

## Circle Pines Membership Meeting Minutes for May 25, 2025 PM

Circle Pines Center a member-based, cooperatively-governed (501(c)3) non-profit.  
Location: 8650 Mullen Road, Delton, MI 49046 Phone: (269) 623-5555

1. **Welcome and Meeting was called to order by Romy Fitschen, Chair, 1:04 pm. (10)**

2. **Attendance/Quorum - 48 members in attendance; quorum is 34. (10)**

**Board Members Present:** Aidan Albano-Bachtell ▾ Caleb Carpenter ▾ Deb Olson ▾  
Josh Olson ▾ Linda Gellasch ▾ Maya Gomberg ▾ Romy Fitschen ▾  
Heather Turner ▾

**Board members not present:** Steve Walsh ▾ Erika Tellez ▾ Aaron Carlson ▾

**Staff Present:** Noah Silver-Mathews ▾ Chris Schleuder ▾ Eddie DeGraw ▾

### Members Present:

- Albano-Bachtell, Aidan
- Albano-Bachtell, Winona
- Allen, Amanda
- Bachtell, John
- Brewer, Benny
- Brown, Kevin
- Carpenter, Caleb
- Cliffer Baratta, Jill
- Connell, Robin
- Davis, Connie
- DeGraw, Eddie
- DuBose Carlson, Baby
- Fitschen, Romy
- Fitschen-Brown, Meredith
- Gellasch, Linda
- Gingerich, Stephanie
- Gomberg, Andra
- Gomberg, Maya
- Gordon, Jack
- Hakim, Charles
- Hakim, Stephanie
- Hamilton, Chia
- Harvel, Patricia
- Heystek, Bryan
- Hoskins, Danielle
- Kinch, Judith
- Leece, Cheryl
- Leece, Robert
- Likover, Amy
- Loch, Bailey
- Loch, Chris
- Lynn, Pat
- Mayers, Leah
- McDermott, Nancy
- Merrick, Maiya
- Olson, Deb
- Olson, Josh
- Olson, Richard
- Phillips, Lisa
- Scheel, Norman
- Schneider, John
- Scott, Mariah
- Siegenthaler, Kathy
- Silver-Mathews, Noah
- Sudler, Karolyn
- Turner, Heather
- VanHammen, Tom
- Zimmerman, John

### 3. Consent Agenda (10) – Fitschen (5)

- Approval of This Agenda
- Approval of [Fall 2024 Membership Meeting Minutes](#)
- Acceptance of [Executive Director Report 05.25](#)
- Acceptance of [Board Chair Report 05.25](#)
- Acceptance of Financials
  - [Approved Budget 2024-2025](#)
  - [Program Outcome Evaluations – Q1 Report](#)
  - [Budget Vs. Actuals FY24-25 Q1](#)
  - [Balance Sheet FY24-25 Q1](#)
- Acceptance of [Fundraising Report](#)
- Acceptance of [Personnel Report](#)

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda by John Zimmerman; Seconded by Deb Olson. Motion carried.

### 4. Membership Welcome (5) – Fitschen

#### Reading of Board's Culture Review and Self Check on Conflicts of Interest:

- Be here, be present, be prepared.
- Give each other grace, think well of each other, assume they think well of you.
- Give each other the benefit of the doubt.
- Share the space and the airtime.
- Avoid assumptions and interpreting others behaviors. Take them at face value or ask questions.
- Understand intent vs impact, when speaking be mindful of audience and reactions.
- When listening, avoid taking things personally. Address the idea, not the person.
- Expect unfinished business.
- Be open to ideas, try "Yes and" instead of "No, but."
- Be open to spending time on relationship development.
- Question your conflicts of interest when discussion or voting on a topic
- Be willing to take risks, be excited for others to take risks - it drives cooperation.
- Be accountable and honest, do you have the capacity to do the thing you took on? Follow through.
- Respect each other's time, and the time keeper.
- No surprises, everything should be on the agenda; Especially challenging subjects.
- Attempt not to interrupt
- Stay on topic
- Don't spend too much time discussing norms that are called out

### 5. Acknowledgement of Staff (5) - Turner

- Heather Turner thanked the land use and facilities committees for their excellent programming.
  - Eddie DeGraw thanked the numerous volunteers and members that come out to attend events and give their time to the betterment of CPC.
- 6. Recognize New Members (5) - Fitschen**
- Romy welcomed the members who joined during the last year.
- 7. Executive Director Report (15) – DeGraw**
- Noah has embraced his programming/event coordinator position. Expanded programming to include Spring Garden Institute, and Earthen Build week.
  - Summer Camp will be run by Benny Brewer (returning) and Dakota Owens-Bastic. Extended the length of summer camp, and will be bringing back international staff.
  - Continues to squash the hierarchy. “No one is above a job or task.” Embracing a horizontal structure.
  - Shoutout to the board and especially people on committees. Without committees, a lot of work does not get done.
  - Winter Camp continues to be a wonderful experience for all involved.
  - Cabin Fever weekend does not always cooperate weather-wise, but it did this year!
  - Danielle and mushroom camp continue to SHOW UP! Very dynamic programming.
- 8. Board Update (15) – Fitschen**

Romy Fitschen spoke of the transition between Tom VanHammen and Sasha Ospina and how it made her take a look at her relationship with the center. Sasha viewed her own success as having members feel more connected to the organization than the ED. Romy has tried taking a similar view during her tenure as board chair.

- Discussed the idea of separating Fall Membership Meeting from Apple Cider Weekend due to resource management.

**9. Bylaw Changes (20) - Fitschen**  
[Proposed Bylaws Amendments 2025](#)

Motion to change fiscal year from October 1 - September 30 to January 1 - December 31; by John Zimmerman, seconded by Robert Leece. Motion passed.

Motion to combine election and nomination committees; by Heather Turner, seconded by Mariah Scott. Motion passed.

Motion to remove absentee paper ballot references; by Robert Leece, seconded by Tom VanHammen. Motion passed.

**10. Budget & Financials (30) – Finance Committee**

- Incorrectly input some numbers for Q2, so not yet available.
- First Q1 in many years where CPC has had a positive revenue flow.
  - Thank you donors!
- Has implemented a number of new fiscal policies such as credit card use and gift giving. Very common amongst non-profit institutions. Working on a reimbursement policy.
- Began a program outcome evaluation based on a daily overhead cost to CPC. Daily operating cost (salaries, utilities, etc) comes out to around \$750/day.
- Question: Will this help with fundraising?
  - Yes, because we'll better be able to direct fundraising efforts to the places that need it.

## 11. **Membership Rate Increase (15) - Fitschen**

### Membership Rate Increase

- Motion to increase dues to \$15/month; by Chuck Hakim, seconded by Jack Gordon. Motion passed.
- Question: How does notification of increase work?
  - Emails will be sent out and changes will occur as their bills come up.
- Question: How much do dues bring in per year?
  - Around \$36,000.

## 12. **Program/Committee Reports (30) – Various**

### • **Archives – Burnett**

#### Archives Report

- Began in January 2025 in partnership with Zhang Legacy Collections Center at Western Michigan University to go through the attic archives.
- Has split up the archives into 23 aggregates so far, and currently has identified materials as far back as the Ashland Institute in the 1920's.
- Is asking members to help submit non-duplicated items.
- **Garden Institute – DuBose-Carlson**
- Garden Institute Report
  - 3/22-3/29/2025.
  - New program to help restore the garden. Worked on the back-half of the garden.
  - 20 people attended, aged 10-70.
  - Implemented a new compost system called a windowrow.
  - Thank you Robin Connell for organizing the toolshed.
  - Call for perennial flowers.

- Question: How can people help with the garden?
  - Weeding and woodchips.
- Baby's coworker Erika Guzman will be coming up on occasion to help out.
- **Buttermilk Jamboree - Hoskins**
  - Sneak-peek of the artwork.
  - "The best showcase of Circle Pines and what we can do."
  - 54 performances, 37 workshops, 30 vendors.
  - 21% increase in ticket sales since this point last year.
  - Workbee weekends getting land and facilities prepped for Buttermilk AND summer camp.
- **Fundraising – Allen**
  - General clean-up on contact list.
  - Applied for several grants, received one.
  - Eddie reached out to a number of lapsed donors, which netted \$7,000 in contributions.
  - Well-oiled machine.
- **Land Use/Facilities – Scott**
  - **FACILITIES:**
  - [Facilities Report](#)
  - The goal is to more closely align the committees with the CPC mission.
  - Decluttering the land and facilities.
    - Cleaned out the staff lounge for conference purposes.
  - Proactively searching for problems that need to be addressed.
  - Improved accessibility road to beach.
  - Repairing pipes near rec hall.
  - Currently in Buttermilk Jamboree mode.
  - Lots of communication between different committees. Hierarchy being squashed!
  - **LAND USE:**
  - [Land Use Report](#)
  - Ongoing prairie restoration with help from Pierce Cedar Creek Institute and the Michigan DNR.
  - Very promising results so far based on bug surveys.
    - The population hasn't necessarily increased, but has changed.
  - Considering a stump treatment for multiflora rose and autumn olive using triclopyr and glyphosate.
- **Summer Camp – Brewer**
  - Camper to staff retention is UP!
  - The garden institute helped get the area ready for summer camp.
  - Lisa Phillips will lead trails, Ethan Avery will lead construction.
  - 3rd session is always over-enrolled, 1st and 2nd always need a little help. Session-end programs are being planned. A circus performance will be at the end of 1st and a homesteading program at the end of 2nd.

- 2nd session will be 2 weeks long this year.
- Staff turnover is tough this year. Basically entirely new staff.
- Question: Where do we need more staff?
  - Unit counselors.
- Question: What's the scholarship fund looking like?
  - Unknown currently, last year \$13,000 was given out.
- Question: Backup plan for international staff being blocked from visas?
  - They are not currently being counted.
- **Programming/Stewart Lake – Silver-Matthews**
  - Personnel/Facility capabilities are at a point where CPC feels capable to run an event and rent out areas concurrently for a weekend.
  - Very successful series of new events based on contact networks with local friends.
  - Neighbor on Stewart Lake has contracted with a treatment company to apply herbicide on lily pads and CPC is trying to negotiate with the neighbors.

### **13. Election (30) - Election Committee**

#### Board Candidate Slate

- Election Committee:
  - John Bachtell nominates himself, seconded by Mariah Scott.
  - Mariah Scott nominated by Deb Olson, seconded by Kathy Siegenthaler. Mariah Accepts.
  - Karolyn Sudler nominates herself, seconded by Meryl Domina.
  - ALTERNATE: Heather Turner nominates herself, seconded by Deb Olson.
- Motion to elect the above as Election Committee by Deb Olson, second by Robert Leece. Motion passed.

### **14. Announcements (10)**

### **15. Adjournment (5) - Fitschen**

- Motion to adjourn by John Zimmerman, seconded by Heather Turner. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 4:38 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Aidan Albano-Bachtell, Secretary