

Friends Lake Cooperative Community

Structure and Procedures

Introduction

The Board of Directors conducted a review of the community's structure and procedures, over a half-year period beginning in late 2016. This resulting document is intended to clarify our process and encourage community members to participate actively in the cooperative work.

The incorporating bylaws stipulate that “the business, property and affairs” of FLCC are managed by the Board of Directors. The directors are chosen by the “voting membership” (comprised of the active and subscribing sustaining and participating members) at the annual meeting each April. The board and its directors are thereby agents of the voting membership.

The bylaws specify that *any* decisions taken by the board shall be “in the manner of Friends” which is defined as “taking the sense of the meeting.” The bylaws go on to allow any director to alternatively request that a matter be settled by vote, per *Roberts Rules of Order*. But the FLCC tradition has been to govern in the manner of Friends, not voting. And decisions related to issues of significance and/or common concern have usually involved the greater membership or those specifically affected, rather than just the board. Note: The authority of the board excludes the power to revise the bylaws.

The board therefore has a threefold challenge in governing and managing the enterprise: (1) discerning the trivial from the significant, (2) keeping the membership informed about the significant issues, and (3) providing opportunities for participation in decision making.

The Sense of the Meeting

FLCC is a community based upon Quaker principles and practice. For that reason, the bylaws call for decisions to be made *in the manner of Friends*; that is, “by taking the sense of the meeting.” This aspiration and mandate applies to *all* decision making in the community, from the board and committees to the annual membership meeting. Sense of the meeting is a challenging concept and practice, encompassing different meanings for different people, even among seasoned Quakers.

Various resources yield a wide range of interpretations for what participants mean by “sense of the meeting.” The common ground is: *discerning a sense of guidance from the ineffable*. By way of many pathways, people can connect with a deep and authentic ground of being, filled with the qualities of peace, contentment and love. This is experienced as a felt sense (or “shimmering” as one Quaker describes it), and is generally referred to as “grace” or “the energy of spirit.” Striving toward a sense of the meeting is a way in which a group or community attempts to reach this place where they stand together in unity and grace. It is left up to individuals to interpret the source and nature of this sense for themselves.

From a governance and management perspective this gathering together in unity is the *constant goal* for the meeting, as the basis for making decisions and solving problems. Effective decisions do get made and problems do get solved as *results* of being in this special place together; a place where peace, wisdom, insight, and good heartedness are all readily available.

So irrespective of time and the demands of immediacy, the group lets go of the temporal to find this common ground of being in the ineffable. This requires that participants: (1) lay aside any personal grievances, (2) consciously reach beyond their ego-based needs, and (3) strive to discern what is beyond.

At a practical level, it is worth noting how business gets done this way. After a group has shared sufficiently about a matter at hand (the practice of dialogue works very well for doing that), the presiding individual inquires: “So is this what is being agreed?” and then proposes a decision. Individuals then have the opportunity to clarify, agree upon, or further revise the proposed statement. This continues until there is a general agreement and “sense of the meeting.”

Additional Resources

For more guidelines, refer to the following in the *FLCC Board Handbook*:

. “Beyond Consensus” by Matthias Drake. An article on how to manage group dynamics and process within the context of sense of the meeting.

. Selections from *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends*, Faith and Practice.

Also, see the *You Tube* video: “Why Quakers Value Process over Outcome” at <http://youtube/aF8PABPq8AA>.

And see George SanFacon, *The Council of Equals: A Guide and Hand book for Shared Governance* (2014).

Committee Descriptions

The FLCC committee structure consists of several functionally-based groups, each one having a convener that reports directly to the board. Established in the 1990s, the framework is intended to: (1) relieve the board of overwork, (2) assure that critical functions of the enterprise are accomplished, (3) create meaningful community-based opportunities for members to spend time together, and (4) provide an integrated framework of engagement that works synergistically. The committees are as follows.

The Committees and the Community

. Committees

Committees are designed to do most of the community’s work. They are the heart of our community life. Each committee is responsible for one area that particularly interests some community members. Committees manage those areas and form proposals for ratification by the board.

. Committee Conveners

Have primary responsibility for committee business. Manage the flow of the committee’s business and communications. Provide leadership within the committee, to facilitate bringing proposals to the Board and carrying out Board directives. Lead the process of innovation where that is valuable.

Finance

Considers financial policy matters as appropriate and prepares recommendations for Board discussion and approval. Develops annual budget and helps Treasurer in reviewing and presenting financial reports for the Annual Meeting in April. Reviews and recommends to the Board changes to dues and structure (including homesite and cabin site charges) as appropriate.

Membership

Deals with recruiting and integrating new members into the community. Responsible for contents and distribution of Guidelines and Handouts describing the community. **Seeks to identify skills within the membership that would be useful to the community.** Responsible for administering the work scholarship program and recommending adjustments to the yearly fee structure in response to special needs. Involved with arrangements for special group activities. The Treasurer is an ex officio member.

Communications

Responsible for compiling, producing, and distributing the monthly newsletter, which is the primary communication with members who do not attend Board meetings. Reports on the considerations and actions of the Board and items of general interest at FLCC. Reviews all methods of communicating to and among community members and publicizing FLCC to potential members. The Secretary is an ex officio member.

Property

Responsible for overseeing the ongoing maintenance of the buildings, equipment and driveway. Determines what repairs need to be made and how best to accomplish them. For property improvements and major items, responsible for developing proposals and presenting to the Board for approval. Works with Membership Committee in seeking appropriate member skills and interests for projects. Convener is responsible for managing annual Committee budget and keeping in touch with the Treasurer.

Environment

Responsible for managing the living environment, including controlling invasive species. Plans the aesthetics and use of the land and water. Works in close liaison with Property Committee and Caretaker/Coordinator.

Also responsible for longer-range planning. Reviews proposals for construction of homes and cabins, including access and construction processes, and presents them to the Board for approval. Deals with issues impacting the environment such as cabin electrification, camping usage (time as well as location of vehicles and structures), trails, playground equipment and requests from groups for special activities.

Programs

Develops programs throughout the year to be conducted at Friends Lake for members and their guests. This includes scheduled Nature walks, water safety classes, craft demonstrations, songfests, potlucks and guest speakers, and others.

Selection and Oversight

Responsible for soliciting and interviewing applicants for the Summer Coordinator and the Winter Caretaker positions. Recommends to the Board the most qualified of the applicants, for Board approval. Maintains the guidelines for the coordinator and caretaker, and provides periodic review of the performance and process with the coordinator and caretaker.

Nominating

Responsible for developing and recommending for Board approval its officers for the following year, at the monthly Board meeting immediately after the annual membership meeting. Works with existing committee conveners to determine any needed change in committee composition, and with Membership Committee to see how best to integrate new members.

Special Nominating

The By-Laws define only one committee: the Special Nominating Committee. All other committees are defined and revised by the board. This committee reports to the annual membership meeting.

Art. III, Sec. 15: "A special Nominating Committee shall be selected each year at the Annual Membership Meeting to prepare a slate of nominees to the Board of Directors for presentation to the following Annual Meeting. The Committee shall consist of three to five sustaining members."

Stewardship / Long-Range Planning

Concerned with the long-term direction of the Community. Charged with proposing a master plan for the Community to balance the needs of the various constituencies (e.g. homeowners, cabin site holders, recreational users, environmentalists, retreat users, campers). It should revise the master plan every several years. Membership is comprised of conveners of Environmental Planning, Finance, Membership, Property, and Selection & Oversight Committees.

Liaison with Michigan Friends Center

A Liaison Committee was established at the birth of MFC in 1992. Its purpose is to address and help resolve issues of mutual concern to both FLCC and MFC, especially regarding property management and environmental planning. It meets when the need arises.



Norms and Expectations for Community Members and Officers

Community Members

The following are norms and expectations for members of FLCC. They are intended to address the following questions: “What do members need to do for the enterprise to be a sustainable undertaking? And in what manner should they do it to be aligned with its founding principles?” as stated in the Sense of the Meeting section.

Basic Members

- Be familiar with the *FLCC Guidelines for Safety and Community*.
- Abide by the governing ideas and core values of *community, nature, and good heartedness*.
- Pay annual dues promptly or, if necessary, no later than middle of the calendar year.
- Contribute at least 4 hours of volunteer service yearly to the enterprise.
- Work with a Committee, and consider becoming a Sustaining Member.
- Enjoy the community with its shared values, the special qualities of the land, and programs that are offered, and contribute to the community as they are able.

Sustaining Members

- In addition to the norms and expectations for all members, this is another level of commitment, to play an active role in the governance of the community and possibly serve on the Board.
- Hold the enterprise in trust for the present and the future generations.
- Ensure that what is happening and how it is happening are aligned with FLCC’s governing ideas and Bylaws.

The Board of Directors

President / Presiding Officer

- Is accountable to the voting membership for the functioning of the Board, its agents, and the Committees.
- Serves as Convener for the Board, presiding over the meetings and proposing the sense of the meeting on specific issues.
- Provides leadership to effectively manage the community's various operations. This includes coordinating and integrating the work of the Board with the Committees, and intervening as appropriate to facilitate community process.
- Serves as an ex-officio member of the various Committees.

Vice President

- Serves as the President in his or her absence
- Supports the President in getting the needed work done.

Secretary

- Assures that the Board meeting minutes are completed and distributed in a timely manner. Is responsible for keeping the file of minuted policies up to date.
- Maintains the Board Handbooks. Revises them as needed to incorporate changes and additions to policies and such.
- Assures that important documents (including Board meeting minutes, contractual documents, warranties, etc.) are archived, protected and available.

Treasurer

- Manages the community's finances.
- Serves as a member of the Finance Committee.
- Prepares and provides accounting statements (including actuals and projected) related to revenue, expenses, yearly budgets, and up-to-date status of such.
- Maintains a record and protected archive of all financial transactions, including revenue and expenses.
- Disperses funds as approved and directed by the Board.
- Secures all funds and securities in depositories, and maintain a record of such.

Board Members

- Abide by norms and expectations for General Members.
- Be familiar with the *FLCC Bylaws* and *Board Handbook*, including its contents and approved policies. Conduct all business and meetings per the Bylaws, Board Handbook, and Quaker process (centered upon sense of the meeting and consensus).
- Establish policies at Board meetings, through discussions and the ongoing flow of communications among all board members. Work within the annual budget and approved variances.
- Be actively engaged. Attend as many monthly Board meetings as possible. Provide email feedback regarding minutes for meetings not attended. When specifically requested, respond promptly to Board email correspondence between meetings.
- Be active on committees as much as possible; recruit community and committee members.
- Keep the membership adequately informed so that community members can meaningfully engage in policy developments and decision making.
- Maintain a functional committee structure (including recruitment of Conveners and members) to assure that needed work gets done through community engagement.

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