

FIC Org Meeting Minutes

October 24-26, 2008

Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage

Rutledge, MO

Opening Circle

Bead ceremony celebrated memories of past FIC meetings with story telling.

2003 The Vale (5 yrs)

1998 Golden Rule (10 yrs)

1993 Songaia (15 yrs)

1988 Alpha Farm (20 yrs)

Amy Seiden from Dancing Rabbit chose the bead for this fall Org Mtg

Amy welcomes us to Dancing Rabbit.

Review of proposed Agenda

ORGANIZATIONAL VIBRANCY

Ma'ikwe introduced the topic. She has been mulling this over for a while. Our ritual at our meetings seems more of looking at the past and not to the future. This may be leaving people out or behind. For new people, associating with the organizational can seem like an up hill climb. This may be influential in not having new blood in the organization. For example, the failure of the regional networking initiative had a personal impact on Mai'kwe that diminished some level of her interest and energy. Comments suggested there may not have been openness to disagreements within a committee structure, for instance.

Questions and comments showed this is a topic that has in various ways been around a while. It seems that for some the "bar" of how to associate with the organization may be set too high. The organization might well look at how to make it easier for individuals to express their unique creativity as they begin their association. Is the FIC more open to individual creative expression than in the past? Yes, but there may still be some difficulties.

Comments:

We may not really nurture people in the ways they need.

Keep the maintenance up of what we've got is one side of the coin with the other side being the requirement of stretching more.

Why aren't there more vibrant people coming into the organization? How do we look forward? We do some of that, but.... For example, the bio regional initiative seemed like an area we could go forward with. Yet, there was conflict in that committee at a later meeting and that was not resolved. That grouping has not been productive and possibilities have not been realized. How to look forward? How do we introduce forward looking things?

There is some expressed discomfort with what appears to be a special place Maikwe has in the organization by reason of her relationship with Laird. Maikwe clarified that in that there is no feeling of "specialness", just an added element.

Not being connected to the history is valid. Coming into any organization, there is no connection with the history. It takes a while for that “place of culture” to be developed. This organization is incredibly well documented! It may be valuable to bring past issues up in the context of what’s happening now.

I share Ma’ikwe’s concern about new people in the organization. We’re having trouble taking care of the business at hand and therefore it’s hard to think of including new initiatives or projects. We’ve shifted from including new people on staff to “hiring” people for jobs. This has been a significant shift. In the absence of viable people for a given job, we’ve gone the way we have.

There are several perspectives on this question. We can look at the past more on issues rather than nostalgia. Yes, we are already overloaded in different ways. We are relying less on volunteer labor. And, it takes time to get new ideas formulated and accepted and worked with within this organization.

When I began my association, I foresaw opportunity for great growth. Life in community has been an ongoing learning, both in the private and in the public. When feelings of being “closed in” were present, opportunity for greater expansion was a recognized course to pursue. There is a dominant male energy in the organization.

There are two issues as I see it. How to make our rituals more inclusive? Current ritual has been done for five years and it filled a void that didn’t include our “history.” Now it’s time to expand that. Second, recruiting new people. It is difficult for people with time and travel considerations to volunteer in the way some have in the past. This next phase of community may involve people who want to be compensated in some way.

This process has brought a lot of things up. We used to de-brief post meetings in the past and that was really important. It may have helped clarify some intense feelings that were present in the past. I’m tired of continuing to talk about this. Past emotional issues still present unresolved elements.

The issue I raised at the outset seems to be getting lost. There still needs to be space to make way for new energy in the future. Laird is the primary implementer of a lot of that. This has touched on various multiple issues, some of which are sensitive to some. My worry is we do not have new people and that is an important concern. My “yearly “review brings this up for me.

How do we honor the past and keep the future. How do we greet the future for things that we don’t know now that even exist. Perhaps another session might be good to do.

From a process point of view, bringing up issues is helpful to the organization. We need to have courage, not tears, when we bring up issues. The people in this organization are strong. Bring it up!

ORGANIZATIONAL VIBRANCY- PART II

One aspect from last time was working to make our ritual more inclusive.

The ritual was an example of the dynamic but is only representative of the underlying issues which seem to include a variety of things: maintenance organization/engaging people’s creativity and vision, and recruitment and integration in general.

Gender and age may also be an aspect of this dynamic.

At some point we stopped doing the tarot card for the meetings. Having dropped that, it seems like we have lost some key element of our meetings.

List of elements in the conversation:

Rituals

Creativity/Maintenance

Acceptance Criteria/knowledge

Integration

Aging/Mentoring new leaders

Is our mission attractive to people? Is it our sense of community?

Strategy for attracting new people

And retaining new people

We get tourists who come to meetings who aren't really interested in joining in the work of the FIC. Only a few people who come to meetings are potential "cmtly members". We have to get people to show up, then draw them in, then retain them.

The question of the mission being attractive is tied in with the question of being in maintenance mode.

For board level we need them to find the mission to be interesting whereas for an implementer we need their engagement on the project.

Some people come to the org and find the mission compelling and are willing to plug into whatever tasks are needed. Sometimes we get people interested in a specific project or we hire them for a specific project. We either need to recruit more people willing to do anything or more people willing to do specific things.

Maybe we need to be more actively using our vision and mission statements to energize and motivate people to engage with the organization.

I think people do like our mission/vision. Our job applicants say they align with it but they still need to get paid. Also it's interesting that our job applicants are from people who don't live in cmtly right now.

Why don't people in community engage with us more? They fantasize that it's all being handled Ok without their energy. They are not aligned with a sense of a community's movement. They are too busy, don't travel, etc.

How do we generate that sense of being part of a movement? If we could then it might motivate them to be part of our activities.

Many people in community do not align at all with a community's movement, many do align themselves, and few are ready to lend their personal energies to that movement.

In western Oregon there is a strong sense of alignment in IC's and the broader community movement. This varies widely across regions.

It seems that we have fewer volunteer implementers. Surprised that when asking for volunteers for something like layout for newsletter we get nothing. We have shifted to paying people because we are unable to get volunteers.

Are we promoting and expressing our mission. Maybe we should be incorporating it into our org meetings.

It seems people resonate with our vision but that doesn't manifest energy to help achieve our goals.

Maybe it really is an issue of people not realizing that their help is needed.

Could have a banner with our vision/mission statement on it.

Could include our mission/vision as an intro to those being invited to our meetings.

People in all aspects of life say they don't get involved because they are "too busy" This is a broad societal piece.

Getting people to know and understand and resonate with the mission is step one but the harder question is how do we get people to lend their personal energy toward that mission. How do we make our mission attractive enough to them to make it a high enough priority that they are willing to take action.

For Ma'ikwe the sense of a movement and being part of it was what motivated me to be part of FIC. I stay involved if I feel like my contribution is valued and appreciated.

Is Ma'ikwe's experience a shared one? How do we find people who are inspired by the communities movement? How do we motivate them to lend their energy to the cause?

We do need to tell people in communities more about what we are and what we are doing. They may feel basic alignment but they basically don't get it.

We used to have much more active committees. People outside the board who would be active participants. Now it is pretty much just the board.

We should recognize that we have a long list of people who contribute to the magazine (writers/photographers etc.) who donate their time. Also we have people on the events team.

It seems that a lot of the people who get involved are directly touched by Laird or other specific people. Seems like that personal connection is key. Might be that more specific goals would motivate me or others to get involved.

Ask people at events what they want from the communities movement or from FIC.

Want to make sure that when we talk about age in our group that we speak of a balance so we don't discount the contributions of the people we have.

Don't want to see an antagonist relationship between new and longer term people (or old and young for that matter).

Maybe we should do a survey of communities to find out what they know or don't know about us.

Ma'ikwe has energy to try gathering more info from communities.

2008 Financial Overview

REVIEW OF P & L (profit and loss)

The Art of Community event in Albuquerque, while a successful event, lost about \$500.

We are operating a loss for this year. While not large, it's still something we need to watch.

Our bookshelf mail order business is down, event sales are fine.

Consensus Books: An error was made in budget setting for 2008. About \$1800. Yet, that is still overall a successful publication

Earmark donations have been good under Laird's hand. General donations are not available as much. Directory V: Sales are slower than projected. And, the slow down was faster than with past editions. This may invite us to consider how our future directory printings should go. Should there be some changes with the next edition? Should there be a continuing of the next edition? Costs of production are increasing.

Auction income has done very well.

Selling mailing labels had no takers this year. So, no receipt of the \$1K projected.

Labor at our Virginia office is significantly down. Since all sales are lower, there is less staff needed for those tasks.

Expenses on supplies and postage are for unexplained reasons, down this year.

Secretary expense, as expected.

The video figures are not in yet. What should we do for 2009?

The web: Some income received. Google ads generating about \$150 per month. Overall income, a little low. We almost always spend all our money received.

On the Balance Sheet:

Earmarked donations total about \$29K. The investments are pooled, no separated. We do use the operating budget to borrow from earmarked funds, albeit limited. We all need to be aware that as a management tool, we do this a bit.

The cash flow statement does not contain much useful stuff.

Communities Magazine (Cmag):

Some earmarked donations are for Communities Magazine.

Sales this year are slow in all categories – wholesale, retail, subscriptions, etc.

Advertising variations may be a result of our new business manager and discoveries that past management may have been sloppy.

Expenses are still as predicted.

A loss of \$9K this year so far is alarming. Continuing the same way, we could lose \$20K in 2009.

Comments

Are we where we want to be with the esthetics, the look? Not yet, says Laird.

Changes in the make up of the team in 2006 caused delays in efforts to “make new” the magazine.

Perhaps now we can return to finishing the efforts. Yet, the new Art Director (now resigned) and the graphics designer for the FIC have to be on the same page in order to move forward.

The new team is not yet “gelled” into the new design. And, we really need an Art Director.

There were very positive comments expressed about our new Business Manager John Stroup and his work with the publication to date. While John's initial days on the job seemed daunting to him, all are encouraged and appreciative of his efforts so far.

As a Board, we NEED to determine what an acceptable loss is for Cmag for next year, and beyond. Set a bar, set a time frame, and then make a “decision” with what we've agreed to.

We need to give more time to John and perhaps some of Laird's time could be spent on marketing.

\$6400 remains in the earmarked funds for Cmag in the 4th quarter. That amount will be likely used up by 2009. We do need more money in the fund, or....

We need a stable Art Director who will add to a stable team.

The Art Director may not be as significant as some say.

We need to market the quality of the magazine now, not wait for the new Art Director before we “sell” the product.

The magazine industry in general is going through crisis. All agreed. Should we have assistance from an outside consultant?

If you go into a natural foods supermarket, we “fit in” with other magazines there, where we didn’t before.

Brainstorming:

No discussion yet of increasing subscriptions, setting targets.

A more dynamic better website for Cmag would be a great marketing tool. Tony just can’t get to it.

The lack of an upgraded server may be hindering some of our storefront marketing potential.

Resources to website may improve our situation.

We can expect a drop in donated support for the magazine in 2009.

John is the primary guy for marketing the magazine. We need to set realistic goals for John and the team, for the next few years. With emphasis on being realistic!

Have John look at reduced advertising revenues and what he sees might be done about that.

TASK: Tony will call John

We want to reduce the deficit. And, our 2009 targets should be historical average of past years, the number of years to be determined by Tony.

What amount can we afford to lose? The targets move each year.

Meet with John, perhaps coming back from NASCO, and coordinate with Marty and Chris in honing in on 2009. Part of this would involve a strategic plan for the next few years.

The discussion should include revenue source reviews and target markets.

TASK: Tony will come up with historical numbers. He has enough input for his next stage of budget work.

Laird will shift some of his energy and effort into this important area.

Personnel will review and wordsmith staff evaluations.

BUDGET

Tony hopes we don’t pass what he is currently proposing, as Cmag and www are a bit like “investments” which are causing us to have a loss. Bookshelf includes lots of events for \$8,000. This means our two proposed events plus Twin Oaks conference, Coho and NASCO. Also includes auction income under other accounts for \$5,000 which means Coho, Kimberton, TO and Bay area event. Tony took out some miscellaneous items, including OS \$ and \$400 for regional networking and lowering

reprint packet expenses. Tweaked a few office numbers as well. Have nothing in the budget reflecting the video release (either expenses or income).

Cmag page. Ads straight line projection would be \$12,000, but have \$14,000 in budget because we've never been below that. Other numbers based on historical numbers and are all down a bit from last year. Promo budget changed from \$2,000 to \$500. Others are where they have been or a little less. Showing loss of \$16,000, which is larger because of lower income.

WWW page. Income is straight line projections, so lower than previous two years (aka not as high as we'd like). We bumped the labor to \$15,000 for our Online Directory Manager's labor, which leaves \$10,000 for Tony or others doing the current work. With the decline of income, we have a loss of \$13,000. The endowment money is showing up as miscellaneous interest income. It's in our Credit Union money market account with 1.25% apx.

These are the two big loss areas for the org this year. Everything else is pretty much even. Under development, there was a question about how to estimate unrestricted giving.

Budget doesn't include anything for either proposed events, which has been our practice and seems prudent to continue. Potentials are events, Cmag doing better, or an earmarked donation to place the Dir 5 leftovers into libraries or other surge in development. Coattails with Geoph's video will probably help. Should know the initial results by interim meeting. If we agree to a budget with a \$16,000 loss, we need to monitor it really closely. We have not been approving budgets with this kind of loss. Earmarked and loan funds are the only reserves we have. We could increase Cmag income, decrease Cmag expenses, though that would most likely come out of staff. We could do more fundraising and promo of products, including directories. Probably a few hundred dollars here and there could get us \$1,000. We could not increase the web budget as much. What about charging for web listings? We've chosen to not do that and additional ads haven't gotten much participation. We could, though, make a pitch to communities when they list. Reluctance to drop people who don't pay, but fine with making the pitch. Are we essentially asking them to become members? If it is in the \$10-50 range, then it isn't really the same. Seems doubtful that we'll get a lot of money from this, but it seems like it could help. A 10% response would be 100 communities. Better to be via a letter or on line when they update? OK to ask for donations associated with having a listing but not a fee. Production cost is very low with email and a bit more with letters.

TASK: Laird will draft a screen full of text and send to Tony.

Could try to increase other income from the website. Tony put Google ads on just a fraction of the website, maybe 10% of page views. Could put them on more of the site and that could generate more revenue, though it would of course mean we have not so well targeted ads on our website. Don't have energy to create higher ad quality on the site. Tony has gotten mixed feedback, along the lines of didn't notice, they were fine, on pages with user-generated pages, got more out of place feeling stuff, and has not gotten any unsolicited complaints.

Approve as a theoretical budget and then work hard to make sure we don't manifest this. Monitor it closely and make some choices. Tony prefers to at least attach numbers to the ideas for how it can be balanced, as we always have to make sure it happens and work hard. Not approved just yet.

BUDGET PART II

We did get a note from Cmag Business Manager, and we'll be generating about \$12,000/year doing it as is. He is hopeful that we can reach somewhere in the range of \$17,000 next year, but Tony left the budget at \$13,000. Laird and Tony did some magic and updated the budget. Put in \$5,000 for events for Kimberton and Bay Area event in the calendar year. May or may not do both and make this money, so it

is ambitious, but seems OK. Did not increase Cmag. Increased donations up to \$8,000 unrestricted donations. Getting donation to place the remainder of Dir 5 when 6 comes out. This would do about 350 copies which would still leave us inventory so he had to do an adjustment and the net result isn't as good as it could be and the net difference is negligible other than helping cash flow. Website upped income to \$10,000 after looking at additional Google ads. Because communities aren't really using the ad option, it might be better to stop that program and convert to Google ads, or change the system in some other way. (Tony will bring this to Oversight Cmtee.) Minor cascading effects into the office budget. This budget currently shows a \$1,000 loss on the year which isn't great but seems tolerable. The idea of asking for voluntary contributions for the Dir is reflected in the increased development budget.

Art of Cmty: while it is true that historically, it doesn't do very well, it seems likely that we are going to do well in the Bay area. We also expect to make some money in Philadelphia.

Donations: could include some earmarked stuff that replaces money in our budget somewhere else, or unrestricted donations. George says Ganas was considering making a \$2,000 donation and would like that to be a matching fund. Tony thinks that \$2,000 could cover the server transition on the website. Dollar for dollar match. George pledges the money for 2009.

Appreciation for the creativity of Laird and Tony and recognize that the creativity must continue in order to make this happen. A bit of caution that we are being optimistic during a time that a lot of people in the US are not being expansive and optimistic about finances. Tony is authorized to implement the change in Google ads right away, so this may reflect in a beneficial boost in this year's budget.

AGREED: The board approves this budget.

AGREED: Tony can shift our advertising on the website to be on the majority of our pages.

FIC WEB SITE

Tony has been solo manager for the last 5 years or so, compensated on a per hour basis. He's not getting to all the FIC web items that need doing, and his paid hours are maxed out. The magazine website needs upgrading. The FIC web store codes are out of date. The server needs upgrading; there is too much traffic for the server capacity. System administration is lagging. The money allocated is 10% of market labor rates. It's essentially volunteer pay.

Tony has been hoping to find an operator close by, but that has not been happening. We need more energy for the Web site.

The board is paying about \$30,000 for Cmag operations, and about \$10,000 for web operations. The web operations have been developed to the point of having more impact than Cmag in delivering information. It is time to shift our priorities to recognize that the web site is delivering more information to our target audience than Cmag. There are Juan, Matt and Tony at Dancing Rabbit that have the skills. Cecil leaving has put pressure on DR web operators, who have paying clients they are committed to serving.

Tony does day to day FIC web site maintenance, where Kate and McCune can't do it. Tony is well-positioned as web manager, but he needs some web technicians to implement much of the upgrade and expansion work needed. Beyond that, he's already managing Kate, McCune (on web stuff), and the Print Directory point person, Lee Revere. More funding would provide the staff, but Tony needs relief from the existing management load. He's not comfortable adding more staff that he would be responsible managing.

So, this is about more than hiring new technical staff, but also about modifying FIC web management. Tony thinks just the managers job should be full time, in addition to the current part time staff. A full time manager with current staff support could get most of what we need done. We need a job description for web manager if we plan to recruit for a full time manager. To start with, the functional job parts of FIC web operations should be listed.

Tony would like to hand over the manager's job to a full time person that sounds appealing to him. He would work with his replacement, or less preferable, share the job for a while. Listing a comprehensive list of job functions could be a place to start, and then identify which functions need to be off loaded first to a new manager. Tony would like to put more time into Dancing Rabbit, and other FIC projects such as events.

Now, from where would the money for new personnel be derived? Laird recalls our established objective to develop the Directory Endowment, which includes web operations, to achieve \$40,000 income from a \$500,000 asset base. Given the time pressure, Laird's fundraising efforts could be split to some shorter term fund raising, including development grant proposals.

We could increase the web budget from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The web could be providing some income for this budget, if we invested more development time in FIC web operations. If we do not increase the budget, web maintenance will continue at the current inadequate level. The Cmag web site will still be unfinished, but current web operations will continue.

Kate handles the first level of technical support; but if she receives user reports of glitches, those have to go to Tony. Also, he's doing no managerial oversight of her work. Since hiring her in May or June, 2008 Kate has become more familiar with FIC web operations and is becoming more self-managing.

Conclusion: We have a clear understanding of what Tony needs. We have a clear path for personnel to begin developing the web manager/staff job description(s). And we have an awareness of the pressure for a budget increase – aiming for an increase from \$10,000 to \$20,000 soon, with a goal of \$40,000 for a more adequately funded FIC web operation.

DIRECTORY 6

As it stands now, the print directory we want to sell about 1,000 copies of each edition in a 2-year cycle. To produce those copies and do the fulfillment costs. We can probably break even but that may not be taking into account the effort it takes from the organization. Doesn't take into account the benefits of a printed book. It would be reasonable to revisit the question of the relative benefits. Is this a good place to dedicate our energy? Directory as it is now? Or with changes to the format? Could it reflect just what is online? Difference between web and book is formatting, indexing, and this time it is also still the data cleanup. Not as much careful formatting, charts, maps and wouldn't be as nice of a book. Our current direction is to have the listings updated as we go which will reduce costs a bit. Print on demand could get some of the work out of our hands, not have to print so many. Go back to a longer cycle. Value of data erodes pretty quickly. Sense that there is value in the book, and not just for non-web-users. In a couple years out, the POD scene or other tech upgrades could be really different than the current. Does seem like there is a law of diminishing returns, though it is still worth it now. Organizational energy is the key issue. Still a really good service. Compare 500,000 visits to the web and only 1,000 print directories sold. Tony decided personally that it wasn't worth his time, and is now asking the organization the same question. Some of the suggestions about changing the expectations around look and quality, charts, etc. could save some amount of money, produce a lower quality book. Cutting articles doesn't save much in staff time/energy. Request to talk about this concretely—what would we actually do with this energy? Most of the people who buy them are carrying it around on their bike, car, etc. The touring crowd would be strongly affected. Financially we can do this, but energetically not so sure. At what point do we need to decide about Dir 7? Need to give Lee guidance for what it is going to say about future directories in the current one. What do we promise? Seems like we shouldn't promise

anything. Also we might want to print more of these if we decide not to do a next one. Do 6 in a comparable way to the earlier ones and let the consumers know that we are unclear.

Related to budget, we've never asked CohoUS to contribute some money to support the website work. Just from a hosting perspective and Tony's energy, \$300-500 seems appropriate. When you add in Kate's time and maybe 10% of the listing are cohousing groups, it wouldn't be inappropriate to ask for some support. Craig Ragland would certainly understand the value of what we are talking about and that we are providing value to CohoUS. Maybe \$1,000-2,000 would be appropriate? NICA contributes some money and Tony has worked on creating a subset web listing for them.

Any \$ in directing people through MapQuest to find community addresses? Not that Tony knows, but he can look.

SKILLS DATABASE

In our online FIC contact survey form, people answer a question about skills that they might volunteer to FIC, and we are not using that data or filing it an accessible way. Do we want to continue this question, using the information to create a skills database?

If we did create a database from this information, the survey question would have to be developed and follow up assigned to some FIC manager.

Presently, when FIC needs particular assistance, a notice is posted on McCune's FIC E-News. We have been successful receiving direct feedback from folks interested in working with FIC.

Conclusion: Laird will change the contact survey wording to delete this question.

GEOPH KOZENY IC NETWORKING AWARD

Should we go forward with this idea? It would take considerable organizing and management energy.

There is strong interest in this idea as a way to develop recognition and encouragement for IC networkers, and to recognize the years of marvelously productive and loving IC connections that Geoph devoted his life to creating and perpetuating. GKICNA Cmtee volunteers: Laird, Maikwe, George, Jenny, and Dan.

COMMUNITY BUZZ

A year ago at our Austin meeting, we talked about social networking sites. People using these sites have the capacity to recommend hot social networking sites to other internet users.

5,000 visitors have been to this section of the FIC website, with 260 people registered to get regular feedback from the site.

3%, or 500 people, have accessed the FIC website thru these portals. Tony has received very positive feedback about this effort from a number of users, including Diana Christian and other IC networkers. Yet, it takes ½ hour to an hour a day of Tony's time. It would take more time for an FIC newbie to manage, at least in the beginning.

Do we want to prioritize this? For volunteers or for paid staff?

In the context of marketing in general, this could be a worthwhile effort. This could feed into a media database, and be a good outlet for promoting access to our website regarding home communities, FIC events, work projects, products, and the entire panoply.

At the minimum, management would not require technical skills beyond writing and pasting FIC related responses, and devoting some training time with Tony.

Conclusion: Tony is willing to post more notices in E-News. We could try recruiting volunteers thru posting a Call in Community Buzz itself. Maikwe will check with her contacts in hopes of recruiting volunteers. When recruiting for this/these position(s) we could think in terms of splitting the project into sub-areas.

PROMOTING LIABILITY INSURANCE SALES TO ICs IN EXCHANGE FOR A COMMISSION REBATE TO FIC

NASCO does this for student coops and realizes an income stream from the activity.

Dancing Rabbit gets insurance thru the Land Trust Alliance, that's the only reason they belong to LTA. If actualized, we'd need to be clear that we have no responsibility for the actual insurance services. There is strong interest in this idea. Until such a project materializes, we could benefit from knowing which insurance companies are insuring ICs.

Meeting participants reported as follows: Chubb (Dancing Rabbit), Grinnell Mutual (FIC office), Travelers (Twin Oaks, 8 years ago), Cincinnati (Shannon Farm), and The Hartford (Sandhill Farm, in the past).

VENN DIAGRAM

Overlapping/Inclusive circles can be employed to graphically represent the extent of group identification with intentional community culture vs. mainstream culture, across the diverse wings of the communities movement and other similar groups. CoHousing has often expressed a self-identified cultural distance from intentional communities. In fact, CoHo may be more well-defined than IC or mainstream culture either one.

Does FIC want to engage with CoHousing national staff in exploring development of a common Venn Diagram, or sharing perspectives.

Where a group stands among the wings of the IC movement, or sees itself somewhere else apart, that is a function of the self-definition of each group.

FIC does not have a single definition of IC. After attempting to define IC for a period of time, we have settled on developing a range of descriptions or characteristics of IC that are not mutually inclusive. In addition to Venn Diagrams, it may be informative to look at the group identification of separate groups – CoHousing, Ecovillage, income sharing commune, religious monastery/nunnery. This is an opportunity to develop self-awareness and communication within groups that share at least some common values.

Conclusion: Laird will continue this discussion with CoHo, from a place of awareness that agreement is not necessary to achieve deeper mutual insights into FIC and CoHo identities.

NEW FIC LOGO

The graphic redesign committee (Harvey, Laird, Susan Patrice, Mark Maggioti, a professional graphic designer) displayed the new FIC logo. The board delegated this decision to the committee. Mark has some technical refinements to make to this logo, but the committee has approved this design. Beautiful job, Mark!

BAY AREA EVENY UPDATE – Maikwe

Confirming Date: Fall 09, Spring 10 or not at all?

Venue: Oakland Senior Center – the recommended option of four sites considered

- Recommended by Raines and Betsy

- Lovely building on a lake, close to BART

- Relatively inexpensive – about the same as Albuquerque

- (about \$3600 for use of all their rooms – a rough estimate)

- Could handle 400 people but there are fewer smaller breakout rooms

- Larger numbers could be accommodated at adjacent or nearby facilities

- (it could be a 3 – 6 block walk to the other venues – for workshops)

- Food service and cafeteria present in the building

Having concurrent workshops is important.

Now there are nine spaces. Ma'ikwe thinks we may need as many as 12.

Ma'ikwe wants to travel out to San Francisco six months before the event to verify site details, logistics.

Julie offered to head a cooking team that might do food service at the event.
Housing is likely going to be available, depending on where we have the org meeting.
The size of the room is conducive to physical movement elements we haven't had before.

Budget: Comparable to Albuquerque

- Venue \$4250
- Publicity \$2750
- Admin \$350
- Phone, mileage \$200
- Travel – 3 staff \$1200
- Presenters \$1500
- Printed materials \$300 - \$600
- Banquet \$4000 - \$6000
- Additional space rental \$0 - \$2000

Receipts:

- Attendees \$25000 - \$60000
- Tables \$900 - \$3000 (for local businesses and non-profits)
- Sponsors \$ 0 - \$5000

Based on a minimum attendance of 200

Having a break even of 200 makes some a little nervous. We need to know the B.E. number
TASK: Ma'ikwe will come up with a break even number and send numbers out to the BOD and oversight.

Parking may be an issue. Further research needs to be done.

Selling tables in Albuquerque were a little disappointed where information tables were pleased.

Sponsor income – unknown

- Can involve names printed in programs

- Can involve pre-event advertising in their publications

- We do not currently have a template of who/what we might think a sponsor should look like.

- There is a distinction between partners and sponsors

- Partners are part of the program material

- Sponsors: Happy to support what we're doing.

Some deposit or front end money risk could be several thousand and potentially be lost if we were to cancel the event.

Jennifer: Sliding scale options should be available due to the variety of income ranges of potential attendees.

Options could be given based on a person's income level.

We want the event to be accessible AND we want it to be economically viable.

And the details might well be left to the events team.

Question: Should scholarships be available?

Some accommodation of scholarships could be done through the sliding scale option; sponsorships might fund/subsidize some scholarships;

And, we have done work exchange options.

Staffing:

- Derek (program layout and tech support)

- and Diedre (publicity and volunteer coordinator) are back again and will be on the team.

- Syd has also offered to be available in a lesser, supporting role.

Due to the S.F. geography, we could draw from Washington, Oregon, Utah, etc.
Syd will do Washington
Ma'ikwe has someone for Utah.
So far, no fund raising person or publicity manager
Peggy will be a major player the weekend of the event
Jo will be the registration coordinator at Kimberton with eyes on doing the Bay Area event.
Compensation is current a profit sharing model.
Ma'ikwe will be emailed names from BOD members that might be potential staffing candidates
Sponsors should be contacted soon as they may have input on volunteer staffing
Long term staffing: Maikwe feels competent but not great at this job.
Doing things on the fly, Maikwe's self described style, is working particularly well.
Working plan is to train Deidre to take over as team coordinator.
Ma'ikwe would step back into roles she is more comfortable with.
Is Deidre being groomed for event team convener? No sure.

Partners:

Designers and Builders for Social Responsibility – Kat Steele, main contact.
Working more with Raines and Betsy
Ella Baker Center
Activism work with people of color in California
Van Jones,
Heather Gray, student coop person, may be another person Raines and Betsy recommend

There may be national organizations such as co housing that would be worth contacting. Also, the solar people, etc.

This event could be an entry point for young people interested in these areas.
One suggestion: Possible contacting Senator Feinstein's office

Marketing Plan:

At this stage, no clarity on what the plan should look like.
Using Cmag, of course.
Accessing local folks is encouraged. Also, check with local sponsors if they've done events before. Use that experience, and verifying that is competent.
Radio stations: KQED and KKFA
There is enormous flyer potential, once one is created.
Finding a person to head these events is a priority!
Some back and forth communication has occurred already but nothing solid.
Maikwe has had seven responses to her e-news solicitation for events help in PA and Bay Area.
The base for a marketing plan could have a starting point from Maikwe's experience in Albuquerque.
And Laird has considerable experience and he should be accessed.
Theme: Urban Community Building, Community in a Time of Crisis, or wait until we talk with other partners and set theme in consultation with them. We'll wait until talking with our partners.

Burning Man dates: August 31st September 7th
Bioneers historically has been October.
Our event would be in between those two.
In San Francisco, events are happening most every day.
There are a lot of people in our target markets. How to access them?
How to bill our event can be difficult.

We are in the business of building and sustaining community. And, we market differently to different groups.

There is a big social component to what we do.

Most people think of sustainability in particular physical technology. Our emphasis and strength is in cultural or social sustainability.

Tying these together is our main job.

Discussion of Dates:

Burning Man and Bioneers are bigger events, taking several days to a week. Shoe horning one in between increases the risk. There will be some who have to make that choice.

Doing it in 09 may be a little soon given staffing considerations. And, diluting current interest is a consideration.

Deidre is ready to work with the FIC and wants to get started. Jo is flexible.

Betsy and Raines are available now and may not be available later on.

Identifying partners may help us answer Marty's question.

Betsy and Raines don't think there are issues of too many events around the same time.

Are their experienced Bay Area events people we could ask about the timing of our event?

Similar concerns to Marty. Think of "true time" availability.

Contact Chamber of Commerce. 400 people max is not a large number and are Burning Man attendees going to come to our event? Probably not. Don't do it the same day or weekend but it really shouldn't matter.

If we don't go to the Bay Area in 09, we could go to other sites, like Kentucky.

Is there enough time to do it right? The BOD is somewhat split. More information needed. Talk to Chamber of Commerce. Will the economy be a factor? Will our target audiences be influenced by lack of availability of extra money?

For now, Tony will adjust potential income from a fall event in case it doesn't happen this Fall.

Events team is on board. We are not pushing them. Yes, we need more questions answered. All things being equal, sooner is better.

Events do get other people involved, other people get inspired. And, we are hearing some cautionary notes.

The team is on board to do this in the Fall. Yes, there are some unfilled roles.

Let's gather the information the BOD wants soon.

Oversight will be given this information at its next conference call.

Decision will be held until the next OS Call.

DECISION-MAKING IN LARGE GROUPS

Brainstorm:

A lot of the writing about secular consensus came out of the anti nuke arena in the '60s & 70s. Groups larger than 100, using representational consensus. Caroline thinks she has all their notes from the time, as she was there. Buried somewhere!

Caroline built on what they did, when she worked with the Greens (350+) and the intentional community gathering (600+) and bioregional (several hundred.) We did a lot of committee work. Clear Marks' came out of that work. Dividing every group into groups of 5 immediately after discussion. Choose spokesperson; limited amount of time to talk; every person would talk. They would come to decision to agree, disagree, or amend the proposal. If you wanted to amend, held hand up and told whole group. After time expired, would bring everybody back together to see if all agreed, or needed more discussion, etc. Need to be strong to make everybody pay attention. Worked with groups up to 250 people. Everybody talking in small groups is important. Caroline didn't use it much, as it seemed a bit

artificial, and missed the large group discussion. But Caroline did see it work, and it was used all over the country.

Alyson has experience with groups of 100-200 in Europe. They used hand signals extensively. Most of her work was technical decisions, which went fairly easily. Representational Consensus she saw in the Czech Republic. Made several big decisions. Circles of affinity groups behind spokespeople putting in info as the discussion went on. Groups were bound by decision.

Same process as used in anti-nuke work in Nevada. Caroline saw that we could make decisions faster than the police could in a hierarchical structure. Those decisions were on actions, with very high energy.

Question as to how well those techniques would work for ongoing decisions in cmty, or in local civil groups. Not certain how well it would work to still try to make sure each person has equal participation. Could select representatives who use consensus, could select them by consensus. Could have the recall threshold be one person (like a block.) Democracy means that any person who wants to effect change has opportunity to do that. Can we broaden focus beyond consensus, so that larger decision processes use aspects of consensus, but don't necessarily require it?

Ganas model: decisions made at particular time and place known to all; each decision is able to be reopened at any meeting. This does happen sometimes. Sometimes the lack of implementation is an indication that the decision was empty.

Don't want to lose the co-creation aspect of consensus. Try to install it in any process.

At Sirius, the few original founders controlled the community's knowledge of its decisions, which was a bone of contention with newcomers. "We've already made that decision; don't want to revisit it." Not likely to be a problem in large groups. And, there is no decision that can't be reconsidered.

In groups that were not very cohesive, require that at first meeting only watch, second can speak, and third can participate in decision. Helped but didn't remove all problems.

Ma'ikwe worked with very diverse group; laid out her usual ground rules. Allowed cops to open up. Shifted attention away from gay hate crime issue to underlying "how to help the police have the emotional support they need to do a good job of keeping the streets safe."

Don't want to worry about the form of consensus, but want to keep the spirit. Does representational consensus keep that spirit, or would an elected body that operates by consensus work better?

How do we create/encourage deep listening? Especially for 500 people?

First time Caroline did this, everybody was assigned to a tribe. Worked together, ate together, etc, getting to know each other. Then in the mornings we came together to make decisions. Can happen in neighborhoods. On a city scale, it would take a lot of work.

It could be fruitful to talk about the concept of an empowered leadership group (council/commission.) Let's look at the dynamics of a group of 6-12 people and how they could provide an empowering process for the larger constituency.

Findhorn may use this model. Core group may be a rotating group. Works well if there is trust, positive attitude about the work, good decisions.

Essence of consensus is hearing everybody, handling the objections and including the essence. If they are heard, probably won't object. If the level of listening of the core group is good, that helps a lot.

When working as a cmtee, try to make a decision that is most like one the group would make as a whole. Requires as much opportunity for input before as possible, and a way to be heard after if disagree. May mean multiple ways of input, plus seeking it out. If you went with seeking consensus rather than 51%, you need them to go thru process with you, or let go after decision is made. Its remarkable how many folks accept losing to majority in voting situation.

Follow thru is sometimes difficult, especially if they don't see how their input was included in the decision. So clear communication about how the decision was made is important for implementation. Transparency is critical. That way it can be seen that body is in service to larger group. Communication is critical. So the requirements for membership in this core group are large around communication. Need to be able to communicate what you've done, and be ready to hear complaints.

Can we bring together the notions of tribe and committee and affinity group? Is a person responsible to a particular sub-group? When representatives represent particular constituencies, the reps are very constrained to their subgroups, and may not be looking at what is best for whole group.

In larger groups, there will be disaffected pockets of grippers who resist being brought into process. As group gets more diverse, the bell curve gets broader, and it is harder to get them included in decision. For some being on the fringe is their identity, which they are reluctant to give up. Hard to even use consensus when there is no agreement on basic values.

If your council is made up of folks who are good at process, can they truly represent the folks who aren't so good at it?

How are those council folks chosen? With what characteristics? Can they put aside their personal agendas/egos? Know-it-alls make it difficult in consensus.

With the bell curve, it can be OK for the disaffected to fall out; with other groups it may not be possible. With second type of groups, may be best to try to engage everyone's humanity.

Other things that help: when issues matter, uncover core values under them. Chronic complainer—work with them to get them to see that their right to complain exists and is limited.

Questions around corruption: representative using power for other than service to whole group's interest. Question will come up; need way to examine situation that is not inflammatory.

Is there anything useful for DR folks in this discussion? Yes, and still not clear. Devil may be in the details. Could set up any number of structures; how it is done may be more important than the details. Twin Oaks planner system works well sometimes. It may have led to passive leadership. Training has to go past explaining system, and include how their role is different from council's, and from voters in outside world. Any cooperative group needs to train every new member; we have to expect that we don't come from there.

How does training fit in with all this? Necessary, as we've not been raised in this.

We're all taking an active stance in promoting the idea of cooperative decisions. Another idea: every council needs group to which they can let off steam, rather than just themselves or the whole group. Ex-leaders may be a good pool for this outlet group.

Do we really have to hide the need of the leadership to vent? At GANAS, Mildred's need to let off steam in public was often mis-interpreted.

What would politics look like if the system was the same, but the intention was different? Visualize two parallel systems.

Executive Cmtee/Oversight Cmtee Composition:

We forgot to confirm last spring that we were keeping the same Executive and Oversight Cmtee members. Exec: Harvey, Jenny, Marty. Oversight also includes Laird, Bill, and Caroline. This group was reconfirmed till next spring 2009.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Harvey: Strategic Planning at Highline Crossing looked at future possibilities and merging them into an overview of where the country was going and what our response might be. The Presidential election was then primary at the time and now we are four years later, in an election cycle again. The "boiling the frog" metaphor (the neoconservative agenda) is perhaps still applicable. Distress in society was likely to increase and quality of life issues are likely going to diminish. Aspects of what the communities movement brings may play an important part in the next four years. These and other points brought up at Highline Crossing were reviewed by Harvey.

Levels of economic collapse would make things more difficult for all of us but may increase interest in community. The plan in this session is to review where we are now and consider possible scenarios.

Discussion:

There are two routes in this country. One is increasing denial "I don't want to know". That is even present in our movement. The other route is the growth greed and avarice, the strengthening of the ego, opposite of what we stand for. The latter is a world of no controls. We needed Bush four years ago because the country was and is asleep. It will be more difficult for people to be in denial. There is now so much awareness and public participation and more are realizing what's going on. Leadership is the ability to bear the bad news and not be overwhelmed by it. It's not about blaming the bad news. It's about moving together in love. We are leaders. And, I'm very hopeful. Crisis is a good thing.

Questions for the day:

- What is the likely environment for the next four years?
- How will this affect demand for community?
- How will this affect FIC as an organization?

We could all agree that we are closer to a serious economic and environmental collapse than we were four years ago. There are more difficulties today that were experienced four years ago. Jobs have been lost. Houses have been lost. More have fallen into the pit. It's bad but when does it get "very bad?" No way to know.

There is no more credit to draw from. There is less credit available for those who need it. We are in an economic crisis.

One of the shifts we've seen is in the awareness of the environmental issues to a much broader segment of the population. The general public is aware of climate change, global warming, etc. much more than it was four years ago. Both candidates are saying a lot more re: climate change than ever before.

I've seen less greed and avarice than in the past. The population I'm in touch with is ready to move now. We can do something about this. Getting our message out more broadly can be more valuable.

The crisis has become apparent to enough people that they are more open to change. It's not just crisis motivated but there is more maturity present in people. They are asking "now what do we do?"

Actions by many on Wall Street are "indictable". And, things are different. I do not know which way things will go. There are very real issues up for us now.

There are qualitative differences in what could happen: recession or depression? What are the bifurcation points? In some ways, people being empowered have its own dangers, i.e. riots if Obama is not elected, etc. The less people have to lose the more they are willing to put it all on the line. Waking up to the fact that we've been conned for so long will raise a lot of anger, feelings of broken trust, etc. A couple of possible scenarios:

- McCain/Obama
- Recession/Depression
- Energy and environmental collapse
- Hard landing/soft landing

Phoenix Rising or Dog eat Dog are two very distinct scenarios. The "landing" if Obama might be a softer landing. That's if he's a good politician. And, we should move forward in the discussion of what this means to the communities movement.

We have developed an incredible communication device. Having lived through one of the times where the Nation as a whole responded in a certain way – McCarthy era – responding to that fear, it was pervasive, was difficult. Today a suppression of information could be equally influential. And, the pockets of healthy choices around the country (community) can be very influential. That could be an underlay for all that's happening and it could forestall a collapse. We are way past avoiding an ecological collapse. The question is "what do we do" that can support us in healthy ways so movement to an oppressive government doesn't automatically follow. We work for a viable link in our culture that sustains sanity.

In the face of this pressure cooker we're in, you can make four pots to describe what's going on.

1. It is not working and there is widespread despair.
2. There are bad problems, I feel knocked down and there is hope, openness.
3. There are those doing something and they need help and know that
4. There are those having a positive response and are having degrees of success.

We can have different influence in different ways with each category. We want to move people into the fourth direction. Our opportunity is in two and three, our colleagues are in four.

More are waking up to the "agenda" the media portrays.

Festivals are successful because they meet a basic need people are not getting in their life. Event composition is not homogenous group. Burning Man, City Repair in Portland, etc.

Our environment is changing. Travel will be more expensive AND the technology of video conferencing is improving. There are ways to save numbers 2 and 3. We invite people to bring in their "work in progress". We can expect a higher percentage of attendees at our events that are more local, due to increased transportation costs.

How do we access local groups and develop interactions with them? How do we use our future projection efforts – more web presence to flank the increased transport costs? How can we be aware of new groups emerging in response to current crises, bring our networking skills to them, and connect them to those we already have connects?

We have the ability to offer a lot of strategic skills, ways they can create community together. We are in pretty good touch with our network. It's that network that doesn't know what to do, and are in need of role models.

Having info on the web for better access and doing more workshops might be a way to go. And, personal contact is important.

Two approaches are available. One, we help people who come to us. Second, we try to find like minded people. We need to be more active in linking, not just in identifying. For instance, there are blank spaces in the Midwest. Is nothing available there? There may be groups who are doing similar work that we are doing. To the extent we link with them; we have a powerful counterweight to the potential of being in real trouble. We haven't been doing much of that, that linking.

Sky from T.O. has just done a "listening tour" around the country. This kind of drawing information in is important. We can do a lot informally, not creating everything. But networking, connecting, answering questions are part of what we can do and do well. This is very helpful to people. It does not produce an income stream, as behind the scene's work often is.

Our events are valuable and may serve a current need. While they need to be economically viable, they are important, this bringing people together. And, we all need to learn more about what people are doing. Writing more about what we're doing, what links we come in contact with, is important.

We are creating a field of awareness and that is good. Let's link together.

CLOSING CIRCLE

Amy Sieden put the bead she had chosen to represent our time at the FIC Org Mtg at Dancing Rabbit on the spiraling necklace. Fused glass with green, blue, and white.

Evaluations:
(Not recorded)