

FIC Org Meeting Minutes
The Vale, Yellow Springs, Ohio
September 15-18, 2003

Opening

F: Geoph M: Jillian

Present: Ma'ikwe, Geoph, Bill, Fred, Barbara, Tony, Harvey, Jillian, Andrew, Elph, Joanna, Earl, Lotus, Peggy, Jenny, Nancy, Laird, John, Vince

Logistical Announcements
Agenda Review
Committee Slot Scheduling
Tarot Cards

Nominating Cmtee (9/15)

Presenter: Tony

F: Vince M: Jillian

NomCom is responsible for finding and cultivating people to be on the FIC board and nominating a slate of board members to the board. Tony, Lotus, and Harvey are the current NomCom members. If there are people who are interested in what it would mean to be on the FIC board, please talk to one of them. Board selections are always made in spring. If you know people who you think would be good board members, please pass along their names. It's a three-year commitment.

Video and Promo (9/15)

Presenter: Geoph

F: Vince M: Jillian

We've been creating products that put our ideas in a form so we can share them -- video, magazine, directory, web site. Geoph got inspired to do this video, and FIC was inspired to be part of it, too. It was a lot of work. It's essential to find ways to promote these products that we put huge amounts of effort into.

Here's what's been happening with the video: FIC has been the primary distributor. Every issue of Cmag has a big ad; McCune at Twin Oaks puts a paragraph in his email announcements every month; it was featured in the Directory; and it's on the store.ic.org web site. In the sales of the video, there's a chunk set aside for promotion that can be used to partially advertise other products, too; but we haven't had any really creative ideas for

initiatives to use that money. Geoph has also been doing his promotional tour; he sells cmag, cdir and videos. He's probably done 60-70 presentations since the video came out in June, and attendance typically is 20-35. Professors have invited him to talk to their classes.

If you can convince magazines that you like (for example, "The Sun") to run a review of it and offer to write the review or send them a copy of the video, that would be great. Or write an article about community and have a plug for the video and/or Directory. Geoph needs more ideas and more energy for promoting the video and other products. Our strength is our connections, the people we know. It would help if people would check to make sure their local library has a copy of the video and of the directory. Are there other ways you can think of to get the word out in your local communities? We have a potent message to get out there, and I would like to see us do it better.

Do you have any literature people can take to hand out at local coffee houses?

Yes, we have some flyers for the Directory; and Geoph will update his video flyer before we leave here.

Do we want to sell them or just show them?

The video has been shown at about seven small festivals. Geoph has received really positive feedback about it, and he is happy for it to be shown like that. So far he has not charged for it to be shown.

When you show your video in a theater, are sales up or mediocre? What do sales look like? In the theaters, they see the whole video so I sell more Directories and magazines than videos because they've already seen it. When I do presentations where I only show excerpts, I'll sell 2-4 videos because people want to see the whole thing.

Do you have it in beta format, something that will be better quality on the big screen? I could do that; I have beta masters. I think having DVDs available would help your sales. I think you should have them on the table. They seem to be perceived to be of more value.

Wouldn't it be nice to ride Diana's coattails with her book? A really valuable place for the video is for those who want to start a community, for those who want to inspire others around them to get involved, too. Thus a good reason to package it with Diana's book -- here's the book to tell you how to do it; here's the video to inspire other people. Could we do a package -- "community starter pack" -- that would include Diana's book, Cdir, Cmag, plus video, etc? Have we tried that in the past? Other ideas for

packages: include top three food-related books we sell, top three sustainability books we sell, etc. We've done some combo deals in the past with some success. There is a tradeoff in that every time you do a different deal, it's challenging for the administrative staff. We have to be careful not to do too many to frustrate our staff.

We could also package services. There's a fair amount of demand for consulting, but people aren't sure what it's worth.

Has anyone approached PBS about airing the video? No. There are two women who are several years into starting a new green cable channel. They were excited a while ago about showing it or parts of it. There seems to be more and more interest about it. Joanna worked at a PBS station in Florida and can talk to them.

One of the paths for the video is to get it shown and that has value (one product sells another). There's another path for the video, i.e., concern about the financial viability of the project and that Geoph borrowed money. Good to pursue sales of the video itself, too. Every time Geoph sells a copy, a certain amount is set aside to pay back the loan. The start-up loan would take 3500 copies to break even, and we've sold about 1000. We're experiencing a significant diminishing of demand. At Twin Oaks we sold eight directories and one video. The book is three years old but selling better than the video in terms of individuals buying it. Maybe it's a much better thing to target to organizations than individuals. It's a lot of money for an individual, who figures they may only watch it once. We need to try to sell it to libraries, organizations like NASCO, community resource centers, community libraries, and video stores in university towns that have alternative film titles.

Would radio clips work? Yes, there are enough good sound bytes they could be used.

Do video stores have central distributors like bookstores? Don't know.

Communities with visitor programs might be good places; they could show it to visitors. A huge majority of communities have never seen the video and haven't taken the initiative to get one ... not sure why.

Small mailing to libraries?

When we're talking about multiple uses, the academic world springs to mind. If we could get materials oriented toward

academics, someone could show it to their class. We should push it in that market. CSA is coming up soon.

Do we all own a copy of it? The more of us who own it, the more we can encourage others we know to own a copy.

Psychological aspect: When board members give money to their organizations, you're in a position energetically to inspire others do give money, too.

Shivalila Grant Letter (9/15)

Presenter: Lotus

F: Harvey M: Jillian

Shivalila is a small, income-sharing group in Hawaii putting together a home schooling learning center, and they're applying for grants, including a National Geographic grant. They've requested a letter of support from FIC to give them more credibility when they apply for grants. They're a wonderful community whose focus is on children.

Have we ever done a letter of support for anyone before? We did something for We'Moon. We've also been a pass-through organization before. I have a positive feeling about it, would be of help to them, and free promo for FIC.

Are they getting the same kind of endorsement from the FEC? Not sure. One thing they're doing is a pen pal program to link their kids to other community kids, and they have connections globally. The deadline is today, not sure how we can meet it.

Good that Lotus and Geoph have contact with them. There's not a lot of risk so let's not take a lot of time. Are they a member community? We should ask them to join the FIC. They write stories for Cmag. We're looking for help and so are they. I'm happy to say "yes, we'll do this for them" and then suggest the ways they could help us in return.

Their local reputation seems to be good.

Bigger picture question - does this have to be full-board discussion? Seems like a smaller group of us could decide on requests like this.

Any letter like this should go through ERB since it does represent FIC. Certainly recommendations that get written out are positive for those who are writing them. Important to not write anything that could be embarrassing. We can write a glowing letter so long as we say it's based on this letter that we got from them.

At this point seems fine to have the board do this and have it reviewed by ERB. But in future seems like those who have the direct connections could write up something and then bring that to the board. This seems roundabout that the board is writing it though we have had no direct contact with them.

AGREED: Laird, Lotus, and Geoph will write a letter, and Laird and Tony will review it. Lotus will fax it to them.

Announcement: Lotus announces a couple of days later that Shivalila thanks us for our endorsement letter, and they have agreed to become FIC members.

Review of Reports (9/15)

F: Lotus M: Geoph

Admin Staff: Velma compensation matter is unresolved; Tony has been in dialogue with her. OS has already dealt with a revised policy, and nobody present objected to that.

Community Bookshelf: It's great that the finances have improved to break even. However, breaking even is not good enough for what is needed, and as a basic policy all projects should more than carry themselves... suggest considering we drop shipping of rare books. What about Alline's observation that, as a service, she carries books that don't sell well? What is the value of that service? Might streamlining it be better? Perhaps best to mostly leave such decisions to Alline as project manager. How about if we keep it on list but don't carry in the inventory and charge more for special handling of those non-stock items? Alline is trying to see how much we support those policies; what guidance might we give her? We get a lot of very positive feedback about the range of titles we offer at events. It may be better to refer than to drop ship (which would likely run up extra overhead).

AGREED: We like the idea of providing the best service we can, while also simplifying.

Community Dialogues: This is an entry portal designed to help people organize in their local area. How do they get people in their local area talking? Kit includes flyers, Cmags, handout about how to run a dialogue. Have been no inquiries in last six months. Presently the web link is hidden in the FIC web pages. Inquiries require that the MO Office would respond to send out packets requested. There's been the start of a conversation of organizing regionally; this would be a good tool for that effort. Ma'ikwe asks how this is different from what we normally do in handling correspondence.

Cmag Biz Mgr: David is only lightly involved in this work

thus far, but will be taking a year off from his summer camp commitments, which will give him more time and energy to pursue this. So far he has not been working closely with Diana C since their initial contact.

Development: Desire to get other folks involved, not just Laird and Alyson. Want to do some of this at org mtgs. Re the mailings: the amount of income received just equaled the expenses, including labor costs. No current movement toward approaching foundations for grants. Directory Endowment Capital Campaign contemplated is to seek approx \$400k which would provide interest income sufficient to cover all operating costs; primarily looking at seeking this from individual donors. Laird will host a discussion about this over a meal later this week. Cmag donation pending; money hasn't yet been used to hire Cecil to develop the idea farther; a new timeline is needed.

ERB: The focus group at the CSI conf had low attendance but was lively. Deborah has been worried about not being able to attend org meetings. **AGREED**: We think Deborah is doing a great job on the ERB, and hope she'll agree to continue!!

ELC: Budget is fine (not using much). We'll likely be co-sponsoring events next year with Twin Oaks and The Farm. The Farm organizers were impressed and inspired by the info we provided for them in organizing their spring '03 conference. At this point our mode is to help and encourage other co-sponsors rather than being the point ourselves; thus nothing is pending on the West Coast right now.

Exec Secretary: Laird wonders how FIC culture supports the people who serve the org ... no answer is obvious. Might be a good topic for discussion in a session. Restoring the salary by \$1000 is already in the proposed 2004 budget.

FEC: Thanks, Tree!

Inreach: Volunteers still needed, correspondence is being covered through the office. OS is covering it at this meeting.

Newsletter: Newsletter has been operating at 50% below budget since Lotus took over. Her commitment as editor is currently through spring '04. Folks present really are appreciating and enjoying it now!

Loan Fund: Walnut Street Co-op has not yet actually used our loan due to complications with insurance. Renegotiating the PEACH fund arrangement is saving us considerable interest costs; however, we can get the funds back easily if we find an enticing loan we want to make.

Ministry: Needs more willing and able bodies.

Org Meetings: A historic moment! (This is the first report submitted by this cmtee ; -)

Oversight: Question of how best to work with balancing FIC needs/interests with Ofek's excitement for personally developing the on-line IC database. OS feels we're not yet altogether clear on best way to proceed.

Personnel: No questions or comments. Thanks, team.

Process Clearinghouse: It's a great resource, and several of us refer folks to it. Several folks will write, email, or call Tree to let her know we love it and it seems to be working!

Web Weavers: Progress is happening.

Budget I

2003 Numbers and 2004 Budget (9/15)

Presenter: Tony

F: Harvey M: Jillian

Present: Tony, Ma'ikwe, Bill, Vince, Fred, Jillian, Elph, Earl, Joanna, Peggy, Jenny, Nancy, Laird, Harvey

Top sheet, summary of entire organization.

First stab at 2004 budget is conservative on the income side and pessimistic on the expenses side (shows a loss); but this is the first stab at it, and we'll massage it from here. We do accounting in an accrual method -- as soon as we invoice a customer, we mark it as income. It's standard accounting but can get confusing. Last page is a statement of cash flows, which helps show you the difference between the accrual method and the cash on hand.

Overview of the income situation first, and then we'll dive into specifics later.

So far this year we're doing better than we expected. It's good to have low expectations. The bright spots include Cmag -- last year was poor; this year's subscriptions are up and back-issue sales are up. However, some of the income in Cmag is because our accrual accounting method is a bit fuzzy so we don't want to count on it fully yet. About \$10,000 of that is still a bit on the dubious side, i.e., it's still in receivables. So things aren't quite as rosy as this picture might show, but it still leaves \$4000 positive.

A lot of other things are selling according to what we expected. Consensus books have been selling slowly. Some of that might be because we're reprinting so we're low in inventory and haven't been pushing them much, but we should be aware that they're selling slower. We need to remember to plug those since we make a great profit margin on them.

Development is another area that could be going better. It hasn't been going as fast as we would have liked. Membership is strong. Video sales are a little down from what we had hoped. Loan fund interest -- just a reflection of not having gotten all the numbers from Bill Becker yet.

Does the development number reflect many donors or a few? There's one donation of \$5000 that's a big part of that number. We have some initiatives this fall that aren't in these numbers. Almost all of it is general fund.

Store.ic.org doesn't have its own income line. It sells all our products so its income is all the others.

Expenses

We're doing pretty well. We budget for certain things, and we don't always spend it. That's good. A lot of the income areas' expenses are tied to their income numbers. Consensus books income is lower, so their expenses are lower. That's not always the case. We do have overhead that remains whether sales are high or low. Bookshelf and Cmag expenses are staying down which is great news (in spite of good sales). Alline is keeping her expenses low. Cmag has figured out a new way to save money in shipping. DianaC's office expenses are down. "Other" expenses are at 20% of projected expenses (we'll look at that in detail later). "Other loan interest" is lower. We've negotiated that and also the Peach loan has been negotiated down, too.

General Questions?

Under Dir2, there's a negative number for expenses? That's from last year and probably reflects an adjustment in inventory such that we ended up with a negative number. We may have found some more books we didn't know we had. Dir2 is essentially a done deal, though we still sell maybe one a month at the low cost.

FYI store.ic.org has some direct expenses paid for by the Web Weaver account. WWS can talk with Tony about it if they want to.

Every project shows a profit this year.

Dir4 doesn't show up yet. We might want to add a 2004 expense line.

Going Into Details:

Bookshelf

This only included books FIC does not print. We're doing

well on web sales and a little less than we expected on event sales. It includes the TO conf but not this weekend's conf. We're predicting event sales will be around \$12,000 for the year. The bummer this year was we only sold \$3000 worth of books because there was another bookseller at the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair. At that level of income, it might not be worth the effort. Alline is going to investigate. Costs are staying down. Alline is doing a great job at keeping event expenses and management labor under budget. Re: the negative number under inventory adjustment, Tony tried to do it once a quarter, but sometimes the counts fluctuate. All in all, showing a profit for this year so far.

Is there a notion that this will make money for the org or is the vision of it as a break-even enterprise? This would be a real profit center only if we can increase sales volume somehow such that the management labor doesn't outweigh it. So far it's mostly seen more as a service that we do to fulfill our mission. It's not in the red any more, one step at a time. Congrats to Alline! And Tony put real effort into mentoring!

One way we can keep events sales up is to find ways to get books to conferences people who are already attending. Events are the place we could make a higher profit margin as opposed to mail order where expenses are higher. But the event that grossed the most didn't necessarily produce much profit because we rented a car and paid labor. That's not true at all other events we attend because Laird takes books to events and does not charge for labor or transportation. We tried things where we ship books to people who are going to events, and that has not worked well. If Laird were not selling the books like this, the event income would be less.

Communities magazine

Big story is we're showing increase in wholesale income, but some of that is just receivables we may not get. Tony is expecting wholesale income will be around \$25,000 of real income. This only represents two issues so far this year, but you can't double the \$20,000 figure. But \$25,000 is better than the \$19,000 we had budgeted. Kind of a mystery why last year was so poor.

Re: Expenses, things are pretty much going according to plan with contract labor. Although there's an in-progress snafu where we have to switch our layout person that might increase expenses on current issue. Graphic design costs have gone up, mostly for photos. DianaC is getting more digital photos that are too low-resolution so she has to pay for photos more often. And she's paying some of our

graphic artists. Direct office expenses look like they're down. Tony needs to check with her on this. Printing is on the high side. We're printing more issues because we're shipping more issues to wholesalers. A little bit of a snafu with photocopying back issues. It doesn't happen for a while, and then someone goes out and does a bunch of it. Some were done at too high a cost. Laird found us a good copy deal so this shouldn't happen again.

Under fulfillment -- we used to get the magazines in a truck from the printer and ship them to subscribers and wholesalers. Now the printer ships to both directly, and we end up saving money. Our costs would have increased with the new wholesale deal if we had been doing it ourselves. Cmag renewal letters -- that's a more accurate accounting than in the past. Other questions on cmag? Looks good, keep up the good work!

Development

Restricted donations are only \$250. Happily the rest is unrestricted. We've made about \$8600. Most of the expenses (1/3 of Laird's salary) are allocated to development, and Alyson is the development assistant. The other expenses are mostly doing the mailings to our donors list.

This does not reflect the endowment project? Correct. Tony would like to see some of the labor get pulled out of here and put into there if it's going to be separate.

How is office overhead calculated? We look at the office staff's entire budget and do some transfers from areas for fulfillment costs. And we estimate time taken for each area that gets allocated. Might say Cmag is 25% and development is 5%. It's kind of rough but the best we can figure. Annually we change percentages as needed. Some things get a high percentage of overhead even if sales are low if they're a pain to deal with.

Membership

We're ahead of our target and expenses are low. Why is it up? The first \$30 someone gives in development initiatives gets recorded as membership income, and this is probably a big reason. We already combined the development team and membership team into one area so in future budgets will probably put them together. Do we know where the numbers are coming from? How many members out of store.ic.org? Out of cmag, etc? Admin staff does careful tracking of sources so we could inquire if we wanted. It's not part of Tony's accounting. We do give a 10% discount on our products for members. With the store, we've made it easy for customers to take advantage of that and many of them do. Half of our web sales might get that membership discount. It's a bigger

plus than a minus.

"Other"

Auctions -- We did well with those; had three this year instead of two.

Expense area -- at the last meeting we chopped out some travel reimbursements money; we'll still spend some. OS cmtee and Personnel cmtees have not spent their budgets. \$2500 for marketing manager is to be moved to Velma's database work. That will be spent but not for marketing. Cmag biz manager is lower.

What are special order mailing labels? That's any time when we sell our mailing list to other like-minded organizations. Coop America is the main buyer, and it's hit or miss if they buy it in any given year. We have not done much promo; it's pretty passive. There are some small ones in there; forming communities buy segments of the lists sometimes.

2004 looks like it has a loss here in "other" - why that number? The "other" area is kind of a catchall. We still need to talk as a group about what to allocate for board travel for next year and whether we want to allocate money for a marketing manager. So these are topics we need to look at. And we can't count on having three auctions next year. Please talk to Tony with more questions. It will come back tomorrow.

Budget II

Proposal/Tweaks (9/16)

Presenter: Tony

M: Lotus

Balance Sheet is a snapshot of what you have (assets) and what you owe (liabilities). Equity - assets minus liabilities

Under accounts receivable, you'll see that CMag receivables have jumped from \$23K to \$33K. Unlikely we'll receive all \$33 K; some represents returns and credits. We're happy if we get a 50% sell-through... doesn't mean that only \$17K is real because some credit memos have already come in. Actual figure is somewhere between \$20K & \$25K.

Bookshelf inventory -- staying steady since last year. Alline is doing a reasonable job of keeping it at that level. Would like to see inventory a little lower.

Loan Fund -- \$10K to Walnut Street and \$30K PEACH Loan Fund loan.

Fund balances -- there's about \$700 in the video marketing fund.

Are books insured for loss at MO location? We pay for insurance, but I don't know the answer to your question.

Need to write off Liberty Gardens & Betterton loans (15 years old).

Liabilities & Equity -- explanations of various loans. Two new loans replace CDir3 line of credit and are at more favorable rates.

About \$1,800 in Missouri checking account. About \$10,000 in payables right now. Not worse than a couple of years ago. We're treading water with nose just barely out of the water. Not able to pay things as fast as we want but still able to cycle things through. Credit card -- nothing outstanding. We pay bills right away.

Why is web weavers kept separate? They don't take any money from org, & money from web site goes into a separate account that they have control over to pay for their expenses.

Equity equals \$29,657. What that means is that we're still in the black, but we're using the loan fund. If we didn't have the loan fund money, we would not have positive equity. We would like to have higher positive equity. Jumped down around the Mt. Madonna fiasco. We've been posting small losses since then.

How are assets (books, etc.) valued? The valuation of Cmag back issues is 0. Directories are at the cost to produce them not at the retail value. Bookshelf inventory is at the price that we paid wholesale.

Statement of Cash Flows -- Another way to look at things to see why we have cash flow problems even though we are showing a profit. We have a little less liquid money available now than at the beginning of the year.

Our sales oriented businesses need to show a profit, not just break even. How can we really push this to make some income?

Tony goes over revisions in 2004 budget. Budget comes back for final approval on Thursday.

Budget III

Adoption (9/18)

Presenter: Tony

F: Harvey M: Geoph

Communities Dialogue Project: no budget included, Vince assumed that the expenses would be covered in the general office budget. In past years the highest line item budget for this was \$200. Can office absorb it now? The office is under budget pressure now, so would probably be best to assign the project its own budget (though the office could still send them out and bill to that account). Would need to include a labor fulfillment cost as well. We're looking forward to movement on this project. Tony feels that as long as the area is small, would be best to just handle this as a simple line item. If donations come in, how would they be recorded, allocated, and tracked? **AGREED:** For this 2004 budget, Tony will add \$50 to the "Other" line item to cover this project.

Budget IV (9/18)

Presenter: Tony

F: Harvey M: Ma'ikwe

Budget now shows a \$45 profit. Adjustments were in the video budget, travel subs, and newsletter. **AGREED:** Budget for 2004 is hereby approved, with great appreciation of Tony for his good work! We are now responsible for making the funds come in and seeing that no more than this goes out.

Space Aliens (9/16)

F: Elph M: Joanna

Scenario: During the fall '03 meeting, a call was received that Space Aliens invaded Sandhill, Dancing Rabbit, and Earthaven. They took away Laird, Diana Christian & the entire FIC staff, records & cash, but left the mailing list, back issues of the publications & the ic website. They also erased all debt. The mission of the remaining FIC members is to develop a plan to carry out our vision of the FIC purpose & goals with no budget. Small groups discussed the proposal and in plenary these suggestions were made:

- To continue, Cmag must come up with some funds. Good plan is to attempt fundraising through a mass publicity campaign telling the story of the Space Alien invasion.
- Good tool to assess where our energy is going. This serves as an opportunity to reorganize the structure of the org. Also suggestion to reevaluate membership -- who was in, and what the members wanted.
- Grassroots initiative. One thing that was recognized was an economic collapse from other Space Alien activities, and a new FIC goal is to help make connections to help

people meet their economic & social needs.

- Accounting was no longer necessary since there is no budget. Tony will take some time off.
- Take inventory of assets. Develop web-based catalog.
- Annual retreat.
- Develop a Kids in Community website & develop multigenerational model.
- Continue vision of a traveling community road show using grant money. More vigor in that endeavor.
- How to replace Laird? More people would have to pitch in or maybe new leaders would emerge.
- Put together lost resources or those that were being gathered such as the Events Template. Develop on-site coordinators of events in various regional locations.
- Laird feels relieved of some responsibilities but only if the work was getting done by other people.
- One thought of replacing Laird is to develop several regional leaders to do his job on more local levels.
- what had not been said? One person feels that others do not understand or appreciate the work that she does. Another person suggested that more effort would be made by remaining members to take inventory of books and sell them via web catalog.

Space Aliens II (9/16)

F: Geoph M: Jillian

Present: Geoph, Jillian, Fred, Andrew, Jenny, Earl, Peggy, Ma'ikwe, Harvey, Tony, Vince, Joanna, Lotus, Laird, Nancy, Bill, Doug, Barbara, Elph

Agenda for this Session

- (1) Recap: An exercise for creativity: asset survey, visioning, prioritizing, team building
- (2) Additional Inspirations
- (3) Combining and Signing On
- (4) Focus Groups
- (5) Reports Back

We wrote our ideas down each on one piece of paper and put it on the floor. Ideas from this morning plus any others that have come up.

- * Local regional empowerment (Fred)
- * Annual FIC retreat (Peggy)
- * Directory Data - Fund/preserve/promulgate (Earl)

- * Sale of assets/inventory (Tony)
- * Fundraise (Laird)
- * Web site/Dir4(Tony)
- * Take time off (Tony)
- * Regional organizing (Ma'ikwe)
- * Traveling IC Troupe (Lotus)
- * Write for Cmag (Ma'ikwe)
- * Grassroots regional networking (Vince)
- * Coordinate conference-midsize in 2004, large 2-4 years after that (Joanna)
- * Grassroots local community building (Bill)
- * Child/generational community integration (Bill)
- * Web work (Elph)
- * Events work (Harvey)
- * Economic development (Vince)
- * Web map (Andrew)

Combine these into 2-5 subgroups. Small groups: web work, events, financing, marketing, regional networking and child development. How many people are split among numerous ones? The child development item has only one person so we'll hold off on that one for now.

Discussion about where to go from here. Are we to stay with the imaginary role? Is this to illuminate our thinking about what the FIC is doing? With unlimited possibilities, what could we do? Let's narrow the focus down to a few things and see what it is that this group would be focused on, and what does that mean, how is that highlighted against what we're currently doing?

Comments: For me, I have nothing that I'm committed to right now. I'm new and this idea I had is wide open for me. For new folks this exercise is more reality. I switched to reality mode when we had to write things down.

What might have been the underlying motive? The original fantasy was structured so that we were not counting on resources that were already spoken for, both to break us out of the box that this is the org, but also to keep us from relying on already-scarce resources of the org. So I would suggest we look at this in terms of what can we do without significant drain on the resources in the org or drain on important things we are already doing.

So it sounds like we bridged from our imaginary world into a place of people who want to move forward on what they've come up with. What can we do without further straining the resources of the org?

We broke into small groups, each one to come back with an

initiative and what kind of resources they would need.

Finance/Money group reporting back

Had a lively discussion inspired by Nancy's story of the beads and by the realization that the new people that come into this group are not totally aware of the history of the FIC and past experiences of the group. We would like to introduce some new rituals to our group tied in with the idea of beads. Each bead would symbolize our meetings in the past, and each new bead would be added with each meeting and our tribal history would be told. Storytelling is also an art form. Possibilities that we will all develop that talent in some fashion. The beads could be kept in a special case that would go from meeting to meeting and someone would be the bead-keeper between meetings. Part of the context of this, trying to stay with the space alien idea: No matter what happens, we still have our stories; and we build community in the transmission of the knowledge. We intend to bring that as an opening ritual next time and close our meetings with the selection of a new bead. We've also raised \$1000 as a donation to support the special initiative to launch this endowment capital campaign.

We'll invite people to look for beads between meetings to donate to the bead box so we have a selection of beads. We'll invite past members who come to meetings to tell a story and select a bead so oral history of FIC is ritually shared at each meeting. How would the stories be held? We don't know yet.

Culture is a group of people who live by a certain story. A good story, a good vision raises money.

FIC historical action figures are people who can add to the oral history of FIC.

Web Group Reporting Back

Shared a wide-ranging discussion. Time and money are limiting factors. Came across a weekend programming idea. Lock programmers in a room together, throw good food in, good internet access, entertainment on their breaks, laptops for everyone, and fund their transportation on a once-a-month basis for the first six months and then quarterly after that. We'd need some funding to get the needs taken care of. Might be able to do it without programming costs just by the sheer enthusiasm of programmers geeking out together.

Events Group Reporting Back

We had a good discussion, large group. A couple of converging ideas. Regarding bioregional, there's an

important distinction to make: If we're looking at our org as grassroots, it makes sense to go back to the natural boundaries, people with common resources. List of what each person had as ideas they'd like to implement:

Ma'ikwe - event in the southwest

Geoph - using evenings as he travels around, small events, to get a few people energized and leaves them some resources so they can carry on with networking activities themselves

Bill - starting events/evenings/discussions that are community related, introducing materials

Peggy - Amherst area, and support of Ma'ikwe in the southwest. Also potential Boston area

Fred - NICA - do some documentation about how NICA does their org and what they have learned by their efforts, could maybe work with Tree

Vince - has a list of orgs he's involved with and working with those orgs as a springboard to call out interest in intentional community and do cosponsored events.

Then they put down some action items.

Identify the regional hubs we can work with - northeast-Boston, Amherst (Peggy), southwest (Ma'ikwe), midwest (Vince), northwest (Fred), southeast (Joanna)

Also want to create some templates - a set of materials that would be available to leave behind to enable people who catch interest to continue their work. Also want to help plan events.

Cmag comes out quarterly with themes: could have a discussion group three weeks after the Cmag comes out about the theme. Great idea to spawn discussion groups.

Two-minute popcorn style feedback about the space aliens exercise:

Logistically awkward but creatively beneficial. I was a bit confused at times but seemed to get a lot of energy rolling and some good creative and practical ideas. Great way to get new people involved in stuff. I came into it with a totally different idea of what the purpose would be, to reexamine what the org is doing. For me there are unanswered questions. For example, it was suggested that we not do any more products at all or sell products. What would that look like? And I don't know when we're going to get to talk about them.

Development (9/16)

Presenter: Laird

M: Ma'ikwe

Goals:

- 1) Involving others in the work of the organization,
- 2) Soliciting funds,
- 3) Making connections.

First exercise is to silently make a list of contacts outside the FIC to approach for donations and to get involved in the work of the FIC. Contacts will not be shared in plenary. Alyson & Laird will discuss these contact lists with each member individually to find out what skills their contacts may have that can help, or give suggestions on how to approach them, what to ask of them, etc.

Discussion: One member's list had people with money and other people with organizational skills to get things going, such as the packet for the communities dialog and promotion of Visions of Utopia video. He suggests that we share these lists with other members who may be traveling to a certain area.

Suggestion made that each of us, when traveling; carry some brochures of the FIC and maybe a newsletter to show potentially interested people. Another suggestion is to develop a clearer list of objectives and specific needs of FIC to leave with people who are considering getting involved. Several members said they'd be interested in traveling to other org's events and spreading the word of FIC.

One member expressed the need for training in how to solicit funds because she does not feel comfortable doing so but would like to. **TASK:** Laird will figure out when a training session can be arranged. He and/or Alyson will do a training session sometime in the spring, 2004.

Office Proposal I (9/16)

Presenter: Ma'ikwe

F: Geoph M: Lotus

Things needing attention:

1. Which community will play host?
2. Review and accept/amend design criteria.
3. Review and accept/amend design services proposal (unable to do right now ... all paperwork not in).

Where do we want to put the office space? Both cmtys have said an enthusiastic yes. No big differences between what each cmtly has said. Both want sustainable design, arrangements & agreements in place, want all ducks in a row before ground is broken, and some general concerns about impact of traffic in the cmtly.

What would be different: eco covenants stronger at DR. Biggest difference is that if office moved to DR, Laird would not be moving his office with it. We'd have a new relationship with DR, we already have an established relationship with SH.

The vision of the two cmtys is somewhat different. DR wants to grow big and do lots of outreach. SH wants to stay small. Parking may be a challenge at DR; would need more parking for a resource center. More general excitement at DR about having a resource center tacked on later and having more activity around it. H is comfortable, but DR is excited. Duplicating office functions in a new building, more room to organize and make accessible materials. Conferencing facility/training center is not embraced by SH. Perspective that SH members would prefer that office stay at SH. Would trailer stay at SH? Not sure.

DR design criteria -- no use of new lumber & off-grid, use lower-power computers, no running water. Which place would be more open to other administrative offices for other organizations?

Ma'ikwe prefers office be located at DR. Laird would like it to stay at SH but sees the advantages of having it at DR; for instance, a higher pool of people to draw from for office staff functions. If it moves to DR, Laird doesn't believe anyone at SH would work in the office.

Resource center could be separate -- one office could be at SH and one at DR.

DR - positives:

- Possible allies on site (other orgs to share office space, etc)
- Laird won't get sucked into office work
- Would this shift to Laird being less indispensable?
- Level of vision alignment with DR is good
- More available staff people at the office if it were at DR
- Susan, Alline, Alyson, and Andra are office staff who would then be on site

- Eco-friendly in the middle -- could be plus or minus

DR - negatives:

- Possible increased costs
- Laird not on site
- Parking question
- Possible unhappiness at Sandhill if we move it

- Separation of files and resources would be needed (might be duplication of resources)
- Laird won't have as many opportunities for staff conversations and absorbing what's going on by being "in the middle"

Discussion of parking question:

Possible numbers of cars doesn't sound like a problem to Tony. He doesn't think the level of cars would be an issue for either community. At Sandhill you might be able to park closer to the building than at DR.

Discussion about if the office moved to DR the hard part would be the transition for Laird.

Sandhill positives:

- Laird's preference
- Already an established relationship with Sandhill
- Possibly cheaper
- Grid access (comments that it might be cheaper to build, don't know if it'll be cheaper to maintain though; grant will cover building it but not maintenance)
- Historical relationship Sandhill has with FIC might be a positive item in grant writing

Sandhill negatives:

- Not the same kind of vision alignment
- Most of the staff would be commuting

Would it be easier to get money if we're going off grid? Might be. There is a more radical funding group, but we would be a large amount for them. Other two possible funding groups are not quite as radical but have more money. What if you proceeded with one and found out that you were not able to fund it. Could we change the decision to pitch it to another group? Yes. It would be nice to pitch it simultaneously to several different organizations.

Do you perceive an advantage to pitching one community over another? Not really.

Out of time, this needs to come back for more discussion.

Office Proposal II (9/17)

Presenter: Ma'ikwe

M: Lotus

Harvey, Tony, Laird & Ma'ikwe met in an attempt to come to consensus on where the office bldg. should be located and will report on what happened at their meeting. Laird has moved to a place of being supportive of the office being located at DR. Here are his reasons: DR is one of the

bright stars in the movement today, and they are growing. It's a good energy fit for the office to be there. There's plenty of room to fit under the umbrella of what they're trying to do. The person doing the grant writing wants to be there so easier for Ma'ikwe to stay excited about it. Greater prospects of an energetic, enthusiastic pool of people to work in the office.

What does Laird need from FIC in order to feel he has everything he needs at SH? He doesn't know. Even if the grant is successful, it will be a while before this needs to be figured out. Peggy suggests he make a wish list of what he needs to function so that he is prepared when the office moves to DR since his main operating base will remain at SH. Laird hopes he won't need to ask for any support from FIC around his working situation at SH.

AGREED: The building will be located at DR.

TASK: Look for a good way to connect with SH with the news.

AGREED: A letter of appreciation will be sent to SH, and this letter will be drafted and completed during these meetings. Harvey and Peggy will draft a letter prior to the close of this meeting.

OFFICE DESIGN NEEDS

Ma'ikwe goes over a list of office design needs:

- * C-Mag: storage, interim mailing space
- * 3 computer stations (bookshelf, office, mgr., unspecified)
- * Bookshelf/publications
- * Order fulfillment & shipping
- * Conf. space: 6-8 (or org mtg or both)
- * Machine space (copier, fax, etc.)
- * Files (current 4 cabinets)
- * Storage of Supplies
- * Recycling area
- * Wood heat/ store OR outdoor wood furnace
- * *Built w/expansion in mind*
- * This building needs its own infrastructure; DR does not want heavy use of DR facilities such as toilet, etc. This is still somewhat in question.

OFFICE DESIGN POSSIBILITIES

- * Snack kitchen
- * Bedroom
- * Composting toilet
- * Need a conversation with DR about these things before

deciding.

- * Current space is about 800 sq. ft.; looking at making new space about 2500 sq. ft. (less now with removal of some rooms previously considered)
- * DR would likely be willing to let folks use common house if more meeting space were needed
- * Conference space wanted for sound barrier and to insure more privacy because main office space is planned to be open

When you write a grant, one writes expansively; but if we get less money, then we figure out what we REALLY need. If we're looking at what is minimal or essential, then not sure this is the list we want.

Not sure how space is needed for order fulfillment; those needs may change over time if we move away from selling products. Don't want to be stuck with a bunch of office space that we don't use. Actual design should be a separate process after the funding is in place.

What do you need in order to start doing the grant writing itself? In order to do the budget, need a solid estimate for the builder and enough information so we know what needs to be included in the building so when the designer and builder meet, they have necessary information in order to create their plans.

FEATURES

Essential:

- * Dry/climate control
- * Heating system w/acceptable fire risk
- * Can be added to easily
- * Open/flexible floor plan
- * Ecologically friendly
- * Pleasant environment
- * Insurable
- * Capable of handling all current functions
- * Rodent proof
- * Consciously designed for our actual functions
- * Integrated w/host's land & land-use plan
- * Good light & air flow
- * Cool in summer
- * Wheel-chair access & dolly access for moving books
- * Wall space/big board space
- * Communication center

If we want the building to be insured, this may affect heating system.

DR tends to be clustered housing design so there may not be a large space next to the building left for expansion because the building will be in the DR downtown area.

DESIGN TEAM

Zaida Amorall (design architect and feng shui practitioner) is very interested in working on this project. Not afraid to ask for outside consultant help when she needs it. She doesn't have a standard program because since coming to US she hasn't done a lot of this kind of work... doesn't have a lot of preconceived notions and has lived in community, works really well with groups. She is also willing to work with the builder (Kent) Ma'ikwe has in mind. This builder has been working on common building at DR, and he is open to working with her and continuing work with crews from DR. She is the executive director of the Sustainability Trust and is a friend of Ma'ikwe. How do people feel about having a professional designer involved?

AGREED: Board empowers Ma'ikwe to choose the designer she feels good about.

Design committee will make decisions regarding payment of designer. We need a rough floor plan and an indication of how they are going to deal with climate control issues. Board would like buy-in to the building design. Sometime in the design process before labor and details begin, we need to make sure that the design concept of the building works for the Board. First pass at layout, climate control (heating & cooling), life cycles costs (ongoing besides construction), building technique, & elevation, building materials.

It is our intent to find money in the grant to pay Zaida for her initial work to get grant together. It is also our intent to continue that working relationship, but we are under no obligation to hire her, if we choose not to. She is willing to do the work without a guarantee that she be hired.

Where would we spend money? (9/17)

Presenter: Laird
F: Earl M: Vince

Wish List:

- Equipment upgrades
- Funds to hire staff at The Farm to edit tape #2 of Geoph's video
- Directory endowment
- Loan Fund
- FIC retreat
- Improve infrastructure

Use the \$ to build money, while honoring other important

aspects - Strengthen, Nurture, Excitement. Idea of dividing the money into thirds:

- Pay loans
- Finish what we've started + better compensation
- Follow our exciting paths

Find the right people to deal with questions properly. Important to retire debt, including video project. Look at hiring administrative management; talk of a time vs. ongoing endowment gifts.

Does Laird need to be able to tell the funders how the money will be spent? Yes.

We have two parallel questions on the table -- what do we do with 1 time gifts? And with ongoing income?

How do we impress others with integrity? What can Laird say without 'making it up' on the fly. We should probably touch base on this regularly, though oversight could handle it. What is the donor 'excited' about? We do have a list already of things/projects. Budgeting?

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (9/17)

Presenter: Lotus

M: Vince

At the weekend's CSI event, Lotus attended Jim Schenk's "Appreciative Inquiry" workshop. He is with Imago in Cincinnati, and his group has been successful in creating Price Hill eco-neighborhood project. AI is an exciting philosophy for positive change -- an asset-based approach and a generative process. The major assumption of AI is that in every org something works, and change can be managed through the identification of what works and the analysis of how to do more of what works.

Essentially very different from the Olinsky Method, this falls within the traditional philosophy of building unity by identifying a common enemy or what's not working. AI suggests we look for what works in an org to build a unified vision. In a lot of ways, it resembles our community dialogue process where we get people to reflect on how they've already experienced community in their lives.

The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the org wants to be, based on the high moments of where we have been. In telling our personal stories, we're essentially sharing our real experience and history, which is an important way to forge connections, cooperation, and team spirit. Additionally,

people know how to repeat their success.

By asking appreciative questions and doing a generative process, we still get the information we need but the difference is the org has the confirmed knowledge, confidence and inspiration that they did well and will continue to do well with a heightened awareness of what works. When you ask people appreciative questions, you touch something very important to them. They don't give politically correct answers; they give heartfelt answers because we ask soulful questions.

Let's take a look at the role of assumptions in change. Assumptions are a set of beliefs shared by a group that cause the group to think and act in a certain way. They are:

- * statements or rules that explain what a group generally believes
- * explain the context of the group's choices and behaviors
- * are usually not visible to or verbalized by the participants/members; rather they develop and exists
- * must be made visible and discussed before anyone can be sure of the group's beliefs

Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry (AI):

- * In every society, org or group, something works
- * What we focus on becomes our reality
- * Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities
- * The act of asking questions of an org or group influences the group in some way
- * People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry parts of the past (the known)
- * If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past
- * It is important to value differences
- * The language we use creates our reality

For AI to work its magic, you have to believe and internalize the assumptions. AI advocates believe that comes with study and practice.

Then we divided into pairs, one person interviewed the other asking AI questions, and then they switched. Then took a bit of time for short evaluation. Folks expressed enjoyment of hearing one another's stories and doing the exercise, more connection, brought people closer, good for morale.

Appreciative Inquiry Results (9/18)

Presenter: Geoph

M: Ma'ikwe

Officially, the next stage in the process would be finding our "provocative propositions" -- gathering things together and combining them in a way that is powerful for the group. Lotus and I didn't have time to compile all the answers to make the provocative propositions, but we'll work on this in the coming month or two and post results to the ALL list. Some of what we got out of this was things we were already aware of. Some of us need handwriting lessons... ;-)

Most common themes (will be typed up and sent out):

- 1) What we value re: FIC
 - Sense of community
 - Interpersonal connections and stretching (personal growth)
 - Avenue for social change work
 - Alignment of life with work

Suggestions for wording of the question: fine.

- 2) Most rewarding thing you've done to promote community?
 - Public speaking
 - Networking
 - Nurturing
 - Inspiring
 - Creating resources for people (directory, cmag)
 - Starting a community
 - Helping un-block stuck dynamics

Suggestions for the wording: Is there a way to phrase this that helps bring out the nuances? Second part is more for personal contemplation.

- 3) High point in contribution.
 - Event-participation.
 - Making decisions that impacted the present

This question was good because it brought out the storyteller in us; but writing it down lost the storyteller feel. Perhaps having it be a group exercise would have allowed that to come through more. In group, the experience would change because active listening one-on-one is different than in a whole group setting.

- 4) Challenging aspect.
 - Decentralized structure
 - So much to do so little time

- Interpersonal challenges
- Feeling strain between volunteering time and income production

Parts 2&3 will be compiled for use more as a template. Sense of disconnect between the questions: "aspect" implies ongoing challenge; parts 2&3 were more about specific incidents. If there are multiple parts, break them up so it's easier to track and answer each part. Q about having the "challenge" question in a process that's supposed to be about positives.

5) Leadership

- Being able to act with integrity for what is good for org in spite of personal disappointment
- Combo of getting stuff done AND being gracious
- Take thing at hand and see bigger picture
- Knowledge and wisdom from past into present and building on it
- Engagement
- Recognize leadership as shared position
- Long-term commitment
- Adding something new that's needed
- Inspired to serve effectively; leader as servant
- Ability to coalesce energy so there's more available
- Ability to weave threads together
- Holds energy and vision that good solution is possible
- Have our cohorts nudge us more
- Willingness to put ourselves on the spot and embrace it more

Question seemed to assume that everyone is a leader; as opposed to other things we contribute to FIC that aren't about leadership. Could have a question about how we are effective as a follower.

6) Small thing that would make a big difference

- Spend more time with my son
- Manage to be perceived as more socially available
- More singing, ritual
- More form to local/regional org
- Keep coming back
- Start working on bioregional map
- Provide support and connection for a particular person
- Be present to nurture spirit
- Being here
- Get events templates packaged to be usable
- Smile more
- Inspire others by making personal connection
- Develop personal ritual for 15 minutes of deliberate

planning

Question was fine; nice expansive ending.

Evaluation: Good to learn about AI. Might be valuable to include in the instructions to encourage a two-step process for each question -- first thought is there, but is not always complete. Capture it then work with it in a second step rather than brush it aside because it feels incomplete or incoherent. The coherent thought that follows is easier to write down, but often isn't the thing we'd like to really focus some energy on. Good for people who struggle to keep a positive perspective -- interested in whether or not this helps folks in that category. For me, as a positive person, I didn't get anything new out of it. Helped to show what wasn't integrated yet and needs processing.

FIC Culture I: How it supports those doing the work of the organization (9/17)

F: Earl M: Ma'ikwe

Review deep dialogue and transparency as organizational commitments. Look at styles of leadership and how we give feedback while also finding ways to see that it lands effectively. Focus on Laird's "interactions." Some ambiguity around what is the focus of topic. Confidentiality issue addressed as it involves persons not in attendance. This appears to be a re-occurring issue. Laird will tell of the dynamics but not name anyone specifically.

Elements of the Dynamic - Laird

A person is irritated, things stew. The reality is this is going to happen again. By the time it gets to Laird, there's an eruption and quite a story. Sometimes the blast comes in a public setting so he tries to stay centered. This feels abusive to come in the way it does, but he wants it to come out.

Another incident: An old incident was triggered and back into the upset when Laird thought the matter had been resolved. Org did a good job of taking care of the upset person but no aftercare for Laird or anyone else affected.

Are we asking our leaders to be different than everyone else? Do they have to step into a parental role? Leaders need to disengage from identifying too much with their role as a leader... difficult to separate self from organization when in a leadership place like Laird. Ask the question: Is this about me? We need to see anger as a healthy emotion

and let it happen and let folks pass through it. When Laird loses his center, he wants/needs support to get back to center. Doesn't think we should ask leaders to act alone in that situation. What is it in you, Laird that gets stimulated when someone erupts in the way you've described? What do we want to do culturally when this occurs?

The culture of what we expect of the people presenting their negative feedback. Is there anything we can do to encourage more positive outcomes? What can we expect from persons receiving feedback? What can we do as a group to support the parties involved? Believes it's the last part that's most important to talk about but only relevant when incident happens and others are around to witness the dynamic. OS has committed to being available to Laird. Look at power dynamics between Laird and the other person... when other person is not as integrated in the org. Laird has good support so we often gravitate to helping the person who doesn't have as much support and who is the one who is in distress. Not right to give no feedback to person getting blasted.

How can we give and receive feedback in more constructive ways?

- * Reach out to both parties publicly.
- * Catch things before they land in a hard way.
- * Develop skills so we're all peers.
- * Facilitators check in with people.
- * Graceful way to interrupt process when it's happening.
- * What do we do after the event?
- * There needs to be a cultural shift from product-oriented culture to one where we place caring for one another, giving support, health and well being as a priority.
- * A stronger and more pro-active ministry committee
- * Viewing conflict as a learning opportunity and a route to deeper understanding vs. seeing conflict as something to be avoided.
- * Integrating a value of embracing conflict as a good thing.
- * Focus on power in the organization weakens the influence we have.
- * Distinction between power and influence.
- * Administrator is the lightning rod and the one who folks direct their complaints to... no way around it, and it's not personal. The way the administrator handles it is his/her responsibility.
- * Pause when conflict happens.

FIC Culture II

Concrete Steps (9/18)

Presenter: Geoph

M: Ma'ikwe

Geoph wonders if creative role-playing exercise and/or "playback theater" type exercises might help surface some techniques/develop new habits to make us more effective in handling future occurrences, heading off the awkward/discombobulating dynamics. We do orientation for new folks, but don't really do a cultural orientation (facilitation tools, deep dialogue process, etc).

Earthaven uses a floating segment of process time that can get included anywhere in the agenda as the meeting unfolds. The topic on hand can be set aside and deferred to that other slot.

We're modeling ways that are different from corporate culture. Needs to be a structural way to support folks in leadership roles who run into situations like Laird described yesterday. We could enhance the Ministry Cmtee function or add to it in other ways (pro-active and responsive). What is the impediment to people standing up at those times? Lack of permission vs. overwhelm; no sense of effective things to do. Seems to be mostly the latter. Dropping bombs rips off the group. Should we have a cultural norm to defer it to an appropriate place later in the agenda? At times it is also because person has gotten hooked so is then not able to be effective in dealing with it. Some of us share a cultural belief that if you don't deal with conflict as it comes up, then the unresolved issues & energies undermine the effectiveness of the process at that point. At times it's best to jump in at the moment; other times it's best to defer to outside or until later in the agenda.

Might help having a better inventory (a ministry role?) of what approaches/ styles work for which people? Could make better use of "Advocates" that work outside of the plenary to be with triggered folks to get their issues examined, bring that insight/info back to the group. Use conflict as a tool for surfacing constructive info in the dissent/unsettling emotions. Need to have a deeper conversation about underlying issues ... how we culturally work with it. How can we better support the people whom the energy is directed at the same time we help the person directing the upset? Are we supporting powerlessness by not balancing our attention and support? Some don't want to be supported when dumping or otherwise not coming from higher self.

In meetings, how do we manage the balance between

structural content and the emotional/interpersonal content? Both are important. In an ideal world, our Ministry Cmtee would be monitoring those dynamics and intervening as appropriate. Some groups use vibes watchers. There are a variety of ways to handle these things in the moment, and we need some flexibility in how to work with it. Definitely need a way to identify the underlying issues that require further work after the meeting and how to bring this back to the whole group.

TASK: Lotus has strong interest in this work and invites others to send her ideas/input on how to move this forward. She will bring it back to spring '04 meetings for further discussion. Ma'ikwe & Vince also want to work with Lotus on this.

Dir4 (9/17)

Presenter: Tony

F: Earl M: Lotus

Data collection system discussion with Laird.

icdb.org is where Ofek's database is located.

We need to talk more with Ofek and decide whether it's worth working with his software or not. No one knows him personally in the group. His software is relatively fully featured but may not have every feature we want. It doesn't have every presentation and not very user friendly. He might be open to changing, but Tony doesn't have a sense of how open he is.

Special Events & Resources (9/18)

Presenter: Laird

F: Tony M: Ma'ikwe

Events:

June 12-20 Earthaven NC Bioregional Congress

June 28-30 Amana, IA ICSA

September 20-25 Hollyhock BC GEN

We have started to talk with organizers about these three events without yet defining our specific role. Laird generally carries a lot of this energy for the org, so to some extent it's a choice of Laird's time. Question is priority within our portfolio and what particular agenda we'd like him to carry. Not a financial question, more a time juggling question. Farm and TO conferences also take Laird's time. Those dates are: May Farm conference, Labor Day at Twin Oaks, Halloween at NASCO. Ma'ikwe is interested in June events, Joanna and Vince willing to do Earthaven conference. Alyson seems like a great person to do this

work.

Part of this is Laird creating links, and not anyone can do that. Could be a mentoring opportunity for Laird to start passing those skills on. Potential networking for each event? (i.e. GEN plans to be small, somewhat exclusive, so perhaps Harvey, Geoph, Laird would be the only ones that really could go...). Lotus interested in GEN conf. and has been considering getting involved with that organization anyway. Laird's sense is that Bioregional and GEN are sorting out their identities, and we have strong values overlap. How do we make common cause? How much overlap do we have. So these two are timely. ICSA seems more solid, international flavor, which isn't our strong point, so less critical timing-wise.

One value to hold is taking advantage of these events as a way of circulating to that area and connecting with local hubs. One idea is having Laird go to the time-sensitive ones and have someone else be the primary contact for the org at other events to help free him up. We could have him be responsible for getting a solid presence at each one, which could be someone other than Laird. Balance between investing in the connections with other organizations. Laird has been the steady face with wanting to share the power within the organization. Mentoring is like shadowing more than it is training someone to "be Laird" and eventually being able to step into that role as well as Laird. Look at prioritizing the newer connections for Laird's time and look at possibility of others maintaining some of the more established connections.

5-year plan preliminary overview (9/18)

Presenter: Laird

M: Ma'ikwe

We don't have a unified perspective on what's wrong, but are clear that community is part of the solution. We offer a lot of different services and networking with other groups. We also help IC's learn from each other. Web, directory, magazine and events; Bookshelf, org mtgs, loan fund, process clearinghouse smaller parts are ways of doing this.

Commitment that each part carries its own weight financially. Shifted from directory carrying a big load to other things doing that. Two strategies are fundraising and events (which is still shaky). Primary mission is not that we are committed to those things, but they are tools for delivering our mission. We try to do our work as an example of the "product" we are promoting... so how we relate is a best-practices example of community living. In defining

values about how we operate, we have been committed to everyone who identifies as a community with two caveats: 1) must not promote violence, or 2) interfere with someone's ability to leave the organization.

Other folks input: Deep Dialogue within org. Question: how much we focus on the active "movement" and how much we focus on the larger world and bringing community out to it? Seems to be case-by-case. Two categories of the work we do: income base (products) and non-income (including org meetings and events). Short-term that perspective works for events, but longer-term we could build it up to being income-producing.

Amount of enthusiasm in the Space Aliens thing for regional networking, which we've always wanted to support but have not found energy to do it. In the next couple years we may have that energy finally. Could even have a working group do some preliminary work.

FIC/NASCO Conversation (9/18)

Presenter: Anjanette

M: Ma'ikwe

Out of the relationship with FIC, they receive some things. They are similar orgs in that they work from afar with a dispersed constituency; however, our membership profiles are very different. Struggle with similar org issues re: projects, priorities. So there's a good back & forth exchange and lots to learn from each other. NASCO is now undergoing restructuring and going back to an older staffing model. They're more staff-driven than board-driven.

FIC might be able to help them with their visioning process (Laird's name has come up). There are a growing number of graduates who are establishing residential co-ops and would have a lot in common with FIC programs. Fundraising is an area of potential interest overlap. NASCO recently added a fundraiser position to their board (rather than Exec Director who used to be the responsible person). Have started to ask alumni to donate \$100/yr for ten years.

Contemplating doing a co-op leadership conference and perhaps a co-op staff conference. ELC folks will think more about how we might put on a conference that was co-op oriented. Ma'ikwe's interest in doing a SW gathering may tap into NASCO's Texas hub. One of the Rochdale Principles is "Concern for Community," and NASCO is considering doing an event around that idea and thinking of FIC as a co-conspirator in doing that kind of event. FEC has also been in contact with them about possible institute

collaborations.

Publish "Co-op Voices" 3x per year. Could use that to pitch Geoph's video, Diana's new book, FIC events, and products. Student co-ops might be a good place to promote the quarterly-salon-based-on-Cmag-topics idea. What about organizing a staff/board get-together to explore common interests, resources ... like a leadership council? Consider reprinting each other's articles (especially our org newsletters).

Meeting Evaluation

F: Faith M: Ma'ikwe

Plus Side/Good stuff:

on-site coordination
interwoven sessions of new initiatives and product sessions
consistency of budget slots and cmte slots helped track
food great and good energy around it
circle before dinner nice
hosts generous, flexible and open
for the numbers, space worked great
kids did great/kid-friendly space
people feeling comfortable coming in
connection through music
being close to town
office close to space
lots of new faces
lots of laughter
came expecting a more intense pace and it flowed nicely
preliminary and behind-the-scenes office work
excitement about FIC necklace and oral history
appreciate Joanna for bringing Dances of Universal Peace
(timely)
meeting behavior
FIC culture topic

Minus Side/Improvements:

space aliens exercise had unclear objectives
rather have 3 days of meetings instead of 4
light food -- need more protein/calories
lack of involvement of Vale folks
assign in advance person to print out reports
reports available 2-3 weeks ahead
new summary of budget before session
more careful about what comes to plenary -- we do well with
agenda but not always with comments
need better cooperation and involvement with minute taking
orientation didn't quite fit for "sort-of" newcomers and
helping folks know where to put energy during their
uncommitted times
FIC culture topic needs more development

FIC culture topic leaned heavily toward problems and not solutions

Closing led by Peggy (Dances of Universal Peace)