

FIC Organizational Meeting

October 30-Nov 1, 2009

**Hosted by Sustainable Berea at Berea College Childcare Development Center
Berea, KY**

Present: Tony Sirna, Harvey Baker, Jorge Caneda, Jenny Upton, Laird Schaub,
Raines Cohen, Marty Klaif, Betsy Morris, Terry O'Keefe, Julie Greve

Spring 2010 FIC Org Meeting will be May 21-23 at Daybreak Cohousing in Portland OR

Opening

20 years ago - Memories of 1989 in New Harmony, IN
Exploring having FIC Headquarters at Indiana University.
Campus was very hospitable.

Dan Greenberg, grad student on education of children in community, and Monique Gauthier presented their video vision called "Follow the Dirt Road"

Alan Fisher and Bill Land were present, also.

Issues arose regarding who could speak to the media for FIC.

15 years ago – Miccosukee Land Co-op in Tallahassee, FL

Their Community Center walls were screen mesh. We sometimes met outdoors under a big tree.

Discussed getting on the web, a domain name. Big changes since then.

Great swimming pool, boardwalks over the swamp; great party; pizza oven in Community Center; fun group.

They are featured in Volume 2 of Geoph Kozeny's video.

10 years, 1999 – Sirius Community

Double bubble meeting – considered wider definition of community, serving larger audience.

Mainstreaming and focusing on members; considered splitting into two groups.

What's our place in the world? Should we be our authentic selves or

prepare ourselves for the outer audience to hear us. Tony almost left; others did leave.

We're not as broad as Jeff Grossberg wanted and we continue to get pressure both ways!

5 years ago -back to Miccosukee Land Co-op

Decided to put more graphics in Cmag. Harvey stayed after the meetings to work on the presidential election.

Joanna Montana organized an event. We picked pecans. Someone sang a protest song about boaters dumping waste in the ocean.

Rose Kelly was our contact person for the second time. We continue to hope we can to recruit her to FIC someday.

Announcements:

Movie, "Kiss My Gas Goodbye" by Richard Heinberg, will be shown at 6:30 at the local library in Berea

Tour today, by faculty member and co-organizer of Sustainable Berea will be at 12:30 to 2pm;

Friday, 8pm Mud Pi – band at the Black Feather Cafe.

7pm Saturday, schmooze with Sustainable Berea

Financial Review – Through Sept. 30, 2009 - Tony

2009 budget; \$123,652 expected;

Income looking good; 3300 from Art of Community Kimberston; no Bay Area event (\$5000 reduced).

Directory 5 book sales; income down;
Development/donations up (does not yet include Geoff's trailer);
Donate directory 5 to libraries next year.
No sales of Directory 6.
Video is really selling well! 236% over expectations; \$15,000 Volume 1 and 2.
Website income is about what expected.
Auction OK.

Total expenses are about what we predicted.
Small operating profit to date.
When we sell Geoph's trailer, bottom line will look even better.

Also have restricted donations, endowment of \$10K for crag; video;
others (\$17,275)
Also have remainder of CSA grant \$3200 for video.

Mail order book sales way down. Some of our books you can buy cheaper on Amazon.

The expense of bookshelf is high because of travel to get to cohousing conference.

It would be good to boost overall sales; video's up but didn't translate into bookshelf sales.
Coho/US gets 20% off net sales.

?what % of library do we have production rights for?
Bookshelf is all resale; video; process books; directory; Cmag we own, but that's not in the bookshelf line item.
Should we explore ebook strategies?

Create a working session on this.

Cmag: Wholesale #'s and advertising #'s look bad. Wholesale; one of our major distributors gave us their returns in Jan. so an irregular surge = but may reflect some level in consumer sales.
Advertising – Only 43% of 75% budget for the year. there are another \$1500 in checks sent in October. Basically dramatic decrease in ad sales. John will be here tomorrow.
Planning a working session for cmag.

The magazine is likely not be self-supporting operation in the future. Probably need to support it through fundraising/development because that's a growing area.

In general 80,000 in expenses; 60,000 income this year. This year 2009, 17,000 loss planned.
***Next year \$25,000 loss projected. More than originally projected.

Given how low ad sales are, and costs of biz manager and commissions; we're not netting very much.

Could cut costs with 10 less pages. Doesn't recommend that; John doing other things; but ad sales could increase, but we could shift. Could sell ads online. And better web site may get more ads for cmag. But could go the other way. Perhaps put revenue on website.

**Losses of Cmag is FIC's biggest financial problem.

Membership #'s on target, \$15,-16,000 a year; have gotten 11,701 so far. @\$30 base membership.

Also printed more pages of the newsletter; \$1700 (above target expense); shipped a lot of videos; higher postage costs.

McCune in MO office labor is really effective for time and expense.

Kate's work as Directory manager is not going effectively. Not always available for extra work. Especially if going to augment the website. Directory drives most of web traffic. Need to discuss in working session.

Expenses that don't cover themselves:

Secretary/development/labor: 9600/year

Magazine: 10-20,000 a year

Website: 6-7000/year

Income:

baseline membership: \$9000

other development (or events potentially): to cover mag and website.

Could also sell more ads;

[Committees/?working session?]

Finance

Development

Web site – ads; revenue ideas working group

Extended conversation with Tony and Laird – ideas to raise revenues through website.

How to encourage communities to contribute; encourage donations? Sensitive to

Add 12:45 – 1:45 working sessions.

Endowment planning;

enews; - providing McCune with content

website strategic planning

ebooks publishing

web-based initiatives

fee-based online education

Cmag website; ads; marketing – wait until John arrives.

Working Group on Web Initiatives: (all except Harvey & Julie participated)

2000 a day unique visitors to site. Most are seekers and visitors;

some community members.

Travel market opportunity.

Most popular pages/searches by month:

Home page

directory by state

First search (auto sort) List of communes (income sharing sort)

ecovillages

most recent month:

intentional communities in california = 4000

second page of california

=christian communities is 3400

intentional communities in oregon

search by hawaii, north caroline, arizona, new mexico, missouri.

then comes cohousing

communes, ecovillage, cohousing, christian, coops – these are

could add educational/retreat communities

offer a guide to getting involved in communities online; make it a more personalized journey through the site.

BUDGET - revised

operating loss of only \$130 – practically break even.

Videos

Add \$2000 for 75 more videos sold adds corrected cost of goods in spreadsheet.

WWW

Add \$1000 for more ads; plus cut \$5K from \$20,000 labor expense since new roles probably not filled in January.

Cmag: add \$2K meeting travel; \$2K = 100 extra subscriptions

Development – add \$2k

Bookshelf – add \$500 extra events sales income; add \$500 travel expense; \$200 net

Norbel - Get free checking – add \$300 saved from checking fees.

\$10,000 added expected income.

2009 sold 830 videos this year 9 months; probably 1000 for the year; expect to sell 475 in 2010.

Tony – most concerned by Cmag subscription drive; how will that happen.

Budget Approved as revised

Tony will email the spreadsheet out to folks.

Local Communities Movements

Green:

Transition towns

Relocalization

Aging:

Beacon Hill Villages

Aging in Place

Pioneer Culture Shift

Boomer Elder Culture

Neighborhood:

Barter/gift

Village network

Land trusts vs. foreclosures

Retrofit cohousing

Walkable/livable neighborhoods

Disaster response

Common:

Security clubs

CSAs

Ecovillages

Things leading people to think about cmty:

Economic stress

Climate change

Aging population

Dissatisfaction with normal ways of doing things – politics, business, etc

Natural disasters (infrastructure down)

Cost of energy

Some of us have been aware of this all along; others were blinded by “progress”

We want to help people new to these ideas to move forward without making all our mistakes and more new ones.

Transition Towns Movement

Self-assessment idea good/fresh look

Focuses attention

Needs more understanding of how to involve more of the stakeholders; more understanding of process.

Transition town movement has no understanding of what we have to offer. Not unusual.

Personalities can get in the way of collaboration.

Folks interested in some of these areas are interested in cmty; come in via these other orgs. Leaders are typically invested in their org per se.

Stereotypes may again be a barrier.

May be able to gain entrée into the movement via local connections. We may not be identified with creating social change in cmty realm.

GANAS has a number of people who live there but don't fully get it about cmty, and even fight it.

Faith & Pat will be talking to 5 Transition town movements in 2 weeks.

This is a growing movement, with significant collaboration potential.

Is there a model for FIC's involvement/service to each of these movements? A model for how each org can reach out to its allies.

Common Security Clubs:

Local networking groups/mutual aid societies to deal with financial stress. Currently 50 up & running.

Beacon Hill Village:

Aging folks banded together to hire care coordinator to help them stay in their homes. Group buying club for services related to aging. NCB is supporting “Village to Village” network. These orgs are building awareness of new choices. Existing aging infrastructure is not acceptable to boomers, and

inadequate for the numbers coming. Finances can be challenging. The users are in control of their lives more than waiting for disaster level services.

Theodore Roszak has written a new book, *The Making of an Elder Culture*.

Older people are living in group houses where support services are more affordable/easily delivered. They are more in control.

Elders' Guild: Conscious Aging for the Greater Good (about culture change)

The Village Network: "Lower Your Living Costs; Improve your Quality of Life, Connect With Great People in Real Ways"

Barter/Gift Org: offer services & gifts/trades.

May have trouble with getting beyond a small natural base. Work well inside that base, but find it hard to raise the energy level/participation level. May be making commitment ideologically that it won't be involved with "business".

Berkeley one had over-abundance of wholistic health practitioners, deficit of plumbers.

Business barter networks really know what you have to do/take advantage of/avoid to operate well.

Alternative currency systems seem unwilling to learn from them for ideological reasons.

Land Trusts generally seem to be involved in local cmtty promotion. In low income housing land trusts, we may be seen as a luxury diversion from the difficulty of saving one's home. There are a couple of examples on the west coast where low income folks get counseling about lifestyle choices etc to help them build cmtty and better success with life.

Housing coops are well established. Apartment complexes that don't have a strong sense of cmtty.

Time to figure out what we should be doing with these opportunities:

Maybe best way to have effect is to reach out and manage a project farther out than we've been doing. We could be developers in whatever way we knew how to do. For example, if elders in Scotland Co MO wanted to set up a Beacon Hill org, DR or Sandhill could help them do it. Instead of partnering with an org in a movement, we could just be part of the movement by doing it.

What we have to offer is process based problem solving. We are not getting invited much to the table. Laird has been going to other orgs meetings but not getting much response. We may need to allow leadership of other orgs to mature in their understanding of what's needed before they see us as valuable. What we offer is cooperation in a deep way. There is growing need/understanding. So far our culture has a superficial understanding of cooperation; as they go thru difficulties, they either find it too difficult to cooperate, or they go deeper.

Overall, many groups (including intentional cmtties) don't grab onto idea of getting help.

For some groups, their drive is to create a vision of a better future, without worrying too much about how to get there.

Important to include that cmtties learn to live with differences, not just live with like minded folks.

Only some fraction of cmtties ask the question of what they should do with respect to the local area, its people, and their needs.

Blogs, Facebook, Twitter

Uses: Promotion, fundraising, connect with our constituency (still mostly one-way), sharing information (promotional, other orgs info, books, websites, etc.)

Most people here are on Facebook; Tony & Laird are not. It's a focusing tool for information; you get more info from people you know. It's asynchronous, like email.

How would FIC interact with Facebook. Orgs or individuals can put up a page. We have a Cmag page done by John. Could have other pages. Individuals can become fans of that page. Anything page administrators put up is sent out to all the fans. We should have a page for the FIC, the Dir, events, etc. In addition, there are "Causes", which can range from an org & its page, to actual causes. Causes can collect donations, encourage activities, and send messages to fans. Donation drives can be passive or active, with or without matching funds, etc.

Can do birthday wishes, where friends donate for someone's birthday.

Can be duplication between causes & pages, which could mean double notification.

Tony recommends that we do these things. Nothing will really happen unless folks become fans, encourage fans, etc.

Need to be careful about dilution if we start too many pages/causes at once.

Donated money comes thru meta-org Network for Good, which takes 4% (like credit card processing fee.) We can see who's donated, but don't necessarily get much more info. Designed to foster excitement about who's raising how much, who's encouraged who to raise how much, etc.

If we change something on the FIC page, it may cause notification of fans, depending on their settings. Should changes be frequent? Should Laird be putting time into these changes?

On Facebook you would rarely write more than a paragraph. Mostly it would be notification about things via links.

Marty registered as a fan of Cmag; hasn't seen anything in several weeks. One of the things about Facebook is that things are displayed chronologically; things that came up several days ago may be hard to find. Facebook is designed for folks who check daily. We would need to put energy into setting things up; then folks who are using Facebook could juice it.

If Laird were to get involved, most important aspect would be for him to set up his Friends list, to set up the connections.

Some people use it to find old friends, find out what not so close friends are doing.

Concern about our ability to respond to efforts to engage with us.

Some people are using Facebook in place of email. They assume everyone is using Facebook as much as they are.

Agreement: We approve the FIC putting up a page and/or cause for the FIC.

TASK: Tony is willing to set up original page & cause for FIC.

Tony expects everyone to help promote the cause/page.

Agreement: Supervising the page/cause will land with appropriate person on web management team.

Twitter:

If you thought Facebook is weird!!!

Twitter is text messaging to mass audience.

Each individual can tweet up to 140 characters whenever. It goes out to whoever is following your Twitter feed.

You can also set it up so that you follow individual words or phrases (like "cohousing" or "intentional community").

Room for back & forth dialogue, spreading of news, etc.

How would FIC use Twitter? Raines is only person in room who is actively on Twitter. Tony has put Facebook & Twitter access on new Cmag site to encourage action. Could also put link on our web site to get folks in touch with where cmties are being talked about.

Can see where folks are talking about various subjects.

Could encourage folks at an event to tweet as event goes on.

With so little participation in the room, should we get into Twitter. Raines feels that it would make folks (esp younger people) able to spread the word, get excited, etc.

Radio program indicated age breakdown between Facebook (older) and Twitter (younger) and that there are racial/ethnic differences.

Raines has quickly set up a co-working lunch meeting in Little Rock using Twitter.

Blogs:

Question: how could we be using blogs more/better for FIC? Community Buzz is a aggregator blog, in action right now. Unless we have active editor, we can lose control of content. What are benefits compared to risks?

Web sites that update/aggregate content daily get repeat customers/more buzz. At this point it is unclear what to do.

All these tools are ways to create and spread more content, get more info back, select info out there that we think is interesting and worth spreading more widely.

We could spread word about other interesting orgs/projects using Cmty Buzz as well. Could have multiple people buzzing in different ways. Could bring someone new into this activity.

Communities Movement Economic Assistance Consortium (“Green EGGS” group)

Terry O’Keefe and Laird Schaub reporting on a non-FIC Consortium

Met in Colorado a couple weeks ago to discuss viability of consulting to the network for communities around cooperative business development or community-based job base.

Current possibility explored –

Acorn Seed Exchange business; Ira of Acorn has seen big bump in business nationally for heirloom seed; competitors quadrupled their sales. How could Acorn have grown more?

Consortium looking for clients. Acorn interest but hesitation, now pursuing further support with Paul. Terry and Laird will help them develop a fairly targeted proposal on how to help Acorn.

Prospect for helping cooperating community-based businesses and growing part-time home-based work across communities. For example, Southern Exposure Seeds wants to have seeds grown in geographically dispersed areas.

Community often owns land and can rent land for home-grown businesses. Economic flow as well as morale flow in support of the movement.

Goal is focus on developing cooperative economic enterprises, particularly matchmaking across communities for businesses and people looking for work – brokering employment opportunities.

Tony – hear two functions: 1) helping people find jobs that can work in community (link with big employers or community-based businesses); 2) consult on growing community-based businesses, i.e. Southern Exposure.

Terry & Laird would like FIC to support a survey on community-based businesses. Possible ads, or income sharing with FIC to do this.

Tony – some community members are entrepreneurial; some are motivated to find jobs, others are not so motivated by money and may not be employable. Can be dangerous if you refer someone who will fall down on the job. A few communities can be intermediary (Twin Oaks, Acorn), Dancing Rabbit does not do that.

Terry – we’re not aiming to be an employer.

Dan – I'm interested if insurance comes up, helping communities sort that out.

Laird – exploring general liability insurance as Green EGGS.

Jorge – recommends the Social Economy Network. Meets internationally

Betsy – would be valuable info – perhaps a magazine issue – what is your business? What jobs do you get to live in community? Industries people know about that others know about.

Don – what happened to Coop America? Now Green America.

Faith – what are you wanting from FIC board? An endorsement?

Laird – want folks to know what we are doing; that we are doing a survey; schmoozing; we will share the information.

Jenny – what info are you collecting?

Laird – what businesses are out there; what types of work folks are looking for.

Dan – Does FIC want to sponsor a business survey of communities? Just as we have done for residential communities. This could be a directory supplement.

Tony – how do we put a tag on this project? What is the benefit to FIC? If it is a survey, how will we use this information? As far as FIC creating a biz directory – probably not our FIC highest priority to create such a biz directory; we don't have the resources to take survey results and use those – regarding what would a community want to put on a web site.

Could also do this as a referral fee or percentage; an ad or link from the website for a fee to FIC.

Faith – another approach, put an ad in communities magazine.

How have you thought to approach this?

Laird – sounds like we should put a written proposal together.

Terry – there's 2 ways to look at this – comprehensive biz directory; or in our case we're after the 20% of contacts that generate 80% of the value in terms of useful business intelligence about what is going on in community, who's doing what.

Faith – so see this as a business venture for your group, plus as a way to strengthen communities.

Suggest you bring this forward in your proposal.

Don Jenson – the Directory has a resource section; begin adding biz as resources.

Laird – we're not trying to create a comprehensive biz directory.

Marty – few communities have own businesses, but have individuals who want jobs, and who own businesses.

Terry – we can offer consulting on how to start a community biz, or employment opportunities, and the people skills to organize selves.

Faith – What is the benefit to FIC of endorsing you?

Laird – 1) more ads from communities owned/based biz for magazine; 2) helping communities members find jobs – here's a benefit in name of FIC; 3) help folks see this as a movement that their community is part of; 4) eventually a directory could be a potential benefit in the future.

We think if it would be a lot more friendly and helpful to Green EGGS if we could use the FIC name when we approach communities.

Marty – do you have criteria for picking which communities/businesses to work with?

Tony - We may want to see that the biz don't embrace violence.

Betsy – board may want to develop a board policy of how to relate to professionals asking to use the FIC name in offering services to communities.

Faith – please write that down.

Terry – If we can get this off the ground, it will have some good implications to the movement; we want to share the glory or whatever comes out of this. Don't expect to make a primary living from this.

Faith – what are the next steps? Do the board members awake and present encourage a proposal

Yes! (Whatever)

Visitor Introductions: Therese Hildebrandt and David Kennedy... of Egret's Cove community 7 miles outside

5 hh; 9 adults, 4 kids; new one on the way; 5 years old community. Great bylaws, good start, but have different visions of community that are up to discuss, interpersonal stuff, setting up goals, could use some help on. 20,000 a house; “People are rich enough to not need each other” Get's easier to do things separately. For more info, contact: leafforlife@yahoo.com (David Kennedy) All are welcome to come here.

Sunrise Credit Union - Tony

FIC accounts now with Norbel; Norbel charges \$5 a month and \$5/transaction = \$300 a year.

Suggests FIC find another credit union or bank with a values match, or a local MO bank that has no fees.

Jorge – checked 4 or 5 socially conscious banks; they are also good for investing in these banks; very stable during the recession. He will send the names to Tony by email.

Tony - (FIC has several checking and savings accounts with Norbel; also a CD that can be transferred when it matures.) No fees with the others.

Marty – thot at last meeting we said it was ok to move out of Norbel.

Laird – suggest contacting Norbel and negotiating with them about fees, once have alternatives. Would like to offer them that.

Jenny – what are local options? Suggests to get to know the local people; valuable relationships.

Tony – Bank of Kirkville – locally owned, DREcovillage and Skyhouse use them. FIC probably prefers credit union; will someone research?, but his preference is also to go local.

Betsy – local seems valuable; have a relationship; but can suggest Self-Help Credit Union in Durham North Carolina, they invest in community economic development; affordable housing; financed Pacifica Cohousing (affordable land trust) in Durham; Berkeley Cohousing banks with them.

Raines – they charge \$5/month for nonprofits.

Jorge – would also support local connection.

Laird - FIC also has relationship with Alaska Federal Credit Union.

Laird will write Bill Becker to see if Norbel will provide zero fees.

Generally seemed support for going to the Bank of Kirksville.

“Life in Cooperative Culture “– Laird.

Discussion of the phrase which debuted fall 2006 as subtitle to Cmag.

Mark put out prototypes for directory and website with used that subtitle – Graphics committee is asking Board to consider the use of the phrase outside the magazine.

Raines – likes it; fits in with the larger vision/cooperative culture not just intentional communities. Don't think there's anyone who would associate it only with the magazine.

Tony – sounds like the subtitle of a magazine. Could be tag line for FIC: promoting cooperative culture. Not sure where he would put it on the site.

Jorge – beyond the design constraints; can it be used in a more open way?

Tony – from website point of view, we're already needing to explain what intentional community means, AND now we want to explain what “cooperative culture” means. Feels tricky, riding two horses.

Marty – where else does John want to use it?

Laird – use in masthead for directory, other pages on the site.

Harvey – suggest using “cooperative culture”

Raines can see it as a useful phrase to help people figure out their part in the circles of what FIC is about.

Tony – feel ok with people wanting to use the phrase; but not quite into that phrase is to brand FIC, i.e. wherever FIC/intentional communities we add the tag line: life in cooperative culture.

WRAPUP - Harvey – sounds like this phrase is suitable to be used by FIC in different areas, but the Board does not see it as “the phrase” to be used throughout all our FIC materials.

Alan Pakaln Proposal:

Alan is proposing FIC use the word intentional only in relation to processes, so “stop using the phrase “intentional community” and stress intentional processes for creating cooperative, sustainable community.

TASK: Harvey will respond to Alan's proposal. Harvey will include an outline on his workshop “Creating Community Where You Are” and convey how the board is trying to broaden the meaning of intentional community and the challenges that go along with that..

Evaluation

Pluses:

+ Meeting space worked really well (ditto); projector, couch, space, whiteboard, much better than pieces of paper (ditto on project);

+ Non-com host pushes us to community where you are

Also enjoyed Richard's show and tell of the Ecovillage Berea

Very impressed by comments at Thai dinner when Berea and Adam presented; sage advice; out of experience – it's a lot of what this group has to offer.

Lot of new faces; counting drop-ins we had more people than Kimberton

Process went well; (awkward first morning; but worked through it)

Yay apples!

Betsy for support help

Good board conversations

Getting biz done with visitors included

Don Hollister felt being here very special to the Yellow Spring group; meant a lot to Faith Morgan, to be welcomed here.

Needs improving:

More dispersal of people to different places; hard to gather on time; ok ending on time

More contact with the locals – we had some, but not much.

Missed having plenaries with more people.

Disappointed we didn't get to break bread with Egret's Cove due to illness in their community.

Explore ways of checking in with the 'imps' folks who are not present; involving them in meetings electronically.

Closing Circle:

Bead was chosen by our host, Cheyenne Olson, and put on the necklace. Before placing it on the necklace, we went around the circle sharing the memories of being together at this meeting.

The bead was green and in the shape of a barrel.