

Decision Making & Meetings Agreement (2021)



All decisions are made by a consensus of members whether in Community Meetings, Team Meetings, or by Posted Decision. (See [Consensus Philosophy Guidelines](#).) The only exceptions are when we elect to use an alternative decision making method (see Alternative Method Vote below) or a Consensus Enhancement Process (see CONSENSUS ENHANCEMENT PROCESS below).

The result of a community decision is an agreement. Members are required to follow agreements. The result of a team decision is a guideline. Members are strongly encouraged to follow guidelines.

All decisions remain in force until they are replaced by another decision. A team may reconsider any of their previous decisions at any time. A community decision previously made is reconsidered only if:

- A) A majority of voting member households wants to reconsider the decision. Requests for reconsideration of a decision must be in writing (petition, email, etc.).
- B) The Steering Team decides that there is significant cause to reconsider the decision.
- C) A team or task force decides that there is significant cause to reconsider a decision within their area of responsibility.

For decisions that directly impact the children, children's input is sought.

Quorum

A quorum is not necessary for consensus decisions because of the ability of absentee members to vote. (See Absentee Member Voting below.) A quorum is, however, necessary to take an Alternative Method Vote. A quorum is established by the presence of at least one voting member from 51% of all voting member households.

Posted Decisions

Community decisions may be made using the Posted Decision method. A Posted Decision is made using the following steps:

- Topic Guide posts a proposal to a posting place designated by the Steering Team.

(The designated posting place may be electronic or physical and must be easily accessible and well known. It is used for Posted Decisions and Community and Team meeting agendas and minutes.)

- The proposal specifically includes:
 - Name of Topic.
 - Name of Topic Guide.
 - Posting Date.
 - Input Deadline Date (10 days after Posting Date).
 - Background information.
 - Proposal.

- All voting members have until the Input Deadline Date to provide input in writing to the designated posting place.
 - Note: Voting members must be specific when giving input as to whether the input is a comment (blue card), a concern not needing to be addressed (orange card), or a concern that does need to be addressed (red card).
- If a voting member raises a red card concern, they work with the Topic Guide to resolve their concern, which could lead to modifying the proposal. A modified proposal is reposted using the same guidelines as though it were a new proposal.
 - Note: The Topic Guide may choose for any reason to withdraw the proposal and have it considered at a Community Meeting rather than as a Posted Decision.
- If no red card concerns are raised (or if they are raised and later withdrawn) before the Input Deadline Date AND the Topic Guide has posted a follow up stating whether or not the proposal passed, the proposal becomes a decision. The Topic Guide is also expected to post a follow up if the proposal has not passed.

Alternative Method Vote

When the community feels that some alternative decision making method is more appropriate than consensus, we may choose an alternative decision making method by taking an Alternative Method Vote (applies only to community, not team, decisions). To pass, the Alternative Method Vote requires a 75% vote of the voting member households present (one vote per voting member household). The alternative method of decision making may employ voting on a per person basis, a per household basis, or in whatever manner the community decides during the Alternative Method Vote. (See [Alternative Decision Making Methods Guidelines.](#))

Absentee Member Voting

Only members who are present at a meeting may vote (i.e., no voting by proxy), except as allowed by the following Absentee Member Voting procedure (applies only to community, not team, decisions). The Absentee Member Voting option cannot be exercised in any decisions involving an Alternative Method Vote.

- At least 2 days before the Community Meeting, an Absentee Member choosing to block a proposal to be decided upon must inform the facilitator by some means of confirmed communication. (That is, the facilitator must confirm with the Absentee Member that they have been informed of the Absentee Member's choice to block the proposal.)
- If an Absentee Member chooses to affirm a proposal, they may do so by sending word to the meeting via any representative to the meeting they choose.

Types of Meetings

COMMUNITY

Purpose: To conduct the normal business of the community where full community participation is appropriate.

Authority to Call Meeting: Steering team -- on an as needed basis.

Decisions Made: Community decisions.

Essential Roles:

- Facilitator to guide the discussion and/or decision making to accomplish the stated agenda purpose(s) while ensuring that Ground Rules are followed.
- Keeper of the Heart to attend to the participants' emotional well being.
- Topic Guide to present a topic being considered (as part of their overall responsibility to oversee and guide the progress of a topic all the way through to its resolution).
- Recorder to keep and post minutes (and revise if necessary).

Participation:

• Observer: Anyone is welcome to come and observe without participating. Observers are allowed to participate only during the opening and closing of the meeting – not while topics are being addressed. Exceptions to this:

- Input solicited from an expert on the topic being considered.
- All attendees are welcome to participate in discussions and practice during training and education type meetings.

• Voting Member: A member becomes a voting member after they have attended 3 Community Meetings within 6 months. (Community Meetings attended before becoming a member do count towards this requirement.) A voting member is entitled to fully participate in Community Meetings, Team Meetings, and the Posted Decision process. (That is, they observe for 3 meetings and then participate at the 4th.)

MEETING OF THE HEARTS

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for open sharing of values and feelings and for the community to work on interpersonal relations and group process thereby creating a greater level of tolerance, respect, empathy, and understanding amongst members, all of which will help reduce potential conflicts.

Authority to Call Meeting: Process & Communication team. Meetings of the Heart are held at least once every two months.

Decisions Made: None.

Essential Roles: None.

Participation: Anyone.

TEAM

Purpose: To conduct the normal business of the community which has been delegated to a team.

Authority to Call Meeting: Team members -- on an as needed basis.

Decisions Made: Team decisions (see Teams agreement for details)

Essential Roles: Facilitator to guide the discussion and/or decision making to accomplish the stated agenda purpose(s). Recorder to keep and post minutes.

Participation: Observers and Voting Members only (see Community Meetings section above).

SHARING CIRCLE

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for open sharing of values and feelings around a particular topic -- not for discussing ideas or problem solving.

Authority to Call Meeting: Anyone (person calling meeting must define the topic and purpose of the meeting when they call it and at the beginning of the meeting).

Decisions Made: None.

Essential Roles: Person who called the meeting to facilitate as needed.

Participation: Anyone.

DISCUSSION CIRCLE

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for open discussion of ideas or problem solving around a particular topic.

Authority to Call Meeting: Anyone (person calling meeting must define the topic and purpose of the meeting when they call it and at the beginning of the meeting).

Decisions Made: None.

Essential Roles: Person who called the meeting to facilitate as needed. Recorder to keep and post minutes.

Participation: Anyone.

RETREAT

Purpose: To reconsider the "Big Picture" topics (where we're at as a community, the nature of the community, and our Core agreements) and to work on core community skills (communication, conflict resolution, etc.).

Authority to Call Meeting: Steering or Process & Communication team. Retreats are held annually.

Decisions Made: None, unless previously authorized by community.

Essential Roles: Facilitator to guide the process to accomplish the stated agenda purpose(s).

Participation: Members only. The team calling the retreat may grant exceptions for outside facilitators and other guests under special circumstances.

SPECIAL

Purpose: To handle any special business that the Steering Team feels warrants a special meeting.

Authority to Call Meeting: Steering team -- on an as needed basis.

Decisions Made: None, unless previously authorized by community.

Essential Roles: Determined by the Steering team.

Participation: Determined by the Steering team.

Community & Team Meetings Ground Rules

- Address each other with compassion.
- Silence means agreement.
- One person speaks at a time.
- No personal attacks.
- Share the air time.

Community & Team Meetings Content

(See [Meetings](#) and [Facilitation](#) Guidelines for more information.)

POSTING THE AGENDA

Agenda must be posted on the designated posting place at least 4 days before the meeting (provides members with the information needed to decide whether or not to attend meeting and allows for Absentee Voting at Community Meetings).

Each Agenda item will include:

- Purpose (what is to be accomplished).
- Topic Guide.
- Clearly stated topic.
- Possibly a Proposal.

OPENING THE MEETING

Begin on time.

Review and get agreement on meeting Agenda and Purpose(s).

Review Ground Rules.

WORKING WITH TOPICS AND MAKING DECISIONS

All voting members are given an opportunity to comment and/or express concerns on a topic. Intellectual and emotional input are both welcome. Decisions are to be made from the community's perspective. A voting member may choose to red card or Stand in the Way of a decision when s/he believes that the decision would be seriously wrong for the group, not because s/he personally disagrees with it. A voting member may also choose to Stand Aside in making a decision, which means that s/he personally doesn't agree with the decision, but doesn't see it as contrary to the stated values of the community.

Major concerns with a proposal are concerns that a voting member considers significant enough to warrant having the community or team work to resolve. A major concern is indicated by a red card that stops the process in a straw poll or consensus "vote." Major concerns are recorded, indicating who has concerns and what the concerns are. Each major concern is discussed until the person(s) holding the concern feels that the concern has been satisfactorily addressed, except in the case of a Consensus Enhancement Process (see CONSENSUS ENHANCEMENT PROCESS below).

Because a red card stops the process until it is resolved, it is important to remember that a red card presents an opportunity to explore and understand more fully any issues with a proposal. How the community works with a red card has the potential to increase cooperation and connection within the group. Both the red card holder and the community must explore the red card concern with full seriousness and respect, in a spirit of mutuality. We respect each person's right to hold a red card and with that right comes the responsibility to show up and participate in the process in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration for the good of the community.

Proposals at Community Meetings may not be modified and consensed at the same meeting, however, because of the need to allow for Absentee Voting (doesn't apply to Team Meetings). A consensus decision is made once there are no major unresolved concerns remaining.

CONSENSUS ENHANCEMENT PROCESS

If one or more members red cards a proposal, the red card holder(s) is responsible for organizing meetings with the Topic Guide(s) who presented the proposal or their appointed representatives, and any other interested members in a series of solution-oriented, consensus-building meetings. The purpose of the meetings is to work through the concerns and mutually agree on a revised proposal that addresses the same problem as the original blocked proposal. These meetings must take place within two months. Agendas for the meetings are posted to ensure that members who want to be part of crafting a modified proposal can be involved. Minutes of the meetings are posted to ensure

that members are up to date on progress toward a modified proposal. It is recommended that four meetings are held, if needed, to find resolution and create a revised proposal.

If no meetings are initiated in the first 30 days, the original blocked proposal is brought to the next available Community Meeting for a 80% Supermajority Vote.

If a revised proposal is created within two months of the red card, the revised proposal is brought to the community for consideration as a new proposal.

If resolution cannot be achieved and no revised proposal is created within two months of the red card, the original blocked proposal is brought to the next available Community Meeting for a 80% Supermajority Vote. Clarifying questions are permitted, but further exploration and comments about the proposal are not. The original blocked proposal passes, resulting in a community decision, if a supermajority of 80% of the members present at the Community Meeting vote for the proposal.

The two month clock for the Consensus Enhancement Process starts running in the case of any of the following:

1. Community Meeting ends with an unresolved red card concern in a straw poll.
2. Community Meeting ends with an unresolved red card concern in a consensus vote.
3. Red card is posted in a posted decision proposal.

CLOSING THE MEETING

End on time, or agree to extend.

Critique the meeting. (What went well? What could we do differently?)

Communication on Email Chat

Members are responsible for information and decisions posted on the Heartwood email chat.

Members posting information on the chat may assume that all Members will become aware of it.

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Source: <https://www.heartwoodcohousing.com/decision-making--meetings.html> (accessed 6 July 2022)