



## Governance Agreement: Sociocratic Cohousing Community

### A. Aims of Governance

The governance of our community strives to address the following aims:

- making decisions that are high-quality in an efficient manner
- managing community work effectively
- distributing and decentralizing decision-making authority to maximum levels appropriate
- developing the leadership and consent-building skills of our members
- supporting broad participation by members in both governance and operational work
- ensuring that all voices matter
- fostering a positive sense of community and connections among community members
- supporting the accomplishment of the community's aims in the context of whatever the community may have stated as its visions, mission and/or values.

### B. Governance Principles

We base our community governance on the principles of sociocracy. The basic unit of governance is the circle. A circle is a group of people who work together to accomplish a specific purpose (called an aim). Circles make policy decisions within their specific areas of responsibility (called a domain). Policy decisions are made by consent. Circle meetings follow the design outlined in the Consent and Meeting Process Summary Guide. *(Check the resource page linked on page 202 for corresponding materials that you can use as references.)*

**The Principle of Circles:** Our organizational structure consists of semi-autonomous interlinking circles as shown in the diagram in the Appendix: Organizational Structure.

1. Broader circles set and/or affirm the aim and domain of their more-focused subcircles.
2. Generally, linked circles have two overlapping members. The leader and the delegate form a “double-link” between parent circles and their more-focused subcircles so that influence may flow in both directions (in hierarchical terms, both top-down and bottom-up).
3. A subcircle may propose its own leader to be confirmed by the parent circle. Alternatively, a parent circle may select the leaders of its subcircles. The subcircle



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then confirms the selection of the leader. The leader of a subcircle serves as a full member of both the subcircle and the parent circle.

4. Subcircles select one or more delegates to serve on their parent circle. The parent circle confirms the selection of the delegate(s). The delegate from a subcircle serves as a full member of both the subcircle and the parent circle.
5. If a subcircle believes that it is adequately represented by its leader or a liaison, it may choose a delegate to be on call to participate in specific meetings/discussions of its parent circle. The “single-link” should only be used at the more focused levels of the community organization, where the work is more operational and less policy-making. When members are primarily volunteers who fill multiple work roles in the community, the needs by double linking for adequate feedback and protection against power over dynamics may not be as critical.
6. To guide well-informed and responsible decision-making, each circle solicits input from community members as needed. Means for gathering information include but are not limited to surveys, one-on-one conversations, and whole community meetings.

**The Principle of Consent:** Policy decisions are made by consent, including selection of people for circle roles, except as required by law and/or as otherwise stated in the bylaws.

1. Consent is defined as having no “reasoned objections.”
  - Circles solicit objections because they provide valuable information. The reasoning behind the objections allows the circle to improve proposals so that all members of the circle can work toward its aims more effectively.
  - A reasoned objection is made when there is a concern that the proposal would negatively affect the circle’s ability to serve its purpose. In other words, objections are based on the aims of a circle and the mission of the community and not on personal preferences.
  - Reasoned objections have a clearly stated rationale, allowing circle members to understand the basis for the objection and to take collective responsibility for possible resolutions.
2. Before a decision can take effect, every member of a circle must consent. Each circle shall establish its own written policy that defines a quorum for conducting business and its procedures for obtaining consent from absent members.



## The Principle of Continual Evolution:

1. The organization as a whole and each circle in particular is committed to ongoing feedback and continual learning about governance, communication, and the content of the circle's work.
2. All policy decisions, including selections of people for roles, are scheduled for feedback and review after a defined period of time (and may be re-evaluated at any time). The review answers the question “how effective has this policy been in contributing to the realization of the circle's aim and the community's mission?” More specific evaluation measures, as appropriate, are included in the original policy proposal. Policy decisions and role selections remain in effect until they are terminated, revised or reaffirmed. Work processes are also periodically evaluated. Every meeting is evaluated. Role performance is regularly reviewed in a constructive manner.
3. We seek to make decisions that are “good enough for now” and “safe enough to try.” The best decisions over the long term are made by making many decisions over the short term and evaluating their impact. As we grow more confident with policies, we give them longer terms before review. On the one hand, nothing set in stone, and on the other hand, we don't needlessly review policies that have proven to be effective.

**C. Circle structure** Our organizational structure is based on a series of interlinked circles. The specific pattern for our community is shown in the Appendix: Organizational Structure. ([Link here to your organizational structure](#))

The purpose (aim) and area of responsibility (domain) of our community's circles are described in the Appendix: Table of Circle Aims and Domains. ([Link to table of aims and domains.](#)) Circles are classified as follows: **Coordinating circle.** Coordinating Circle is responsible for carrying out the community's mission and aims, including the effective implementation of the governance system. The Coordinating Circle assigns the operational work and policy-making of the community to Core Work Circles.

The Coordinating Circle is responsible for:

- the well-being of the Core Work Circles
- resolving any gaps or overlaps in the domains of Core Work Circles
- making policies in any areas not otherwise delegated to Core Work Circles



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- ensuring that the master log book and all policies, including governance policies, are kept updated and periodically reviewed
- arranging meetings and agendas of the whole community (the Full Circle), and maintaining community records (the logbook).
- flow of information among the Core Work Circles
- supporting long-term planning & visioning for the community.

The Coordinating Circle is composed of the leaders and delegates of the Core Work Circles and a leader. The Coordinating Leader is ideally not a leader or delegate of a Core Work Circle so that they are freer to attend to the needs of the whole.

**Core Work Circles:** The Core Work Circles are the primary set of circles that divide up the entire work of the community, preferably not more than four, so that the Coordinating Circle is small enough for meaningful dialogue and ease of scheduling.

**Subcircles:** Subcircles are circles that are created by a parent circle (either a Core Work Circle or another sub-circle) to focus on a particular portion of the parent circle's aim and have a specific domain of responsibility.

**Helping Circles:** Helping Circles are temporary circles created by an existing circle to research and recommend actions or policies to the circle that created it. A Helping Circle can also carry out specific, short-term work assignments. A Helping Circle can also mean that two or more circles meet together for a limited time.

**Full Circle:** The broadest circle, containing all community members. The aims of Full Circle meetings include (see item M for specifics related to our community):

- **Feedback:** Any circle can request time on a Full Circle agenda to generate input or feedback that will help that circle make a decision. These “Community Conversations” are focused on exploration, dialogue and understanding, not decision making.
- **Learning:** Learning **about** governance, communication skills and anything that is useful to the community (finances, first aid, permaculture design, NVC, etc.)
- **Community building:** Telling life stories, sharing what is meaningful in people's present lives, celebration, anything that builds connection among community members.
- **Decision making:** Decision making in Full Circle is limited to that which may be required by law and any decisions that are delegated to the Full Circle in this governance agreement.



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**Mission Circle.** While the General Circle pays attention to the day-to-day operations of the community, the Mission Circle takes the long-term perspective. The Mission Circle makes sure the organization stays true to its mission and is connected to its broader geographic and cultural context. Its members bring outside perspectives, inspiration and expertise into the Mission Circle. They can come from the outside or within the community, holding a certain perspective that they bring to the table as stakeholders who care about the community.

**Board of Directors.** Governments usually require housing organizations to have a Board of Directors that is responsible for legal and financial matters. There are a number of different ways to meet the legal requirement of having a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors could be the same as the Mission Circle, the General Circle, a subcircle of the General Circle or even all the owners/leaseholders of the community. (See item N for specifics related to our community.)

## D. General framework of all circles

### Aims and Domains

- **Aims (purpose):** These are what the circles strive to accomplish within their domain. All circles will strive to meet community needs by providing services within their areas of responsibility in ways that are in harmony with the aims and mission of the community.
- **Domain (area of responsibility):** This is the area of responsibility of the circle, distinct from the domains of other circles. The circles are responsible for making decisions about the policies, operations, and budget of their domain. Circles define their domains with affirmation and coordination by their parent circle. Both will agree on the domains in order to adequately address gaps, areas of overlap, and needs for coordination. Circles carry out tasks and enact policies within the limits of authority set by a subcircle's parent circle, and conduct information gathering as needed to inform decisions that need wider input.

### Creating and populating circles

- A circle may be created by its parent circle. The subcircle leader and some or all of its initial members may be selected by the parent circle. Alternatively, any group of community members may identify a potential circle's aim and domain and request an existing circle to create it as that circle's subcircle.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> How people become members of circles—full, coordinating, departments etc.—particularly at the time of implementation of sociocracy varies among communities or according to when sociocracy is implemented. In most communities, members self-select into the circles they wish to join. In some communities, membership of some or all circles is a decision of the Full Circle, the parent circle, or the selected coordinator of the circle.



- A parent circle selects the leaders of its subcircles. The subcircle confirms the selection of the leader. Alternatively, the subcircle may propose its own leader, to be confirmed by the parent circle. The leader of a subcircle serves as full member of both the subcircle and the parent circle.
- Once a circle is established, community members may request to join that circle. The request is put on the circle's agenda as a proposal to be discussed with the prospective member present. The existing members of the circle, by consent, accept or decline a prospective member.
- A circle may have well-defined operational roles that are filled by individuals. The holders of those roles might or might not be circle members. Holders of roles who are not circle members may be consulted about improvements related to the fulfillment of their roles, but do not have consent rights. Policies governing those roles and tasks are set by the circle.
- No one may be denied membership in a circle or asked to leave a circle based on personal preferences.
- New members will be oriented to the aims and activities of the circle so that they can become productive members as quickly as possible.

### **Criteria for Circle membership**

- The intention of a circle is to be inclusive and welcoming. To ensure well-run productive circles, circles will generally have an open and defined membership of individuals who agree to the following guidelines:
  - attend circle meetings regularly
  - inform circle members if they will be absent or late to meetings
  - work to fulfill the circle's aim and carry out the circle's work in between meetings – make an effort to sustain a quality of connection among members that supports the circle's ability to achieve its aims
  - make an effort to resolve interpersonal conflicts that occur within the circle. – offer and willingly accept feedback.
  - commit to these working agreements
- A circle can set additional criteria for membership relevant to the circle's domain as long as they are clear and transparent, and relevant to the circle's area of responsibility.

**Removal from a circle:** If a member is having difficulty following the above guidelines of a circle, the circle may initiate a respectful and open-minded conversation with the member having difficulty to support that member in doing better or leaving the circle. As a last resort, if the above-named difficulties are not resolved, a member may be asked to leave a circle by a proposal requiring consent. The member may participate in the decision-making process of that proposal up to but not including the consent round. No



circle member can object to an agenda item considering another member's removal.

**Ongoing Learning:** Develop ongoing learning for its members in three areas: 1) communication and interpersonal relationship, 2) governance structure and meeting processes, and 3) work processes and content (such as bookkeeping or HVAC repair, etc).

**Feedback Cycle:** In order to improve their capacity to achieve their aims, circles generate feedback. Circle meetings end with an evaluation about productivity, group process and interpersonal issues. On a regular basis, evaluations occur of the performance of the circle as a whole and as individuals in their roles. Evaluations of specific workflows, projects and policies occur according to their purposes and terms. (In classic sociocracy, the feedback cycle is called Lead Do-Measure.)

**Input on decisions:** Circles are responsible to get appropriate levels of input from the community when they make policies that affect the community.

**Logbook:** Circles record the content of their meetings with whatever level of detail they deem necessary, providing that all decisions be stated verbatim, and include a review date. Circles maintain a logbook (collection of documents) accessible to the full community that includes but is not limited to a) the circle's aim and domain, members, role descriptions, policy decisions and meeting minutes; and b) any other documents that record the circle's activities and plans.

## E. Visitors attending circle meetings

Community members may request to observe a circle meeting and may participate in the meeting's opening and closing rounds.

Non-circle members do not participate in the other parts of the meeting without the circle's explicit consent. This protects the circle's authority over its domain and agenda. In request, circles will reserve up to 15 minutes near the beginning of a circle meeting to hear any community concerns. Any individual can request to be heard by any circle that they are not a member of.

The circle may choose to invite anyone to present or comment on any topic at any time. The circle may choose to include a non-member in rounds. Only circle members participate in consent rounds.

## F. Circle member roles

Any member may fill more than one role, and roles may be combined (except as noted below). All roles are selected by the members of a circle (except as noted below). Any person selected into a role may appoint a substitute to cover their absence from a meeting or that substitute may be appointed by the leader, facilitator, or secretary (in that order). All circle members are responsible for supporting the well-functioning of their circles, particularly to support listening and mutual understanding.



**Leader:** The role of the leader is to coordinate the work of the circle. The leader communicates the directions and decisions of the circle's parent circle to the working circle. The leader is a full working member of both the working circle and its parent circle. The leader may make time-sensitive decisions without being authorized to do so by the circle. In such cases, the leader will make every effort to seek circle members' input before the decision is made. Any such decision must be reviewed at the next circle meeting. Agenda development is a collaborative process among the facilitator, leader and secretary that varies across circles.

**Delegate (Representative):** The role of the delegate is to communicate the interests, concerns, and activities in the domain of their circle to its parent circle. The delegate is a full working member of both the subcircle and its parent circle. The delegate serves as a second link between the subcircle and its parent circle.

**Facilitator:** The role of the Facilitator is to conduct circle meetings, to provide leadership in decision making, to support listening and mutual understanding, and to ensure that the circle is functioning based on the principles and methods of sociocracy. It is the facilitator's responsibility to assure that the agenda plan is something they can facilitate.

**Secretary (circle administrator):** The role of the secretary is to perform tasks related to its functioning, such as arranging and announcing circle meetings, distributing study materials and proposals, taking minutes or ensuring that minutes are taken, distributing minutes, maintaining the records of the circle, and performing any other tasks assigned by the circle. As the keeper of the records, the secretary interprets policies when questions of meaning or intent arise. The secretary ensures that the agenda includes policies and roles that are due for review, and often sets up the agenda document that is then filled in by the leader and facilitator.

**Logbook Keeper (Archivist).** The role of the logbook keeper is to maintain the circle logbook. Depending on the size of the circle and the complexity of its work, the role of the logbook keeper may be combined with that of the Secretary or any other role. The logbook keeper of the Coordinating Circle is the logbook keeper for the whole organization.

**Operational Roles:** A circle may delegate specific responsibilities, tasks and authority to anyone to be carried out autonomously within the limits set by the circle (examples: mailroom manager, tree pruner, parking officer, pet issues coordinator, etc.). Most of the work of the community is done by people filling work roles.

**Leader of Coordinating Circle (General Circle):** The leader of the coordinating circle is responsible for

- ensuring that logistics of the Coordinating Circle and Full Circle meetings are taken care of
- gathering input and proposing agendas for the Coordinating Circle and Full Circle



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- meetings
- supporting and encouraging Core Work Circle leaders to lead their circles to accomplish their circles' aims
- ensuring that minutes are kept and that community log keeping is being done effectively
- communicating the “state of the community” to the general membership regularly, including a summary of significant past decisions and future decisions expected.

## **G. Membership and Participation in Community Governance**

Not all members of the community are active in the governance circles in the community. Some members participate in the labor work of the community but are relatively inactive in decision making. Whether or not members choose to be involved in the community's decision processes, they are still bound by the community agreements and the policy decisions of the circles.

## **H. Producing Minutes**

We are committed to producing circle minutes in a timely way. Each circle is responsible for having a policy about how it will manage the production of minutes. These are two examples of and recommendation for such a policy:

### Option A

- Secretary has 48 hours from a meeting to send draft minutes to circle members.
- Circle members then have 24 hours to send feedback to the Secretary.
- Secretary then has 48 hours to publish the minutes to their Circle's Minutes folder in Google Drive and a summary to the community, having used their judgment about what to incorporate or not from the feedback received.

### Option B

- Secretary reads back minutes of each agenda item as the item is completed and the full minutes are approved at the end of the meeting.
- Secretary then has 48 hours to publish the minutes to their circle's minutes folder in their logbook and a summary of the minutes to the community.

## **I. Decision-making**

**General process:** When a question comes to a circle, the circle may decide the question, research it, survey community members, seek out individual opinions, or send the question to another circle for input or decision. A circle may appoint a Helping Circle to research the question and make a recommendation. A circle can ask for time in Full Circle meetings to generate more input. How much input to request and what methods to use



to gather that input is a judgment call of the circle based on the issue's complexity, impact, and/or potential controversy.

Elements in policy decision-making:

- What is this issue and in what context is it arising?
- Is this issue in our circle's domain?
- What questions do we need to answer in a policy in order to resolve this issue
- What research and/or community feedback do we need before we bring a proposal to consent decision making?
- What policy proposals can we generate to answer those questions?
- Do we consent to the proposal? How and when will we evaluate its effectiveness?
- Have we published our decision in our minutes? Is the new policy integrated into the policy manual in the community's logbook?

Inability to Reach Consent: The delegate or leader, based on their own judgment, can bring a proposal or issue to its parent circle for input and/or decision if a circle cannot achieve consent on a proposal within a reasonable time.

## **J. The basis for objections**

Objections are ways for circle members to express a concern that a proposal or policy will interfere with a circle's ability to accomplish its aims. As such, objections are gifts to the process rather than obstacles to progress. Personal preferences are not a basis for objection.

We seek resolution of objections by finding some way to move forward, either by trying something on a shorter or smaller scale or by moving forward and measuring the impact of the policy. Then we evaluate whether the policy is supporting the circle's capacity to accomplish its aims, and whether some amendment to the policy would improve it. In some cases, an objection will mean a proposal is dropped. The decision to drop a proposal requires consent from the circle.

## **K. Managing Objections from Absent Members**

Circle members have the responsibility to communicate their perspective on key issues and proposals that may be discussed in an upcoming meeting that they will miss. Each circle may set a policy for managing objections from absent members. This is an example of and recommendation for such a policy:

- If a member has an objection to a decision that was made in their absence, that member will communicate that objection to the circle and implementation of the decision will be stayed until the objection has been resolved. That communication



will take place within 24 hours of receiving the draft meeting minutes.

- The absent member and the circle leader will co-determine the process for resolving the objection.

## L. Appealing a Circle Decision

**Method 1:** Any individual circle member may appeal any decision made by any circle. The appeal will first be heard by the circle(s) to which the individual belongs. If that circle agrees with the appeal, they will send up to three delegates selected by that circle to the circle that made the decision. These delegates will meet with the circle that made the decision. The purpose of this meeting is to understand and explore the reasoning behind the original decision and behind the appeal. The circle that made the original decision may invite these delegates to be part of the decision. Alternative: The circle that made the original decision will then confirm, amend or withdraw the original decision (within one session, or more if extended by consent).

**Method 2:** Alternatively, a minimum of three individuals (no two from the same household) can appeal any decision to the circle that made the decision. Those appealing will select up to three delegates to meet with the circle that made the decision in order to collectively understand and explore the reasoning behind the original decision and behind the appeal. The circle that made the original decision will then confirm, amend or withdraw the original decision (within one session, or more if extended by consent). If those appealing are not satisfied with the result of their appeal, they, along with delegates of the original decision-making circle, can seek assistance from the Care and Counsel Circle to get resolution (within two sessions, or more if extended by consent).

If Method 1 or 2 is not successful, **Method 3** is to move the issue to its parent circle.

**Note:** Decisions of the Coordinating Circle may be appealed to the Coordinating Circle but not to the Mission Circle or the Full Circle. The Coordinating Circle may reverse or amend its past decisions.

## M. The Full Circle

As a community, we decide who to include as decision-making members of the community. Our Membership Circle sets policies that define different classes of members and their rights and responsibilities. The different classes include owner members (HOA members), opt-in household member associates, renter associates and off-site associate members.<sup>2</sup> We call the complete set of our decision-making members the “Full Circle.”

The aims of the Full Circle meetings include:

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<sup>2</sup>Details about types of membership and their rights and responsibilities are documented in the Community Agreements/policy manual.



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- Giving Feedback: Any circle can request time on a Full Circle agenda for the purpose of generating input or feedback that will help that circle make a decision. These “Community Conversations” are focused on exploration, dialogue and understanding, not decision making.
- Learning: Learning about governance, communication skills and anything that is useful to the community (finances, first aid, permaculture design, NVC, etc.)
- Community building: Telling life stories, sharing what is meaningful in people’s present lives, celebration, anything that builds connection among community members.
- Decision making: Decision making in Full Circle is limited to decisions that are delegated to the Full Circle in this governance agreement.

The Full Circle has the authority to make major decisions that meet one or more of the following criteria. Note: Determination of significance is by decision of the Coordinating Circle.

- Significant and permanent changes to the physical community (for example, adding a new barn for animals)
- Significant changes to the governance structure. (This does not include forming new circles or roles.) For example, changing decision making to consensus or majority rule
- Significant impact on members in terms of money, housing, and/or liability (for example, a major change in what is covered by insurance, adding a new unit, a change in the framework work how condo fees are assessed).
- Changes to Master Deed and its amendments, Bylaws and its amendments, and agreements with local governments
- Annual budget decisions, budget revisions that impact the monthly fees of community members, or decisions regarding special assessments. (Note: non-property owners may not object to HOA financial decisions).

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. The Coordinating Circle, at its discretion, may choose to take any decision to the Full Circle.

## **N. The Board of Directors**

Massachusetts requires condominiums to have a Board of Directors that is responsible for legal and financial matters. The Board of Directors shall be composed of 7 members—3 members at large and one member representing each of the 4 core working circles. The Coordinating Circle will propose to Full Circle the slate of 7 Board members and officer roles to serve one year terms.

## **O. Homeowners Association**



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Massachusetts requires condominiums to have a Homeowners Association (HOA) that meets at least once a year to set the annual budget, select Board members, and amend bylaws. The HOA is composed of the community's members whose names are on the deeds of the condominium units.

## **P. Committees of the Whole and Consent Agendas**

To honor both our community's governance agreements and applicable laws we make use of two legal practices known as committees of the whole and consent agendas.

### **Committee of the Whole**

The aim of convening a Committee of the Whole is to bring together the people legally responsible for decisions and other stakeholders in those decisions. The Full Circle, for example, can serve as the Committee of the Whole for the Homeowner's Association and/or the Board of Directors. Likewise, Committee of the Whole can also mean the joint meeting of the members of a working circle and non-circle members who are appealing a decision of that circle. Decisions made by consent of committees of the whole can then become consent agenda items for the Board, the HOA, or any circle as appropriate.

### **Consent Agenda**

A consent agenda is a meeting practice that groups non-controversial and/or routine items in one agenda item. The consent agenda can be approved quickly, in one action and without discussion, rather than deciding each item separately. The consent agenda is particularly useful for items that have been previously discussed at length, for example in a committee of the whole.

**How the two practices can help us keep our process legal and simple** The members of the HOA and the Board of Directors are subsets of the members of the Full Circle. The Full Circle serves as a committee of the whole for the HOA or Board. When a Full Circle meeting adjourns, the HOA and/or the Board convene briefly as needed with a consent agenda to confirm any decisions made and note them in the minutes of their meeting. The consent agenda of the HOA Annual Meeting will be to approve:

- the budget
- the Board members
- and any bylaw changes recommended by the Full Circle

The consent agenda of the Board at the close of Full Circle meetings will be to approve: •



policy changes that have been included in the Community Agreements document since the last Board meeting

- Insurance policies and tax filings
- Board members/officers

### **Q. Policy Resolution Circle**

The aim of following policy is to ensure that decisions are always possible. If there is no consent to a proposal or to its withdrawal by any of the Coordinating Circle, Full Circle/HOA, or Board of Directors after reasonable effort, the Coordinating Circle may request that Community Life Circle convene a temporary Policy Resolution Circle. If there is disagreement whether reasonable effort has been made, the Coordinating Circle will make that determination by simple majority vote of the Coordinating Members then in office. No one can object to this vote being on the agenda.

The Community Life Circle will select members of the Policy Resolution Circle based on the basis of capacity to listen, empathize, synthesize, be multi-partial, and willingness to make difficult choices. The criteria for selection shall be published with the names of the people selected. *(This increases the chances for choices to be made with integrity.)*

The Policy Resolution Circle (PRC) will meet and immediately set a timeline for decision. That timeline needs to be communicated to the community. *(This motivates all sides to make an effort to be heard by the PRC without stalling the process.)*

The Policy Resolution Circle will attempt to understand the particulars of the debate, explore possible solutions, and then by consent determine the policy and resolve the debate. Their decision includes actions to be taken by all parties or circles involved.

Decisions of the Policy Resolution Circle may not be appealed. The Policy Resolution Circle will be on reserve and will hold the decision in their domain for three more months after the final decision. *(This is to prevent that a circle will simply un-do the PRC's decision or fail to carry it out.)*

For legal compliance, the HOA or Board will decide by consent-agenda the solution presented by the Policy Resolution Circle. Should the Board fail to consent to a proposal in its consent agenda, they will immediately decide by 2/3 majority rule of those present and voting with a quorum of 4. Should the HOA fail to consent to a proposal in its consent-agenda, they will immediately decide by 75% majority rule.

It is unlikely that the Board or the HOA would fail to consent to an item in its consent agenda. Given that an objection at this stage is likely to be controversial and painful, if a majority rule decision has been made, then the Care & Counsel Circle will initiate a Restorative Circle with the failure to decide by consent as the trigger event.



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## **R. Evaluating, amending, and reaffirming the governance agreement and practices**

Like other community policies, this governance agreement shall be periodically evaluated, amended and/or reaffirmed. The Community Life Circle will lead or delegate the review process. Here are examples of what the review could include:

- Frequency of circle meetings/attendance of circle members
- Record of circle meetings (minutes)/availability of minutes to all community members.
- Quality of community logbook. Is it well-organized? Are policies up to date and accurate?
- Evaluations in each circle: what went well, what could have been improved, suggestions for improvement
  - Effectiveness—are decisions getting made? Do the decisions contribute to meeting our aims?
  - Efficiency—is the speed with which decisions and actions are taken appropriate to the decisions or actions?
  - Transparency—is there easy community access to information about the decisions? – Positive relations—how do circle members feel about working together?
- Brief case studies of:
  - issues where there were significant objections or appeals
  - a member was removed from a circle or not approved for circle membership
- A simple survey of individual members about their experience with the governance system, including whether they experienced their voices to be encouraged or discouraged.

After review of the information gathered, the Community Life Circle will ensure that the suggestions for improvement of the governance agreement generated by the evaluation are considered.