

# Spokescouncil Planning

## Meeting 11-20-2024

2 hours

### Action Items for next meeting

- 
- Ella** demarcate reproduction vs. project working groups (in Ella's summary of WGs)
- 
- Frankie** to add chat-addition protocol to Signal group description
- 
- [someone]** make the agenda for next time. topics to include:
  - o Plan for the spokescouncil council to meet with outside groups and have a research debrief meeting
- 
- Ella** to add a link to Spokes explainer to Signal description (or Lippy and Ella to collaborate)
- 
- everyone:** make proposal(s) about the following things:
  - o How to make proposals (meta!)
  - o How to decide who gets a Spoke
  - o Spokescouncil goals
  - o Woodbine points of unity
  - o How often should the spokescouncil meet? Bi weekly? Monthly?
  - o How to approach accountability via spokes (one idea: include spokes reps in notes to track which WGs are at meetings as part of accountability system, key holder access idea)
  - o Cleaning project (what would the cleaning project be?)
  - o Agenda of 1st spokes meeting + how it'll be run
  - o Strategy for approaching WGs to get Spokes, craft the messaging
  - o Spokescouncil Signal group proposal (how it will be used, who can be in it, norms/protocols, conflict culture, admin access)
  - o Spokes/Fishbowl explainer with a decision making flow chart explainer and fist to five explainer (could be one explainer doc we hand out)

- Who from the spokescouncil should attend the 1st spokes meeting? And how should they participate?
- Research debrief meeting proposal
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- Ash** to make a date poll for next meeting
- 
- Frankie and LP** continue research on language accessibility, determine spokes language needs, reach out to interpreters
  - <https://basement.woodbine.nyc/spokes-multilingual-research#>
- 
- everyone**: ask Frankie for access to the hopes and fears [Mural](#), contribute to said Mural

## Summary

- **Brainstormed** about Spokescouncil goals. Some recurring themes:
  - reproducing the space
  - drawing Woodbine-related people into community + collaboration (working group members, neighbors, speakers of various languages)
  - clarifying who can make decisions about what, and how
    - finances
    - appropriate use of the space
    - programming
- **Discussed** who will constitute the spokescouncil / who gets a Spoke. Ideas coalesced around:
  - Ongoing work to identify all working groups [in this spreadsheet](#)
  - It may be useful to distinguish between different kinds of groups
    - groups / Spokes whose goal is solely reproducing the space, Spokes that work in the space
    - Young Lords' "ongoing projects" (long term) vs. "taskforces" (short term)
  - All entities who *use* the space will likely care about decisions made about the space. They may or may not want to participate in making those decisions, but it would be useful to keep them informed.
  - Spokescouncil may itself decide who's a Spoke.
- **Decided** on a chat protocol, which is as follows (can also be found in Signal chat description):
  - To add someone to the chat:
    1. establish that they are involved with woodbine AND
      - they care about the future of woodbine AND
      - they are interested in a spokescouncil existing OR
      - indicate another clear reason why they make sense to be added to the chat

2. indicate in the chat that you want to add the person
  3. wait to get a cosign/vet from another member of the chat (can be an emoji thumb up)
  4. add the person to the chat
- **Discussed** how the Spokescouncil can make decisions together.
    - Proposed mechanisms:
      - [Yes, Block, Stand aside model](#)
      - “consensus when possible, consent when not” (BAM)
      - [Fist to Five](#)
      - Consensus minus 2
    - Acknowledged that the Spokescouncil itself can decide how it operates. (But it's useful to bring a scaffold as a starting point)
    - *Next steps: bring proposals about decisionmaking to the next Meeting*
  - **Discussed** what the 1st Spokescouncil meeting might look like. Some possibilities include:
    - Introduce a cleaning/space maintenance proposal
    - Inform groups about how Woodbine works today
    - Explain Spokes
    - Disseminate information about maintenance tasks (like when to take out trash)
    - *Next steps: bring proposals about 1st Spokescouncil agenda to next meeting*
  - **Summarized** prerequisites for 1st Spokescouncil meeting, including:
    - Deciding who, when, why and how for the 1st meeting
      - attendees, scheduling, goals, logistics/agenda
    - Inviting all relevant stakeholders to participate
    - *Next steps: bring various proposals (enumerated in action items) to resolve these prerequisites*

## Action item check ins from last meeting (10 min)

- Language accessibility infrastructure
  - [LP reportback](#)
  - RTU has simultaneous translation resources we can borrow.
- Link map of all working groups
  - link to the resource TODO
- Fears and hopes mural and access, keep it general
  - The mural exists [here](#)
  - You can request access from Frankie (Frank on Signal) individually

# What are our goals as a spokescouncil? doc to make sure we keep an eye on our goals? (20 min)

- (ash) reproduce the space more consistently, effectively and horizontally (cleaning, fundraising)
- (ash) increase individuals accountability to reproduce the space and grow involvement
- (ash) create a healthy conflict culture
- (ash) build capacity for resistance and develop strong community by making this a creative and experimental space to make decisions collectively
- (ash) develop programming that increases our capacity to fight repression and support individuals who are the most vulnerable (pantry, solidarity fundraising)
- (ash) offer space for people to organize resistance (digital security teach ins, banner making)
- expand who feels welcome in the space (language support, engage with whiteness of the space, patriarchy in the space etc)
- develop Woodbine's points of unity and values
  - would be nice for woodbine's position to be clearer + well-defined. when people participate, they should know what framework or scope the space is operating in
  - there was a points of unity experiment in Ops. but there are more people involved in a spokescouncil. there will be representation issues if we can't get key/highly active people in the room.
- build assembly culture and autonomy in Ridgewood
- we need to consider our relationship with our neighbors. we might not get them to like us, but we can do better at communicating with them
- Alt approach: work from existing problems, brainstorm structures to address.
  - Unclear on appropriate use of space
    - Can people wait for pantry indoors?
    - Who decides what / clarity
  - Stop "shadow decisions", ideally. What happened at the Working Group Assembly? Why'd we propose Spokes to begin with?
    - Goal: show that we can do the thing, let the Spokes take on more responsibility as it demonstrates its capable
  - finance should probably be a spoke (or something?). the finances are really frustrating. took dinner 3 weeks to figure out how to get \$100 from finance. this was wrapped up with reproducing the space as a topic.
    - we had to make a serious case about those \$100

- people ask about how to put together an event, sent along the google form, "no one got back to them". who has access to that form? who checks it?
- what if there was clearer process for how to request funding for each group? a form that requests details around funding, how it'll be used, who will get access to the things bought? people who decide aren't there very often, involves people who do work at woodbine having to regurgitate things that are more obvious to the working groups themselves.
- what gives people decisionmaking power? how does that operate today? how could that operate in the future?
  - right now, Spokes don't have complete latitude. but latitude could change over time. if we can make a Spokes council functional, we can start making decisions. there's a lot we can probably do with the latitude we already have.
- we could probably diagram what a good finance system would look like (in the abstract). getting into the specifics can be a decisionmaking trap (sometimes). but people closer to specific work areas can likely make useful concrete decisions. now, finance meetings happen monthly. they are open to anyone. i'd like to see clearer expense reporting.
- if it's just us (the people in this room), people won't like that, it probably won't work well. we want to make sure we have good working group representation at the spokescouncil.
  - + reach out to stakeholders
- can we make the spokescouncil fun? we'll need to get people in the room.
- potential goal: make the structure of the space legible. often: "i want to do something. how can i make that possible?"
  - [structurelessness can reproduce](#) latent oppressive structures outside of woodbine. making the space legible can combat that
- programming vetting. do we do that collectively today? not really. but there could be a committee that comes out of this that decides what programming gets put on.
  - Process and communication transparency and privacy in general
- does woodbine have a fiscal sponsor?
  - yes.
  - a fiscal sponsor (e.g. OpenCollective) can oversee whether expenses are aligned with expenses
  - there's an alternative to opencollective called [Raft](#)

## Who is the spokescouncil? (20 min)

- What are the working groups we are inviting to be part spokes?
  - [spreadsheet of working groups](#)
- Discuss differences in scope and involvement in reproducing the space: finance v yoga v basement v food fight as examples.
  - finance -> crossfunctional, critical for the space existing
  - yoga --> uses the space, people come and go. less extensive use of the space
  - basement --> tons of simultaneous projects, not super cohesive, one working group probably

- food fight --> cook in the space, do distro outside of the space.
- who's in?
- basement has a different financial relationship than other working groups?
- seems like the basement is its own decisionmaking body (? maybe?). for working groups like yoga, writing group, is there a preexisting decisionmaking model in those groups?
- (fgj) stewards model
  - thought experiment
    - if we don't have specific people who are responsible for reproducing space
    - if you are a spoke, you're accountable as a group to be a steward in relation to the individuals you bring into the space
- it's reasonable for everyone to have a hand in reproducing the space. we'd need a document or standard to help groups with less involvement understand what is expected, to address their potential frustration with being asked to do stuff for the space
- basement is kind of incoherent. meets somewhat regularly, but struggles with other issues. seems like incoherence comes from the preexisting issues with woodbine. seems like pantry and kitchen are the most coherent groups.
- i worry about "hey you're invited to Spokes" "now this is something you have to do". people might like to get a monthly concise thing that explains what decisions have been made. trying to make it as friendly and concise as possible. people can have a relationship to the space at the degree that they want it.
- stewardship model should be the end goal. seems like the goal of woodbine. self governance can become really expansive, but starts with the space itself. yoga could get themselves together, basement can cohere. that can be what we aspire to. each group with the opportunity of a voice, and a hand in reproducing the space.
- we don't want to make it feel like another chore. some folks just come through for the reading group. forcing people to do it seems like a bad idea. accessible and transparent. you don't have to come, but decisions will be made. encourage people to come.
- who is not a spoke? who is not allowed?
  - random people who are curious? are they a spoke?
  - transparency may cover this. if we have transparent notes about meetings and stuff, if you're interested, refer to these resources, and that will get you involved
  - no one has to come, but they're using the space and not cleaning? what do we do?
    - we'd need some conflict resolution around this. if you can't put in extra labor, maybe we'll ask for a financial contribution
    - lockbox code as "key" for responsibility, use to establish relationship between access and accountability, may prompt subdivision
- BAM states that they are modeled on Young Lords and Rainbow coalition organizing. this is aspirational more than functional, but prompted some thought. Young Lords made a distinction between "ongoing projects" and "taskforces". Something like a strike or a direct action would be a "taskforce". Versus ongoing reproduction tasks were "ongoing projects".
- it'd be nice to dig in at greater length on "what is a spoke? and how to spokes map to projects"
- yoga would be interested in what's going on here. we should loop them in here.

- the spokescouncil can decide itself what Spokes are. we don't have to pre-decide it now.
- there are MOUs (memorandum of understanding) circulating.

# What is the chat for? chat protocol and conflict culture (15 min)

- what is the chat for?
- who is in it?
- what do we do when things get heated? Take it offline!
- what sort of things do we discuss over chat v irl?
  - Big issue v small issue model
    - small decisions can happen in the chat, big ones shouldn't?
    - someone can flag something as a "big decision" to move the conversation to in person
      - Adopt an emoji reply for this? (~LP)
- is it cool to add someone to the chat without asking the current attendees in the chat?
- a lot of groups could benefit from a parallel chat structure where there's an "announce" chat and a general (noisier) chat
- collective decisionmaking, we hadn't talked about how to decide who gets added to the chat. "working groups" get bogged down with people who lurk and don't show up to meetings. i wanted to avoid that. the person who joined didn't seem invested in Woodbine.
- want the chat to be a safe space to make decisions without people derailing. it's not easy to do what we're doing -- there's a big task on our hands.
- it makes sense to talk about who's in the chat. locations has 200 people in it but no one's saying anything.
- the chat should include people that care about the future of Woodbine / are invested in Woodbine?
- it'd be helpful to have people in the future talk to us who are experts organizing in other spaces

## Proposal: To add someone to the chat:

1. establish that they are involved with woodbine AND
  - they care about the future of woodbine AND
  - they are interested in a spokescouncil existing
  - OR indicate another clear reason why they make sense to be added to the chat
2. THEN indicate in the chat that you want to add the person
3. THEN wait to get a cosign/vet from another member of the chat (can be an emoji thumb up)
4. THEN add the person to the chat

# How do we make decisions together?

## consensus protocol and culture. This can be a work in progress but we need something to begin with (10 min)

- Delegates introduce clear proposals
- Yes, Block, Stand aside model ([resource](#))
- Avoid total consensus model as a blocker to anything getting done
- Direct and supportive conflict culture
- "consensus when possible, consent when not" -- BAM uses this
- (in one model) Spokes itself isn't a decisionmaking body. they're communicating with their groups.
  - a proposal is brought to the spokes
  - spokes bring to working group
  - each working group discusses a proposal, comes to a decision
  - spoke comes back to the group, indicates the stance of their group
- what happens if there's not consensus across the spokes?
  - it depends. it can be a slow process. for the biggest decisions, this would likely be important. for smaller proposals, we maybe don't need to always go back to the spokes
- is there a way to decide at the beginning whether consensus is needed for the proposal or not?
- levels of influence within each working group? does every spoke get the same level of influence? finance? yoga?
- mechanics of decisionmaking miss the part of defining who the group is. in a food coop, if you pay, you're a member. it's less clear with woodbine who's a stakeholder/who has a say.
  - if subgroups are making the decisions, this mitigates issues somewhat. a transient member of a subgroup has less influence
- if we're presenting a proposal at the spokescouncil, then bringing them back to the spokes, that's good for slow decisions. we might need another approach for fast decisions.
- maybe spokes can do both? immediate decision: spokescouncil makes a decision. slower decision, slow process where spokes go back to the subgroups.
- there's more to it than the model. there's the culture of deliberation. proposals can be hard if they're not well-written. need a process for getting the proposal out there (e.g. posting it on a pegboard in advance of a meeting).
- big vs. small decisions -- will we get there? at first, spokes will likely make small decisions. if we come up with a model that is ok with making small decisions, that's ok for now. would be good to get small wins happening quickly. small decisions are good.
- agree, we're not close to making big decisions

- having a starting point decision making model would be a good place to start

Proposal: proposals are presented at the spokescouncil meeting. spokes bring the proposal to working groups, working groups discuss and decide, then spokes come to council, **fist to five** on the proposal (based on their WG opinion). We do consensus minus 2 (if everyone but 2 spokes agrees, the proposal goes through)

## What can be a first project for us to tackle as spokes? cleaning project example (Ella) (10 min)

- collective cleaning procedures (this has been a long Woodbine discussion, nothing comes of it)
  - cleaning proposal could open the door to other conversations (like who can be in the space and how?)
- (fgj) 1st spokes meeting "gather" vs. "decide" -- can we ID a concrete and attainable outcome that can come from 1st meeting?
  - deciding things as a group is hard. can we instead engage spokes to go back to groups and gather information rather than come back with a decision?
  - can groups come back with a summary/decision of what their existing cleaning protocols are?
  - announce / inform what trash days are, ask if it's ok to take out trash?
- 1st meeting = onboarding to spokes
- bringing people from pantry inside? is that a first discussion topic?
  - potentially heavy for a first project
  - different groups have a different stake in it
  - can get political quickly
- who will be at the spokescouncil meeting?
  - what if people try to derail / don't participate in good faith?
  - fishbowl -- spokes speak, but anyone can be present. if you don't trust your spoke, you can see the whole meeting go down
    - indicate visually who the spoke is
- ops is a working group?

- how do we communicate preemptively?
- people will have questions about how woodbine runs today. can we help inform people who come to spokes? overview of decisionmaking, finance.
- re: cleaning: accessible and set up cleaning supplies would be a huge win. but where'd i'd want to put that vaccuum is where the chairs are stored.
- the point of the 1st spokes meeting should be to talk about how spokes should work, field questions and grievances from everybody
- worried about people coming away from the first Spokes meeting being like "what was the point of that meeting?"
- we could do "theory and practice" -- here's a summary, and here's the things we think we should decide first

## Ella's Explainer overview (5 min)

Plan for the spokescouncil council to meet with outside groups and have a research debrief meeting (this feels like a separate meeting than can happen alongside actual spokescouncil meetings or be part of a spokescouncil meeting) (5 min)

When is our first real spokescouncil meeting going to happen? Do we feel ready? (5 min)

- (fgj) Identify spokes' language access needs + plan to have them met
- figure out who from the spokescouncil will be there
- strategy for approaching working groups and bringing them in
  - people should come to it with an idea of what's going on
  - presenting everything at the meeting is TMI
- way to decide who are Spokes / who gets a Spoke
- have strategies for managing who'll be there and what they say
- communicate with working groups beforehand?

- facilitator?
  - proposals for what the first meeting will look like
  - an explainer of how things work and how we came to Spokes. history of woodbine + how it's worked
  - proposal: a Signal chat for the overarching spokes
  - cleaning project proposal
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Revision #5

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