

Board Chair Report Membership Meeting Fall 2025

October 12th, 2025

Dear Circle Piners,

I'd like to start by thanking you (yes, YOU), for taking time to participate in this membership meeting and our larger membership process. For a member-run organization, our most important asset is, well, our members. You help keep the lights on with your dues, keep the fires running with the wood you split, and you keep each other coming back with your ~~arguments~~ enticing conversations. I am constantly in awe with the depth of knowledge, skills, and willpower our members possess. Without you, we would literally cease to be.

I've been left some big shoes to fill. Romy Fitschen did an amazing job of leading the Board during her tenure as Chair. When I first joined the Board in 2022, loud arguments were commonplace, meetings would run long, and completed work was minimal. But through her leadership, we have developed a strong cohort of Board members who have become comfortable in their roles. Working with her and Eddie DeGraw has been extremely calming during my onboarding process.

The first several months of my time have been calm. Policies and reports have been our main concerns. As decided at our Spring membership meeting, our fiscal year has been changed to give staff and the Financial Committee better timing when completing year-end reports. Kari Jo, our new secretary, brings a keen mind and strong questions to meetings. Eddie, Chris Schleuder, and our summer camp directors, Dakota Owens-Bostic and Benny Brewer, led us to a successful ACA reaccreditation.

That is not to say we are without problems. Our committees are not functioning equally, with some, under Mariah Scott's stellar leadership, meeting and performing significant functions multiple times per month while others have been without a Chair for months or years. We sometimes have issues crossing over from our policy-oriented goals into

dictating operations for the Center. At the Spring Membership Meeting, I said that sometimes I drop the ball or make mistakes, which remains true. Ultimately, we are an imperfect group wishing to further this organization and its mission.

I struggle to say we are in a good place right now, but on the sliding scale that is Circle Pines, we are doing alright. We'll be passing the next Fiscal Year's budget later this October. We are also very excited about a new Organizing School debuting over several weekends in November, with funding spearheaded by Deb Olson. Noah Silver-Matthews successfully fills our weekends with rentals and new programs like Dual Power. Gerardo Reyes continues to head the most consistently delicious kitchen I've experienced during my time at Circle Pines. All in all, interacting with everyone and participating in the larger membership process here makes me feel good, and I think that says a lot about where we are. Thank you for making this organization so special to me and each other.

In Service,

Aidan Albano-Bachtell

Board Chair 2025-2026