

12/04/2025: How to make a proposal

“How to make a proposal”, Violet, 12/4/25

Found some good language on how to make a proposal. Am proposing this as an answer to how to make a proposal, which can come from anyone:

Present Proposal or Issue

When possible and appropriate, proposals ought to be prepared in writing and distributed well in advance of the meeting in which a decision is required. This encourages prior discussion and consideration, helps the presenter anticipate concerns, minimizes surprises, and involves everyone in creating the proposal. (If the necessary groundwork has not been done, the wisest choice might be to send the proposal to committee. Proposal writing is difficult to accomplish in a large group. The committee would develop the proposal for consideration at a later time.) The presenter reads the written proposal aloud, provides background information, and states clearly its benefits and reasons for adoption, including addressing any existing concerns. (basically the food co-op method LP shared

Currently I'm thinking the express purpose/method of the spokescouncil should be to create cohesion between all of the working groups within the space and to be a means of facilitating decision-making being made by the “at-large membership” of Woodbine.

I found this to be a compelling argument against consensus, addresses a lot of concerns people have of small influences blocking functioning of the council.

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/andrew-flood-a-practical-guide-to-anarchist-organisation#toc61>

Two quotes from above in the text that support this argument “In working out a libertarian concept of organization, we need to remember that the individual members not only have rights that must be respected by the organization, they also have obligations to the rest of the membership. Since the majority have the right to control their own organization, individuals must conduct themselves so as to respect this right of the majority.”

“The idea is that the main decision-making responsibility of the organization is not to be delegated to some “steering committee” or executive but is conducted directly by the membership through their own discussions and votes; this is the heart of the libertarian concept of organization.”

I think a sort of synthesis of consensus and voting could work well. Consensus works well for small groups with a cohesive purpose; the working groups of woodbine have many purposes but possibility of common ideals. if we take the elements of proposal making and reworking from the consensus process, i.e. giving everyone an opportunity to have input but removing blocking power and even the potential for a small united minority to sabotage decision-making. after an established time period the spokescouncil will take proposal with suggestions and rework into a new coherent proposal to be voted on by everyone. votes can be tallied in a transparent manner through thumbs up/thumbs down reacts in group chats and then added to a google sheet accessible by all but only editable by spokescouncil. in the case of urgent issues the spokescouncil should be empowered to decide within group chat or emergency meeting with availability for feedback from wider membership later.

So for example:

Non-urgent: there is a proposal that any group that eats food during their meeting must clean the area when their meeting is finished. if you sit on couches then vacuum couches and rug. if you sit at tables then wipe down tables and sweep underneath them. make sure all food waste and other waste go into proper receptacles. if it is a trash night please help take out trash. > two weeks have gone by and suggestions are made > spokescouncil disseminates to their working groups > groups vote > votes are tallied and proposal is implemented if passed or retooled and re-presented if failed

Urgent: refrigerator stops working and an obvious fix can't be determined by folks on site> spokescouncil votes to call electrician > after the fact there is feedback that skilled individuals in working groups could have fixed instead > proposal is made to form a repairs working group that can be tapped in case of future technical issues to save money

people would have to declare what group they vote in or something like that to not have redundant/extra votes. it might be more efficient to put decision making power more firmly in the hands of the council with the possibility for feedback from wb at large. proposal posting ahead of spokes meetings would ensure transparency and allow time for feedback. it depends on how much we want to empower individuals and how much we think the people who show up to woodbine want to run it. concentric circle structure can mitigate some of that, for example the strength collective votes on space proposals rather than the whole strength community, but that isn't moving toward the broadest sense of autonomy and community involvement imo

comments (format: commenter name: comment)

- Ash: I agree with non-consensus model. From the linked text “The structural requirement of unanimity puts pressure on the majority to placate small minorities in order to accomplish something. Often this leads to decisions that paper over disagreements and leave everyone dissatisfied.” This is super important to remember imo. Even in smaller group

interactions in the space, we are ideally striking a balance b/w supporting minority voices that are valid (especially when we are attempting to correct structural bias like racism and misogyny) but also to make sure we are not being hamstrung by a small group or even one person's voice overriding the group moving forward. anarchists are often way too nice (because we want to see everyone as acting in good faith and want to be sensitive to our own biases)! sometimes people are assholes and bad faith actors and no one has a right to take over a discussion and it's ok for people to call that out. Something to consider as a group is we can ask ourselves if

1. if the minority voice is bringing up something the rest didn't consider but most people see as needing to be addressed
2. the minority voice is representing bad faith intentions to stall or distract people from moving forward
3. it's a good faith disagreement that most of the group doesn't concur with.

The response to

1. is to reconsider the issue and draft a new proposal.
 2. there should be some way to publicly call this bad faith or distraction out and move forward. if
 3. acknowledge and reiterate the shared value of non-consensus and why we have that value and move forward with respect for that person's dissent. Conflict support skills might become very important in the case of 2. and 3. and we should be ready to offer that pro-actively.
- Ash: I am a little confused about how the mixture of consensus and voting ideas would happen in reality and how the signal chat would be involved. This feels like we need to dig into this irl in the meeting and talk through how this would work and weigh it against other methods including the "Proposal is passed if consensus minus 2". is this the very basic method we use to pass a proposal to start? I wonder if we can develop more complex systems as we go along and face the problems this will bring up v. overwhelming ppl with a complex process

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