to make it go well

How to squat responsibly flyer

Train the trainer's activities: Creating Community Where You Are (CCWYA), starting a community, social skills for cooperators

Publishing programs

Get material online in an accessible way and it will self-spread

Articles posted on website from Cmag

There's a difference between where we are now and if the situation doubles. How different would we be doing things if it got worse? Localization seems to be the thing, regardless of scale. What can we reasonably affect in a short timeline? Short time means that we have limited opportunities to affect these changes. Whatever it is, it has to be local with limited resources.

6-8 modules that can be taught... what can people take to the local community college and teach others. We can provide info on how to do local things. CCWYA is about how you deal with folk's right here and do it better. Partnerships, networks that we can leverage. Who do we fellowship with? For 30 years we've been training facilitators. Need to train people who know how to organize. Most of us in this room are facilitators and could teach it. We should be promoting it and a basic consensus orientation because they will really matter if/when things melt down. Train the trainers, work through community colleges.

Webinars and other downloadable forms of workshops online. Matthew Simmons power points on peak oil. Laird's blog is a great resource.

Key questions: What's immediate, what's cheap, what's local, what systems are already in place, who do we partner with, what's replicable?

Workshop session this Saturday? Local solutions to economic stress, present examples, ask people what they are aware of that works, and ask for local area solutions. How do you have a positive rather than negative response to a crisis (Greenburg, KS example)? What can we introduce to people that can mitigate economic hardship with more cooperation? Division lowers people's quality of life; cooperation enhances it. Stuff does not equal happiness is a basic message. What enhances your quality of life?

How about several lists of questions that could address different levels of distress (ala conversation cafes) that people could find their potency of questions?

What do people need in order to get a community off the ground right now? High social skills. Conversation Café could be a real service on the FIC's website. How do people find the FIC and access us? People are looking for values-matched lives.

Cleveland Ecovillage group tried to do rehab of homes in the worst neighborhoods. Conclusion was not to go to the worst area, go to the margins. Where can we be most effective? Might be where it is only half bad. Guy in Oakland who bought the worst houses on a not so bad block and really made a difference. Where do we think the margin is? It is like triage.

Evaluation:

+++:

People gracious
John & Don here
Weather great
Setting
Tours
Diedra was great
Quality of attention great
Cmag session good
Timeliness/punctuality
Larkspur social space
Food
Interaction with Claus
Tom Pierson good interaction
Don's energy input
Finished in time to wrap up later work before event
Having event after meeting is good for Laird
Event & org mtg in same location

Change:

Better directions

Logistics clunky (internet access, printing, etc.)

Chairs

Onsite coordinator needs to be focused on job

Social time with Kimberton didn't get together

Fuzzy on getting more people involved and more board prospects/consider how to do it

Laird & Tony burdens only minimally relieved

Closing Circle

Recognition of Ma'ikwe and her contributions, esp. in events. She is presented with a stuffed rabbit made here at Kimberton Hills by a resident.

Tarot card: 3) Shaman of wands, mostly upside down

Represents positive male power; male power with sensitivity to feminine

Laird chose a bead for the completion of Visions of Utopia Part 2: from Tibet, speckled green egg shape. This bead goes on before the meeting bead.

Bead for this meeting: Chosen by Diedra Heitzman, our Kimberton Hills host.

Blue green oval glass -- for the silica which is so important to light and life on earth; aquamarine for the water on which we depend and which we need to learn to live; stars and moon which give us more than we often realize and point to the larger realities; oval for past (smaller) present (so large) and future (we know so little of it yet!) and the hole for the possibility to enter into a community necklace with others.

