

FIC Organizational Meeting
November 12th through the 14th 2010
Mosaic Commons Cohousing
Berlin, MA

Opening Circle

Remembering highlights from the following FIC Org Mtgs:

2005 LA Ecovillage, CA

2000 Sunward Cohousing, MI

1995 Church of the Golden Rule, CA

1990 Ganas, NY

Budget

The 3rd Quarter 2010 accrual calendar year is looking bad overall.

Art of Community did not happen, bookshelf not selling, and our income is low.

Cmag income is very low, Development is ok, Dir-5 sales are slow, new one is on the way, Dir-6 sales are just starting, we could get a bump in Q4 from that, video is ok and we will end 3K below budget, ad sales are about the same as last year, not using new capability, co-housing event should bring in \$11,000 more, we are at 53% of budgeted income through 3 quarter.

Expense side: we are down to 63% of budget but still that leads to a \$15K operational loss so far.

Money has come in for Directory Endowment and for Cmag

Cmag has lost \$14K so far this year.

Not selling a lot of books and we did not have a Bookshelf manager for first 6 months and the economy is bad.

Cmag: so we predict that we will make 42K and in past years we have made 49K and the budget was 57K so this is a real problem area.

Cmag loss is the exact same as the organizational loss, subscribers are at 1150

No surprises in office expenses, not a problem on the expense side.

How can we absorb the loss is main question.

We have a donation that has been floating us so far, but this is not good because it has been earmarked for other things.

Dir6 will be our last printed version of the Directory. Listings are free. We just made a big push to communities that list to give us help with capitalizing our directory endowment.

This is the start of a major campaign. First went to communities and then will go to individuals. Looking for \$500,000 and the interest will generate \$35K. We are working to make next year better. A New We video with 10 European communities should give us a boost. Cmag is better in quality. Why can't we find another 1000 subscribers or more advertising?

There are over 1000 communities in the directory. We need half of them to give 100 a year to reach our goal for our endowment. Donations have been supporting Cmag, but will this continue? Can we lower our expenses by shifting Cmag from print to online? We could get ads through a service, but they would not be community oriented. Tony feels like he cannot model what a Cmag online budget would look like with any accuracy.

How many more Cmag subscribers would it take to break even? The magic number is 1700 and we have 1150 now.

Laird has tried to convert a donation from project based to an operational donation that is floating the organization.

Lowest possible barrier for people to participate in the Directory is what we want. People want it for free. Reason why we cannot charge for the online Directory is that people feel information should be free in this day and age.

Budget Continues:

Tony has altered the budget.

The Art of Community has bottom line 6k profit for the event, Bookshelf sales go up a bit, decrease the event expenses and expense is getting to co-housing event in DC.

Google ads will go up from 6k to 9K.

8k to 10k in unrestricted donations.

Played with Cmag bottom line is -20K, so the overall budget is down to a 10k loss. That is not enough.

Development:

Emily is in charge of membership and its running well. We are slightly up. \$100 or more in the last five years is a major donor. Laird deals with them. 4th quarter is usually our best quarter.

In the past we have been doing house parties for fundraising. We get an average of about \$1,000 per house party. We need hosts for these events. Madison, WI is the one coming up. Do we know people who could set up one of these evening events for FIC? What can we do in the Bay area to make money and promote the Art of Community event in Sept, 2011? , NASCO will have a regional event in the Bay area in the near future.

Will people give to Directory Endowment and then give to general operating?

We have not done much with Facebook.

Some have done a birthday wish pitch and we made \$450 on that. We should do more of that.

Approach friends to be FIC members, give Cmag subscriptions for Christmas gifts, and buy our DVDs. Place our DVDs at historic sites.

Rains and Betsey will talk to Berkeley Ecology Center, and Solar Living Center to ask them to place our DVD's there.

We can do better with Development. We can do 15K in unrestricted so that means we have a 5k deficit. If we budget a loss next year where does that come from?

We have \$18,000 in various bank accounts and we have \$21,600 in an earmarked donation from 5 years ago. We have a total of 50k in earmarked donations pledged. We have been losing money and we have been balancing that by dipping into our earmarked donations. If we loss 10k next year we will be spending directory endowment.

Ashlar investment could take place with a large payout in 2011 or 2012; We cannot add that to the budget because it is not certain.

Raising money for operating funds are the hardest. It's easier getting more money for new initiatives.

We have 300 or 400 memberships that generate 15K.

We are 4K short and Cmag is losing 19K a year, so Tony is proposing a large cut in Cmag of 8k.

How long can we continue to absorb that loss of 19k a year, our reserves are low.

Could be the times we live in.

This is the amount we need to cut and give it to the employees to figure out.

We work interactively with staff to get down to a 15K a year loss on Cmag. They can tell us how they want the budget cut, in a cooperative way. We cannot use unrealistic budget numbers. This is an attempt to continue Cmag.

Show Production Team the original budget and where we are, and they have to get to 15k.

Fundraising for Communities Magazine how does it fit into the formula.

It's a wonderful magazine. Targeted approaches work well for Cmag.

Give Production Team discretion to help close the gap and have Laird raise targeted donations?

FIC donations need to be above a certain threshold. There is still an incentive to have staff go out and raise donations for Cmag.

How much does Cmag rely on the rest of the organization? How much are we willing to pay to have a great Cmag? We need to get the loss down to 5 or 10K max.

Until we get targeted organizations to make it work, Cmag is a program service.

Is Cmag meeting the mission in the best possible way? Yes, and this is part of a longer conversation.

Without Cmag, would we do more in terms of the web site?

How can Cmag get down to the budget numbers we need? Sell more ads, raise the price, and make the magazine shorter, use different paper, samples or back issues could be higher, sell more subscriptions.

Why is staff not here? There is a cost issue. We should get them to Chicago mtg.

Back to Budget... Tony says he will draw the budget with a line item that says \$16,000 deficit and then our budget gets in the 700 range.

2008 26k loss, 2009 22k loss, 2010 the loss is close to 30k projected.

AGREED: The board all feels that the budget is ready and is passed. Marty and Laird will talk to Cmag staff.

How can we cut Cmag losses?

Are we making money with a business manager? Chris has offered to take a \$2,000 a year pay cut. No one is excited about this, but sees that it should be on the table.

Let's look at the Business Manger salary.

We have never gotten the result of the Cmag that we need for it be self sustaining.

We could have lost more money in the transition from John to Tanya than we accounted for.

We need to talk with Tanya. There is potential for improved performance, along with ads and subscriptions.

Marty and Harvey will check in with Tanya and Chris.

Ads are way down.

Maybe it's harder to sell ads then three years ago. Has there been any boost in subscriptions?

Perhaps our Cmag liaison can spend more time in terms of supervision and assessment. Laird says he is part of this as well, and is working on it. We can not afford to wait on this.

We have a problem in the area of ad sales. We need to give her a timeline and markers for improvements. We can make ads a separate job and cut the business manager job.

We don't have a Business Manager report at this Org Mtg.

Who will be on the phone call and should we include Chris?

Can our Business Manager prepare a plan that the board can evaluate in the next weeks?

Rains asks if we have considered selling the Magazine.

Can we say staff budget is 20K and the Production Team figures it out?

Let's pose these questions to Chris, Yulia and Tanya. How can we work together to fix this problem? We need a plan in two weeks. Do we want to have a dissolve date; do we have to face that now?

Marty, Chris and Laird is the group that needs to be involved to get these conversations started.

We're aware that Chris and Yulia are doing a good job. Cmag has never looked better.

What is our strategy? We need to look at the budget more so we can say what a bottom line on Cmag is. We need to set a target for Cmag ad sales.

Converting Cmag to an online Journal

Might be half the work on editing and layout. We may generate 5k in ad revenue or we lose 5K.

Lost 15k last year so...

Wonder if layout cost in Tony's new Cmag online budget estimate is going to be that low.

Cmag online would not be a layout PDF, it would be HTML.

What would we lose in traffic and revenue by not having a print Cmag? Morale and buzz could be lowered by this lesser product.

Can we raise our subscription level? Is there a loss in the transition? Plenty have done it in the past.

People know things that are online these days like Huffington Post.

Lots of people move there magazines to online only and then fold it up because they are taking a loss.

Printed Cmag is viewed by less people, but in a more in-depth way.

We have a big hole to dig ourselves out of in 2011.

What happens with Dir6, A New We, and Art of Community in the fall? These are new elements for 2011 budget.

We sold 800 copies of Dir5 in 3 years so we have 300 copies of Dir6 selling in 2011.

We could sell 100 copies of A New We in 2011, and it only gives us \$600 profit for the year. We are selling 125ish of our Visions DVD.

If you take Cmag out of the equation we break even.

If we make 10 to 20K on Art of Community in 2011, it does not mean we can do the same thing in 2012.

2010 we are down in donations by about 20K so far, but there is 4th quarter still to come. Laird says that those numbers will be better.

There is a danger from being too optimistic. A little in a whole lot of areas, can add up. How can we do a little to generate more revenue on Cmag?

Cmag development and the Art of Community are places where we can make a dent in the 30K short fall

Events Proposal

Susan Frank and Molly Reed want to do FIC events.

This has been difficult because the event vision has not matched the facilities available. Now they think that Westminster Woods is a place that works, but it is not cheap. It's located in Northern California. We are considering September of 2011.

The vision is a place that can allow for people to be near each other in off times to allow for more community involvement and interaction.

With Westminster there is a significant deposit up to 6 months before the event date. We only get half the deposit back if we cancel. We have 5K in funds for seed money for events, but just the deposit is more than that. Susan and Molly will be looking for conference sponsors. In the past we have lost a lot of money on people backing out of the organizing of an event. Susan has

experience and is very enthusiastic. The target time is middle weekend in September, 2011. Its 2 hours from San Francisco. Sonoma County is a big center of community

There are 27 cabins, a dining hall, and meeting spaces. Full rate is \$500 for each participant, but there is a bunch of discounts including all lodging and food. There will be workshops, better food, more comfortable than some rustic venues.

In the summer they do kids camps. We will need to respect their traditions.

There are a lot of ways to connect with this event. There will be information about community as well as an experience with community.

What about timing? There is concern with the date around Burning Man. Do the Bay area folks like this time? What about competitive events? Organizers have a preference for this type of event in the Northern California region, and a camping less urban event.

How hard is it to get to? 70 miles north of San Francisco

We have had great success with events in the past in terms of participant satisfaction.

People could drive from the city on Friday to Sunday with a Thursday optional. Current vision by organizers is start supper time Thursday with conference starting on Friday at dinner. Thursday would be an add-on. FIC provides content, and help with content. Good data for an area to have this event. This is higher cost investment than we have done by a significant amount. Must draw participants from California for this to succeed. We could make 15K on this event. The place can hold 450 or 500 people.

There would be booths with vendors that could be an income source for us.

Tony wants lodging and meals to be around \$425. Can we get people down to a low income rate around the \$200's? We all spent a lot to be at this meeting.

Title or theme, will be about Sustainability.

Tony wants to see a budget where we have 150 people and breakeven numbers. Costs seem high and it makes him nervous. We could lose our deposit of \$8600 and could potentially lose 20K.

Ask event team to draw up a scenario where we have 150 people and one where there are 350 also we want to see more Scholarships for folks and a low income camping option.

Laird thinks we should go for this, and we are going to do a go around.

Do we have the \$8600 for a deposit? We do not know the answer. Concern that our other financing will be tight. Harvey will give us a 0 or 1% loan of 5K for this event.

Marty likes event and the area and the Risk is high and he likes the Idea of doing an event.

Jenny very nervous about the money and is also impressed with the event team, she stands aside.

Bill thinks risk is huge. If it bombs, it will sink the ship. He is supportive because of the site and solid management team.

Laird is ready to role the dice. It's in line with our Mission.

Harvey says that it serves the Mission and can provide income. He wants to do something the organizers want to do so they will be focused and enthusiastic. He wants to go for it.

Tony likes the idea of an urban event and is a bit disappointed that it is not on the table.

Tony and Lincoln do not like the budget. With the asking price for attending, he does not see that many people.

Doing something exciting is good says Tony, but we should not act foolishly.

We can do a Westminster event but we need to find a low cost option.

Lincoln is sketched out: not enough scholarships cost too high, risk too high for our current organizational economics.

Put energy into this project as a whole board.

Lincoln might like to see a smaller scale event with this team that goes well.

Do we need to give them \$8600 right now, or can we wait? We can wait but we need to reserve the date.

Could the event produce a product that you could make money from, workshop tapes or something?

Fall 2011 or spring of 2012??

We need from the Team more scholarships, more budgets, and Friday evening start with an optional Friday course block.

Friday event could be down in the bay, like a tour of co-housing.

Could offer Thursday night lodging at the camp or just say show up on Friday at 10am for community process or starting a new community track, could start early.

After conference call with Event Team:

Events Budget for West Coast Art of Community

Susan seems comfortable going from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. Could allow for a post conference for a sub group. Trying to keep things simple as far as registration, and not have some people showing up early and it being tricky to create the container. Susan preferred longer time for program but seems to have made her peace with this length.

This would mean paying for two nights plus one extra meal (Sunday lunch). We would price things accordingly to the attendees. People would show up Friday in time for dinner.

Got rid of idea of ticket price reducing by \$.30 per attendee. Still include a group discount.

Looking at a cost of \$375 for non-members and \$325 for members. This is a bigger discount than the price of membership, so we would assume that everyone would join as a member. We would expect almost everyone to join if they are not a member. If a community is an FIC member then all their members get the discount so we should not count on \$35 from each person. Student rate at \$325 which means they do not need to get a membership. \$300 per person for group rate for groups of 8 or more. Child rate currently set at \$250 for kids 6-16.

The venue cost is \$150/person more or less.

At 150 people we would still see a small profit. At 300 people we would see \$20,000 profit. \$5K to future events team. \$16K to be split between events team and FIC.

Concern about having a more robust scholarship system. Maybe set a budgeted amount and allow for partial scholarships and full scholarships. Volunteering is an option but up to team if they want to do it.

Break even is around 150 from what we can tell. Might be 170 if we actually have to pay for 200 people even if we don't have that many.

Would like to see scholarships for around 10% of the attendees at a rate where they essentially pay the venue costs so we are not losing on them.

If some people are going to camp we would need a price for that option that was lower.

Westminster Woods website indicates housing and dining for 250. Not clear how we would do 450 to 500.

Susan may still go to Malaysia which is a concern for people.

She seems on board with this project and seems to have good energy for it.

Some thoughts of going up to \$350 for base price.

Would like to see the full price, including FIC membership, for registering after the early bird date, to be under \$375 max. Great if it can be cheaper than that, but concerned that anything higher will cause too much price resistance. Could have a higher price in last 2 weeks before event.

Day rates won't save that much money for participants given the site fee.

For two day event the deposit would only be around \$6000.

At some point we have to give Westminster firm numbers. Not clear exactly when that is.

AGREED: Normal registration rate including FIC membership should be \$375 or under. Late fee in last two weeks could be higher. Early bird could be cheaper.

AGREED: We would like to offer partial scholarships to at least 10% of the attendees at the rate that we will be passing through to the venue.

Next issue is dates

AGREED: Seems like we are OK with September of 2011. Looks like the weekend of Sept 23-25 is the best weekend for us.

FIC Org Mtg in fall 2011

Ideally we could do Oversight Meeting on Thursday or Friday and do board meeting directly after event on Monday to Wednesday Sept 26-28.

One question is how would we fit in a pre or post event add-on.

Seems like the ideal would be to do it on Friday. We could do stuff to make it simple for our events staff so it stays simple for them and simple for our attendees.

AGREED: Ideal case - Board meeting afterwards. Pre event on Friday if we can make it work and keep events team happy.

Newsletter: from the FIC

Is the newsletter an enticement to joining FIC? Probably not.

Dancing Rabbit has 4 – 5,000 people on its e-news list and about 200 paper newsletters. They plan to stop sending out the paper stuff.

Ideal is a newsletter every quarter, which is a higher standard than we are meeting. We have eNews once a week.

What else besides what is already in the eNews would we want to put in the content of the newsletter? What is interesting to our members?

Answer : volunteer openings, our newly scheduled event on west coast, in two weeks we are doing a Facebook push, a balance between giving members things they want and things that we need from them, personal stories and vignettes.

Web based newsletter, contact with members in a regular way is the goal.

Gleanings in the GEO newsletter pick up articles that relate to our content with a headline and a link, any member of the collective can do this. How can we get other voices besides Laird, what is the appeal or ideas Laird, use existing blog software that Laird knows how to do. Marty and Jenny take pictures; we should get pictures in the news letter. Harvey will write an article about the event we have in the works, can we have some bead history piece?

We are looking for an editor for this membership newsletter. Is it FIC NEWS or Intentional Communities newsletter? How to differentiate it title wise.

FIC Voice, Inside Dope, FIC Pennant, Inside Scoop, Lets have a contest, FIC Scoop, FIC grapevine, word Buzz,

Email for all of our members is not available. We need to get that info at renewal. Laird does not write from an organizational perspective as a rule, it could work

Electronic version not as good as an email, GEO does rich email every once in a while, like monthly.

Tony says one article at a time is good, what percentage of people are opening a newsletter or clicking on a link, could we use it for surveys?

Editor job description needs to be created. Let's shoot for once a month or less. George and Cloud (layout person) need to know about what we're talking about. Michael Johnson from Ganas suggests using a presentation, read online, print PDF, or print out magazine format. Three links maybe. Michael will put Tony in contact with person at GEO who knows how to do this.

www.ic.org and Facebook:

Should we put ads on more pages? We may be throwing away 15% of the page views? Should we put picture ads on the top of the pages? We do not have ad control so may get viewed as sleazy or bad? Do we want color ads on the top of pages? He will try out different ad style ad layouts and see.

What if you sign up for newsletter then you do not see ads after that?

Tony presents what ads look like on our Home Page. We can not control the ad company's put up, and they are somewhat targeted, somewhat random. We have not ever had ads on our Home page.

How much money could we earn? Could be an extra \$1000 per year on the low end says Tony.

We have our own ads on the first page. We can bump right and left and center content. We can pick the spot on the page where ads appear.

We can also sell and place our own ads on our page to get a better values match. You can call it ads or site sponsor.

The more you can make the ads look like your content, the more clicks you get. This is the common wisdom. Tony is not excited about doing this; we can try one ad in one spot and see what happens.

We have a lot of info already on our home page and having irrelevant content could be confusing.

Also our directory landing page is another spot for ads. Also, geographic sort page is a good spot for ads with a lot of space.

People have a high ability to block out ad noise and so you need to make ad's look like content.

AGREED: Tony is given the go ahead to place more ads on ic.org. We have no complaints thus far on ads Tony has already put on our website.

Communal Studies: they gave to Geoph's video. We've been making some money at Cohousing conferences thru Bookshelf and auctions. Should cohousing pay more for the directory?

What if you needed to be a FIC member to put a listing in the Directory?

Should we monetize our directory? Charge to list, charge for favorable positions on our website, charge for advertising? Charging might drop listing amounts. Charge to search the directory. These are the real expenses to people or organizations that use the directory how can we get more from them to support our efforts? Restricting the flow of information will run contrary to our mission.

How do we help seekers be more Intelligent Shoppers for Community?

We have questions that people answer and we spit out a list of the communities that fit their profile. Find the matches for me click on button, like e-harmony and match.com

We are doing a one way matching. The algorithm these companies use have weighted questions like how important is religion to you community choice? You get lists that are good matches for you and then you can search on your own.

People may not know what they want. They should visit before they make a new community move.

Tony can write the code but it's tricky. It will help guide them through the process. Diana Christian did some of this work in her book.

Ideas for key sorting questions:

Location

Forming vs. established

Has a common or shared spiritual practice?

Member composition

Urban, rural, suburban

Financial style, number of shared community meals, economics

Strictly secular

Diet

Shared spiritual orientations vs. eclectic spiritual orientation

How much do you want to be in each other's lives?

How does the group solve problems?

List of questions that they can ask of the community in person or over the phone or by email

Directory cannot help with these questions, but they are still important

How do you work on your relationships?

Are there jobs in community?

How do you work with conflict?

What assets do you bring, what can you afford? Are you open to a community that has a buy-in fee?

How do I get permission to visit? What is a communities visiting practice, how do I visit well, are you even a community?

What type of work do you want to be doing? What do you do for income? Are you looking for a job and a community?

How far left are your politics?

How far off the grid do you want to live?

If we get this down then it could be a paid service.

These are the questions you need to ask, but we need to be sensitive to our communities and not get on their nerves by asking 30 questions. Subjective piece is still critical and you need to visit.

OK, so what is the format for how we do this? Laird suggests hyperlinks. Ask question and then link to 3 paragraph explanations. Roll ups to expand the answer if you click on it. Laird can blow up the questions and Blog on it, and then we can use it as content.

Facebook Brainstorm:

Quick, fast acting, low cost pitches on Facebook

Can we get donations for auction, fundraising projects on Face book?

Two groups have set up a page that has a cause on Facebook that named us.

New cause once a month, 4100 have joined our cause, friends 1000 on our page

Create a page event for the Art of Community

Give a magazine for Christmas, 923 people on Facebook who like Communities Magazine.

You donate; we will send you Directory5 for a resource center or Library of your choice.

FIC as the Fiscal Sponsor for Reach Within Productions LLC

We need to have basic financial oversight on the organization that we are the fiscal sponsor of and we need to make sure they are doing something within our mission. They seem to meet the criteria with the production of their movie on intentional communities.

We get 5% of the revenue they raise. They need to provide us with a report to show us how they spent the money.

TASK: Rains will be a check-in for the Reach Within team on how they are doing with donor solicitation and other stuff. We suggest quarterly reports.

It's OK to have a non-profit corporation make a profit.

Are we responsible for there 1099?

We pay the LLC money and they are furthering our mission.

We need more research would be a good idea on Fiscal Sponsorship in general.

We want quarterly reports and more investigations on Fiscal Sponsorship.

TASK: Rains is going to do a report on Fiscal Sponsorship obligations by the next board meeting. His report will go out before the meeting. The purpose of this new cmtee is to research the legal requirements of fiscal sponsorship. Rains is the only committee member.

TASK: Rains is going to check in with Ryan and Mandy and read the reports. Rains will tell us if there is an issue. Rains is the Reach Within Productions Liaison.

TASK: Jenny will capture this report on her Master List.

TASK: Laird will sign the Fiscal Sponsorship agreement as the board has agreed to it.

Pass Through:

Reach Within Productions is an example of a Pass Through.

The conditions under which we do a pass through are that we support activities of unincorporated group(s).

We have done some individual pass throughs in the past.

There is some discomfort with certain types of pass throughs. It gets tricky when a donor is benefiting directly from the donation.

We want more research.

Paying for trainings with donations is something Tony is not comfortable with. Not a good fit with our overall mission. Let's not help people play a game with the IRS.

AGREED: Discourage donations that inure to the benefit of the donor. Oversight committee will decide the appropriateness of fiscal sponsorship and all pass through donations.

Walnut Street co-op loan renewal:

Walnut Street co-op wants to renew the loan of \$8,875 for 5 years.

AGREED: Bill Becker will send them a signed loan document.

Caroline's board status:

Caroline has been unable to attend the last 3 Org Mtgs. We need to act or she is off the board.

AGREED: Caroline is to maintain her board status.

Evaluation

Weather outstanding

Hosting was great; host member engagement with us was great

Living Routes great, youth portal great idea, Paul and Lisa a plus, Don a plus

Lincoln taking notes

Gender balance needs work

Lincoln trying hard to help out

Great to reconnect, Rains feels like we are in a bubble, the content and outreach could be more inclusive.

Paul learned a lot, FIC feels more real to him, he would like to host

Lisa wanted meat as a food

Connecting with Susan in a virtual way

Wanted to have Chris here or involved him more

Tony great work on budget

Periods of low energy

Rhythm of engagement was good

Closing Circle:

Catya Belfer-Shevett, aka Cat, chose the bead to represent our time at Mosaic Commons Cohousing. She was our contact from Mosaic for this fall org mtg. She chose a white glass bead with orange and black lines.

A bead was chosen for Directory 6, but it broke in the process of stringing it. Tony needs to pick another bead to represent the 2011 print publication of Communities Directory.