

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 Aidan Albano-Bachtell , Chair, 1:19 pm. (10)

2. Attendance/Quorum - 39 members in attendance; quorum is 34. (10)

Board Members Present: Kari Jo Sudler ▾ Aidan Albano-Bachtell ▾
Heather Turner ▾ Josh Olson ▾ Romy Fitschen ▾ Aaron Carlson ▾
Linda Gellasch ▾ Maya Gomberg ▾

Board members not present: Deb Olson ▾ Erika Tellez ▾ None ▾

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

Members Present:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Aidan
Albano-Bachtell | • Maya Gomberg | • Noah
Silver-Mathews |
| • Amanda Allen | • Andy Hollenbeck | • Karolyn Sudler |
| • John Bachtell | • Danielle Hoskins | • Heather Turner |
| • Mary Bourgeois | • Michael Hoskins | • Steve Wester |
| • Benny Brewer | • Vance Hoskins | • Aaron Wissner |
| • Aaron Carlson | • Carla Kaplan | • John Zimmerman |
| • Caleb Carpenter | • Robin Kaufman | • Meryl Greer |
| • Amy Clay | • Karen Lee Larson | • Domina |
| • Sarah Coffey | • Cheryl Leece | • |
| • Ian
Colburn-Jaynes | • Josh Olson | • |
| • Robin Connell | • Dakota Owens | • |
| • Rebecca DeGraw | • Bostic | • |
| • Romy Fitschen | • Lisa Phillips | • |
| • Meredith
Fitschen-Brown | • Gerardo Reyes | • |
| • Linda Gellasch | • Chris Schleuder | • |
| • Andra Gomberg | • Mariah Scott | • |
| | • Kathy
Siegenthaler | • |

3. Consent Agenda – Albano-Bachtell (5)

- Approval of This Agenda
- Approval of  25.05.25 Membership Meeting Minutes.pdf
- Acceptance of [Executive Director Report 05.25](#)
- Acceptance of  Board Chair Report Membership Meeting Fall 2025.pdf
- Acceptance of  Election Committee 2025 Fall Membership Meeting.pdf
- Acceptance of  Facilities Committee Fall 2025 Membership Meeting.pdf
- Acceptance of  Land Use Committee Fall 2025 Membership Update.pdf

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda by Romy Fitschen; Seconded by Aaron Wissner. Motion carried.

4. Membership Welcome – Albano-Bachtell (10)

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. Recognize New Members (5) - Albano-Bachtell

Several new members have joined.

6. Executive Director Report (15) – DeGraw

Summer camp has been main focus since May. ACA accreditation. Every 5 years required. Takes about 6 months to prepare. In compliance with all regulations.

Low attendance at camp this year, but allowed for more opportunities to get to know campers, and less stress for staff. For next year, registration will be made available within the next few months.

Debrief after camp to discuss successes and challenges, etc., - everyone (staff) will have a voice.

Also working to improve programming, open invite to bring ideas/suggestions.

Rental season - family reunion and weddings. Developed more marketing for wedding rentals. Program Event Coordinator has been working with various groups to establish relationships and secure rentals. Montessori schools and Waldorf.

Organizing Training Institute - November 15th. Hosting a training for trainers. The next weekend (11/22) will be an organizer's conference, workshops and networking opportunities.

7. Board Update (15) – Albano-Bachtell

Acknowledgement of Romy's efforts to get our Board meetings to this level.

8. Financial Update (20) – Finance Committee

-  2024 Form 990.pdf

Caleb - finance update. Reconciliations for last year is not yet complete and is estimated, finalization in progress. Unfortunately, in the red for this year - ~\$20k in the red.

Programs generate income, missed some opportunities, but overall looking ok.

Budget - still in progress.

990 from year before is available for review.

Program evals - a number of them were in the black for this year (ie. Songwriters).

Membership income was up this year.

Buttermilk - did well.

Unexpected - a local grant came in for Summer Camp to help support staff.

Rental income and Fundraising - over expectations.

Expense side - big ticket costs were lower this year. Created a more conservative budget for this year. For example:

General Operations - 10k less

Facilities - 15k less

Staff - 24k less

In the red - missed out on some grants, bequests. And expenses - program service (performer fees were higher), but the majority of expenses were kept in check/lower.

Rough estimates/info only at this time until reconciliation and approvals are completed.

Finance Committee - 2nd year in the red. Using the idle loan to carry cash flow along with strategies to implement payments, but this will need to be addressed. Program evaluations need to be finished. Those completed show that most are covering expenses. May need to skinny down on our programs to make room for rental income in the future.

We have excess capacity for most of our programming.

Breaking down the finances and budget, etc. is appreciated as something of value.

Program outcomes - are incomplete evals keeping you from answering finance questions?

CPC - a variety of methods are used but standardization is in process and it is needed to help simplify and keep things on track.

Are there any new expenses in the new programs that may be causing the shortfall?

A lot of new programs are in the black, but not all - and still need more accurate data collected and standardized. Rental programs are typically bringing in more than non-rentals. Will have to consider what non-rental program will continue or be deprecated.

Marketing materials - for Montessori and Waldorf schools would be helpful. Along with wedding brochures, etc.

Changing the fiscal year and working with an accounting firm to assist. This is due in large part to having the fiscal year end coinciding with the end of Summer Camp programming.

What is the goal of % revenue for wedding rentals vs. center programming? What percentage is in the budget? What % is going to our mission as a non-profit?

About 1% of total budget is rental.

Programming/center related is ~80%.

Weddings are important and many of them are related to LGBTQ, which is in alignment with our values, etc. We also try to align renters to our values as well.

Retreat center and summer camp - is our 501C3.

Motion to accept 2024 Form 990 by Caleb Carpenter; seconded by Linda Gellasch . Motion carried.

9. Program/Committee Reports (30) – Various

● Facilities Committee

- Guide priorities for grounds to support programming.
- Stayed under budget and volunteers
- Since spring membership meeting, items completed:
 - Doors, ramps, electrical upgrades, farmhouse deck, removed brush. Solar panels for Juniors. Upgrade electrical on farmhouse in progress.
 - Summer camp staff - cleaning and repairs. Garden project. Pruning apple trees. Got a new lawn mower this spring and keeping it in good repair.
- Using volunteers and staying under budget, also writing up procedures for maintenance.
- Farmhouse has many trees that pose a potential safety hazard and that is being worked on to reduce endangering buildings, properties, trails, etc.
- A lot of programming involves supporting facilities, like this weekend. Workbees and summer camp projects also have a strong intersection between the two.

- Garden camp - Baby Carlson and Erica Gonzales led that effort. Eddie is now doing a lot of the work in the Garden during non programming times.
- **Summer Camp**
 - 3rd session was the largest session - ~50 campers. Ideally all sessions would be filled. Low enrollment this year.
 - New programs including international staffing, circus programming, Dabke dancing, theme days, etc.
 - Need to announce programming earlier to attract more campers. And expose campers to things they would not otherwise learn about elsewhere.
 - No CIT counselor-leader this year however CITs led theme days, etc. More energy needed for next year in this program.
 - Without Garden Institute, would not have had as much success with the Garden during the summer.
 - Increased staff pay using a grant.
 - Next year - increasing effort to recruit staff, flyers, career fairs, online outreach, grant writing and improvement of the CIT program.
 - Getting the word out earlier.
 - If someone buys tickets for Buttermilk for kids, giving them a coupon for Summer Camp. Can also have something more structured during Buttermilk for camp specifically. Note: Buttermilk is too close to the start of camp so we need to focus marketing efforts now. Not enough staff and need people on committees to help support these ideas. Josh has volunteered to help kickstart the programming committee, if it is needed. Use the ticket list from this year for kids tickets sold.
 - Noted that the camp cannot be reached by phone and that may cause concerns and lost opportunities to get new campers in.
 - Kathy S. part of the programming committee, and needs to have a meeting with Josh. Certain things were done during Buttermilk at our tent.
 - ACA accreditation - use this in our marketing.
- **Land Use Committee**
 - Preservation and protection of grounds of CPC.
 - Sourcing organic foods with local providers, etc.
 - Removing invasive species.
 - Received ~100 fruit trees and planted most.
 - Recertification from MI environmental committee.
 - Will be looking for herbicide to treat autumn olive and another species. Need board approval and specific policy. Poison ivy needs to get under control as well.

- Develop a tree planting program - using the free trees from Lansing and Yipsalantee orgs.
- Christmas trees will be available by Harvest weekend.
- **Buttermilk Jamboree**
 - No presentation from Danielle, materials are online for review. Noted at capacity and ran out of places to camp. One of the top family festivals in the state.
 - So many dedicated volunteers (~200 people) who give months of their time to support this program. Sign up for volunteers go out around March.
- **Election Committee**
 - Nominations for Board - looking for candidates for next Spring's meeting. Floor nominations are allowed but in advance is appreciated. One open slot and two alternates will be open.

10. Announcements (10)

Email vc@circlepinescenter.net to express interest in joining a committee.

Camper for many years, and summer camp staff this past year - Carlos Martinez is embarking on a career for jazz music. He has a gofundme. It will be posted in the chat.

Looking for a new chair for the fundraising committee. Amanda Allen as fundraising chair - thank you and recognition.

Need donations - due to unprecedented times. A monthly donation can be set up as well.

The Organizing School is a good example of how our programming can help reach our financial goals. Come to programming.

Scholarships, family gatherings, not as available for black and brown people - donations can help bring more people in. Grants can be helpful. Being able to afford a weekend or multiple weekends during the year can make a huge impact on people but help and donations are needed.

11. Adjournment (5) - Albano-Bachtell

Motion to adjourn by Heather Turner; seconded by Maya Gomberg. Motion carried. Benny opposed the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 3:27 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Kari Jo Sudler, Secretary