

## Board Chair Report Membership Meeting Spring 2025

May 25, 2025

Dear Circle Piners,

As I started writing this last update as board chair, I reflected on where I started as an incoming board member in 2019. Tom van Hammond as long-time Executive Director of Circle Pines Center, and my strongest connection to CPC, had retired, and Sasha Ospina had taken over. She was looking to refocus the board as a policy governance driven board, and we connected over this. Then Covid hit, which caused all manner of outcomes including no programming; but also, the board had time to really refocus on Sasha's leadership objectives and the policy governance process.

As change can be, this process was difficult for some and welcomed by others – for both the board, membership and staff. However, I personally believe focusing on agreed-upon policies and procedures has strengthened our decision-making and develops a clear line of expectations for the board and executive director. It also made it easier to deal with some very difficult issues that have played out over the last couple of years. And for me as Board Chair it was clear guidance when working with our Interim ED, Chris Schleuder, who took over in the Summer of 2022, and onboard CPC's newest Executive Director, Eddie DeGraw who celebrated her second anniversary in February 2025. A personal thank you to you both for spending so much time working with me as board chair – honestly, I learned a lot from your calm thoughtful presence(s).

We keep developing *and more importantly* documenting policies, both at board and committee level. We actively work at review them in our board meetings, when onboarding board members, and have set up a recurring/perpetual board monitoring calendar which will help build capacity when there is turn over. Additionally, we have developed an electronic document storage system which means the governance materials are owned by CPC, modernized the bylaws (twice), made sure the board had direct contact with Summer Camp staff and have a process to invite those staff to the membership annually. This last year we worked with Christyl Burnett on decisions around cataloging and transferring the archives to Zhang to ensure CPC's historical legacy.

As part of our governance plan, we began the process of developing annual strategic goals for the ED and Board, so we are all on same page and are less reactionary (see below). Many of these goals filter down to board committees and programs and guide our work for the upcoming period. They aren't perfect, nor reflect of all of the amazing effort and programs by all of CPC. We have not yet had time to have the

program/committee goals filter up in a measurable way. I envision this happening in a future stage in our community where we can spend more time connecting our distinct but important goals and can collectively spend less time on unstopping toilets.

It really has been an amazingly productive and calm year. The respect and commitment of my fellow board members have to each other is no small part of this for me and managed to replace that strong connection to CPC through Tom in a way I never thought would happen. With that I end my last report with a big thank you, to all of you who help to make up this very special place.

In service,

Romy Fitschen

Board Chair 2024-2025

# 2025-2026 Strategic Goals

## KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

### Governance & Leadership:

Developing program, organizational, and financial plans; plan and implement existing center-run programming and to develop new center-run programming; progress toward meeting strategic goals.

- Resolve the remaining issues in bylaws that are not practical
- Antibias Training for the board
- Changing the Fiscal year

### Fundraising/Financial Stability:

Growing existing membership, volunteer and donor base; development, implementation, and evaluation of fundraising activities and center-run programming; develops, and negotiates new contracts, rental agreements, grants, and other funding with public and private sources.

- Develop perpetual calendars that are coordinated between committees
- Research climate change funding applicable to CPC
- Develop planned giving materials

### Fiscal Management:

Develop, and maintain sound financial practices and operations within the budget guidelines.

- Formalized written financial policies
  - Monthly Reconciliations of all Asset Accounts being completed part of policy
  - Set policies on database and communication software use
- Simplify endowment process, and make sure procedures are documented
- Budget and financial reporting within 45 days of quarter end
- Program Outcomes & Evaluation within 45 days of end of program (presented to finance committee, exec committee then board)
- Program Outcomes & Evaluation summaries to members as part of communication plan

## Human Resource Management:

All staff and volunteers managed in accordance with equal opportunity employment and sound human resource practices; resolves personnel conflicts; maintains policy and procedure documents; develops a diverse, committed and highly-qualified team.

- Rental agreement evaluation
- Annual Review of Handbooks/Redesign of Volunteer/Work trade handbook
  - Including adding to perpetual calendar, and setting deadlines
- Add all handbooks to website in secure area
- Explore dedicated database staff or volunteer
- Continue Anti-bias and racism focus

## Maintenance/Development of Facilities (Buildings/Land):

Develop and implements environmentally and fiscally sustainable strategies for preserving and improving Circle Pines Center; ensures facilities, grounds and equipment are maintained; effectively prioritizes maintenance.

- Develop High-level building and infrastructure priorities presented to the board - 5, 10 years look ahead. Include cost estimates and labor needs
- Add Update on Facilities status to members to communication schedule
- Add onsite facilities communication processes (implemented last year) to event procedure & perpetual calendar

## Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations:

Communicate about the status and completion of strategic priorities; advertise Circle Pines Center events to a wide audience to ensure events are well attended; Produce regular publications, annual reports, newsletters, appeal letters, social media postings, and other communication materials with the goal of connecting with members and program participants raising the visibility of Circle Pines Center.

- Event Registration needs to be promoted to Members first; ideally 3 months before
- \*Timely updating the website and other materials for events.
- \*Put placeholders in the online calendar for upcoming events 12 months in advance and dates for registration being open
  - Exploring a membership log in access
  - Deadlines for all information from event organizers - We are putting Save the Dates
- Event procedure policies

- Including data management and consistent registration standards, refund policies, et all
- Protocol procedures and policies for all Membership & Event software, thank yous, event registrations etc
- Website Updates - recruit long term volunteer
  - Including secure area for members
- Marketing & Communications plan
  - Cross posting of information, and calendar of dates to collect info and disseminate
  - Include 1 email a month to members, 1 to targeted non-member lists
- Communication follow up with event attendees to encourage broader participation at CPC (survey or ?)
  - Attendance Records updated in database - especially onsite registration
  - Place on marketing and communication plan

### Mission and Cooperations:

Carry out the Mission of Circle Pines, including: (a) Teaching peace, social justice, environmental stewardship and cooperation. (b) Demonstrating cooperative alternatives for economic and social issues to teach cooperation as a way of life.

- Membership Handbook (including documenting our culture & participation expectations)
- Re-engage people in work bees - advance dates on calendar and through communications
  - Crossover with advance scheduling of event
- Committee perpetual calendars
- Promotion of the practice of living out our cooperative principles by using consensus in decision making within circles of authority (staff, board, committees)
- Teaching consensus decision making skills to our campers
- Annual Committee chair/event coordinator training (Board)
- Script for the what it means to be a member and membership responsibilities, and recruitment of volunteers for each event where it is spoken (not just staff)

### Legal & Regulatory & Information Management:

Maintain official records and ensures compliance with federal, state, and local regulations along with compliance of all contracts; Oversee information and technology management systems. Ensure that adequate databases are selected and implemented. Ensure staff and

office volunteers have access to technology and computers to effectively carry out their duties.

- ACA 5 Year Accreditation
- Board should tackle information management goals next year