

May, 2024

Fellow CPC Members,

Since October, the CPC Board continued to work on board processes, finishing out Eddie's first year of service, doing her review, developing a rhythm with her (did I say she now has been with us a year!), working on a governance calendar and on our strategic priorities.\* We worked on the Community Participation Agreement (see below) as a way to codify our CPC culture, laying out specific expectations and *self reminders* to those who walk onto CPC property. Eddie has had it posted in various places around CPC and the board formally adopted it - if you have feedback feel free to send an email to me or another board member.

One of our strategic priorities was to work on employee, volunteer and work trade policies. The Volunteer and Work Trade Policy has taken us a little longer to work through as we attempted to balance the ideals of CPC with the practicality and legality of how we operate. Part of the board discussion was: Is the arrangement equitable to the person living at CPC long term with no remuneration other than housing or food? What if our organizational priorities change? As the policy is with an attorney right now, the board has not passed it and will have to share it later. What I can say is that it lays out when someone is a volunteer vs work trade, and the upper limits of how long a person can stay exchanging labor for a place to reside.

Additionally the board and Eddie have been heavily focused on current CPC culture. We have been intentional in our conversations, thinking about inclusion, bias, differing opinions or perspectives, thinking about how to present or navigate topics, having conversations when something offends someone. We have spent time trying to bridge the gaps with the different programs - so we can be viewed as one CPC rather than this program or that program.

That being said, this year has had many member/volunteer and personnel "issues" that have been intense, emotional and time consuming for everyone. We have people retreating from CPC because they didn't feel welcomed, were ignored, were talked about publically or were yelled at. Sometimes Circle Piners focus on *their own* project/cause/world view at the exclusion of understanding we are a complex organization with ideals that exceed our ability right now. Sometimes we "other" people or make assumptions. This is not a new thing for the world, for nonprofits or for CPC. And if you haven't experienced this - GREAT!

At the expense of doing other things, Eddie, others and the board have had to handle even more serious issues, some of which were inherited and some of which are the nature of some of our structures and limited resources. This current board is committed to addressing them and has given major time investment to do so. There has been a great deal of mediation, networking, negotiating, working within the constraints of individuals needs. The framework the current board and Eddie are working under is one of some policy change, some of operational change, and a lot of it culture change which not every member will be comfortable with but we hope it is in our best interest.

I want to be clear that grievances or personnel issues will be held between the people involved, the ED and possibly the personnel committee or board depending on the situation; we will not discuss the details of these situations. That being said, *if you have witnessed/experienced a behavior contrary to our values, make you uncomfortable, is abusive or is illegal please, as the situation warrants: respectfully address it with the person directly, or have a conversation with Eddie or discuss it with the personnel chair rather than just share it with a fellow member.*

Sorry if I sound insulting or disheartening but members/staff/volunteers/guests are reminded to live by our values and in accordance with the Community Participation Agreement. We have to undergo some cultural change not just to adhere to the ideal of CPC but if we are going to financially survive. We are still working hard on our economic and system stabilization. Our costs are still rising, all our staff need decent wages, we need more year round staff to maintain our current facilities and programs, including subsidizing those who would not otherwise be able to come to CPC. We may have to change some of the ways we operate to achieve these goals. Our sometimes blaming culture and diffuse objectives are making reaching these goals difficult. We are a living organism that needs to change to thrive.

My ask for this year; recruit one new member, work on retaining one member and get one more member to come to an event, personally sign up for a committee or a task if you aren't already (or increase your membership/donations if you can not), do not assume ill intent, *and please please be kind to each other* as we try to improve together.

My report is focused on what the board did this year which may not sound positive; I will leave to Eddie all the successes CPC has seen since October - there have been many. And many wonderful member/participant/staff interactions even if I am not focusing on them. I truly appreciate my fellow board members and the board truly appreciates Eddie's leadership and all of the staff, volunteers and members who participate and run CPC.

in service,

Romy Fitschen

Board Chair 2023-2024

#### **CPC Board 2023 - 2024 List:**

Aidan Albano-Bachtell, Benny Brewer\*, Nelson Brown, Aaron Carlson, Meryl Greer Domina\*, Romy Fitschen, Meia Freidheim, Isabella Friedheim Perez, Deborah Olson, Josh Olson, Heather Turner and Steve Walsh

Gary McClelland\* resigned in March, 2024

**Future Meetings (Sundays 4-6 pm):**

June 23, 2024 (First meeting - new and retiring board)

July 28, 2024

September 22, 2024

October 27, 2024

November 17, 2024

\*Outgoing board members at end of term (ie not re-running by choice or bylaw limitation).

Board Emails:

[chair@circlepinescenter.net](mailto:chair@circlepinescenter.net)

[personnel@circlepinescenter.net](mailto:personnel@circlepinescenter.net)

[treasurer@circlepinescenter.net](mailto:treasurer@circlepinescenter.net)

Committees Open to Membership:

Program/Education

Membership/Outreach

Facilities

Land Use

Nominating

Election

Fundraising

Finance

Buttermilk Program

Summer Camp Program

\*Personnel

\*Special Committee - Archives

\*with approval/appointment

\*\*Programs

## **Community Participation Agreement**

Anyone who is participating in an activity sponsored or organized by Circle Pines Center and anyone who is on Circle Pines property is expected to follow the community participation guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, all members, staff, volunteers, visitors, and guests.

Repeated and/or severe violations of the community participation guidelines will result in consequences up to and including a request to leave Circle Pines Center property or the Circle Pines Center activity.

**(1) I commit to participation in cooperative living/engagement and non-violent conflict resolution**

- I will be inclusive
- I will be mindful of the impact my words and actions have on other people in the community
- I will refrain from bullying or otherwise negatively targeting other people in the community
- I will respect other people in the community

**(2) I will refrain from actions that would endanger myself or others**

- I will follow health and safety policies
- I will follow health and safety related instructions from staff and event organizers

**(3) I will respect the physical environment of Circle Pines**

- I will be a good steward of the land and facilities for the future
- I will accept responsibility for and pay for damages that I deliberately cause

## **Strategic Priorities 2023-2024**

### **Communications**

- Event procedure and communication policies (Staff, Committee Support)
  - Timely communications and website information
  - Deadlines for all information from event organizers
  - Including on facilities, finances and progress on strategic goals
  - Including onsite information for members/visitors about current facilities priorities and known facilities needs
- Marketing & Communications plan (Staff)

### **Financial Goals**

- Formalized written financial policies (Finance Committee)
- Budget and financial reporting within 45 days of quarter end (Executive Director, Finance Committee)
- Cost/Benefit Analysis (financial and otherwise) of Programs (Staff, Committees and Board)

### **Facilities Goals**

- High-level building and infrastructure priorities presented to the board (Facilities Committee, Staff)
- Prioritized list of Facilities maintenance needs (Facilities Committee)
- Mechanism to report individual housing and facilities issues by attendees (Staff)

### **Membership/Participant Culture**

- Committee chair training (Board)
- Committee calendars (Committee Chairs, Staff)
- Communication followup with event attendees and new members to encourage broader participation at CPC (Membership/Outreach Committee? Event Committee?)
- Script for the what it means to be a member and membership responsibilities, and frequent place where it is spoken (Membership/Outreach Committee, Staff)
- Re-engage people in work bees and committees (All) - step 1 - promotion
- CPC Culture Improvement (All)

### **Employee/Residential Work Trade Goals**

- Formalized written residential work trade policies (Personnel Committee)
- Formalized written work trade policies/procedures (Personnel Committee, Staff)
- Written job descriptions for employees and residential work trade (Executive Director)
- Mediation/Restorative justice for ongoing workplace issues (Personnel Committee, Staff)