

State Meeting

Charlottesville, Virginia
November 21, 1998

Present: Aaron Feldman (Central Virginia Greens), Mel Leasure and Eric Sheffield (Rockbridge Greens), Sherry Stanley (Valley Greens), Jonathan Bates, Sharon Williams, and Jim Lowenstern (NOVa Greens), Pat Baggott (Tidewater Greens).

Mel Leasure conducted a consensus decision-making workshop in the morning. We discussed various aspects of the consensus process: choice of consensus as a way to come to decisions, possible consensus blockers, possible consensus enhancers, consensus as unity not unanimity, training to use consensus, remembering what is best for the wholeness of the group, initiating new members into the consensus process, and how we can improve our consensus decision-making process.

We walked to downtown Charlottesville for a lunch at Revolutionary Soup and then returned for the afternoon business meeting. Mel agreed to facilitate our afternoon session.

1. Minutes of May meeting --- Sherry read highlights from the spring meeting. We accepted the minutes with no questions and no modifications.

2. Treasurer's report --- Eric asked for a volunteer or volunteers to get out the yearly fundraiser letter, probably in January. He reported that the GOV has a current balance of \$461.55. Eric reminded us that he holds money for each local ready to be forwarded upon request. He has started a savings account so that our local money is now earning interest. Local levies are due at the beginning of the year.

3. Report from locals/introductions

Tidewater --- Pat said he has called people on his list to see if they are interested in a cooperative building project but has talked to only one member. Tidewater Greens are not currently meeting.

NOVa --- They are looking at sprawl issues and have been attending other organizational meetings, such as ballot access issues and helping a Natural Law Party candidate.

Rockbridge --- Eric said they continue their project of forming/drafting a platform and hope to have candidates in the upcoming Board of Supervisors election. They had a successful tabling at the Community Festival.

Central Virginia Greens --- Their main focus is building a local.

Valley Greens --- They have not met recently; primary members active presently in a coalition to stop a Wal-Mart expansion in the Harrisonburg area.

Blue Ridge and New River Valley Greens --- no representation

4. Report on retreat, update on PAC, update on 501(c)(3) --- Sherry commented briefly on the summer retreat and the regional gathering in Pennsylvania that seven Virginia Greens attended. At the summer retreat we put into action some of the ideas we had been discussing for some time. At the regional gathering we immersed ourselves in the corporate threat to democracy; Sherry urged everyone to look for an opportunity for forums at which Richard Grossman from POCLAD could spread this message. Sherry reported that she has completed all the work on registering the GPVA as an official PAC with the state. She reminded us that this means we can officially raise and spend money for candidates rather than placing the complete burden on the candidates themselves. Sherry continues to work on completing the process for forming a 501(c)(3).

5. Flyers --- At our summer retreat we designed a flyer for the Greens of Virginia/Green Party of Virginia that can be used by locals also, simply by writing or stamping in local contact information in the area we left for that use. Sherry distributed clean master copies to each local so they can make as many copies as they wish. A committee designed the flyer and then Valley Green Sue Micklem did the graphic work to completion. We decided that we would not make copies for distribution but instead leave that up to each individual local, realizing that some things could change so that we would not want to make too many that at some point could contain inaccurate, outdated information.

6. Discussion of how to incorporate new members, etc. --- We have a total membership of 351 members now (less than previously reported because Eric has been cleaning our data base), but we are getting new members every day. Our problem is that we don't have a way of embracing our new members and getting them involved. Aaron said that distributing newspapers is the easiest thing someone can do so everyone should do this. We need to have someone at each local who will ask individual members to do at least this. Then we need to have something other than meetings, some social gatherings to bring people together. Where we have locals, it should be the responsibility of the current members to involve new members. We have learned that it is unrealistic to expect new members to start locals without help because they don't know much about Green process. That's where the clerks need to facilitate. In the meantime, we encouraged all members to attend local and state government meetings, even if only to listen.

7. Empty office positions --- Sherry and Eric reminded us that we have the positions of co-clerk and treasurer empty and don't seem to have prospects. We need someone who is familiar with our history and our process and our philosophy. We need to develop people to fill these positions or look at our structural organization to see if we should change that.

8. Muriel Grim's proposal re national platform (Appendix A) --- Jim was not sure we needed to do this, and almost everyone agreed that platforms are helpful. Aaron said there are some essential federal issues and a platform could help prevent us from being labeled as a one-issue party. Eric said we have things we do agree on and should use those as our platform. Though we felt the need for a platform, Sherry asked that we table the proposal until Muriel could be with us to present her argument. We agreed to do so.

9. By-law amendment proposals from the bylaws committee (Appendix B) --- Number one --- Sherry reminded us that this amendment makes it possible for locals to have members who are not Greens. We decided that the avoidance of top-down structure is of most importance here and reached consensus on accepting this proposal.

Number two --- Sherry asked for adoption of the second amendment to avoid locals that could potentially sabotage the GPVA. The bylaws currently call for a mail ballot of all members, but our experience on full membership votes in the past discourages using this method. It is costly, time consuming, and garners very little response. We reached consensus on accepting this proposal.

Number three --- Sherry read the proposal and Charlie Jordan's emailed responses to it (because this was Charlie's proposal originally). We reached consensus on accepting this proposal.

All three bylaws amendments must now be ratified by the locals.

10. Running candidates and supporting candidates --- Looking to the future, we discussed where our strengths and opportunities lie. Eric said Rockbridge Greens plan to run some, if not a full slate of five, county supervisor candidates. They may run candidates that are not Green but will run on the platform. Even the Greens may not run openly as Greens, in fact. We agreed these are tough decisions. Eric did not see that the rest of the state could help much in these local races. He said that next year there will be 140 seats up in the General Assembly, both House of Delegate and Senate races. He said we should have at least a dozen candidates; Jim asked if we have twelve ready to run. Muriel had suggested that we consider working hard for one candidate instead of spreading ourselves thin. Jonathan agreed that he would run if he had help, knew he could count on all of us working with him. Sherry reminded us that being a candidate can be exhausting and lonely and supported the idea of putting all our resources and energy into a few candidates. Aaron said it would really boost morale and esteem if we could actually win one of these seats. Sharon has been working with New Mexico Greens and said she has seen the same problems concerning elections there. We agreed that we have to do some serious thinking here since these elections come next year.

11. Virginia issues ---- landfills, highways, etc. --- Jonathan reminded us that our issues are hitting the front page of the Washington Post. He urged us to find ways to let the public know these are Green issues. We need to go to local meetings and become part of coalitions when that works in our favor. Sherry said she is getting good articles for the newspaper and we should consider ourselves an alternative media, really get our newspapers in as many places and to as many people as possible.

12. Winter retreat --- Eric urged us to have an overnight retreat, similar to our summer retreat. NOVa Greens agreed to discuss this and see if they could host the retreat. Sherry must know by early January to get the announcement in the newspaper. The retreat should be in February. We are still testing our new schedule of two decision-making meetings and two "other" meetings a year.

13. Consensus development --- Sherry agreed to check into ordering the booklets from Food not Bombs that outline the consensus decision-making process. We authorized \$100 for ordering books to share with locals and decided if we needed more we could go the interim committee. We also reached consensus on forming a committee to develop the fundamentals for our guidelines. Aaron, Sherry, and Jonathan agreed to begin this work and asked for more volunteers to join us.

14. Evaluation of meeting --- We commented that meeting this late in November was a mistake (such a low turnout) and the workshop had been scheduled for too early in the day considering the travel distance for so many. However, the workshop was stimulating and helpful. We all said the meeting had gone smoothly. Sharon praised us for seeing that we are still learning the process and for being aware that we need to do this. Several said it helps to have a speaker to open these meetings because we need inspiration as well as decision-making.

Appendix A --- Muriel's proposal At the fall GOV meeting I would like to have the GOV decide whether we should send the following proposal (or some modification of it) to the ASGP and the GPUSA. -----
----- Because decentralization is one of the ten Green values and incorporating minority opinions in decisions is a Green practice, but a national Green party platform requires uniform acceptance of specific opinions on many issues by all Greens from various geographic areas and social backgrounds, which is difficult to accomplish in a decentralized, inclusive way and Because without proportional representation a party platform is not essential to the electoral process

It is proposed that the ASGP (and also the GPUSA) consider whether a national party platform is needed or whether a different vehicle could be used to present the program of the Green Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates.

===== Apart from the proposal, an example of another approach to the platform concept would be:

1. Stating that the Green candidates will make all executive decisions and legislative proposals according to the principles expressed in the 10 key values (the 10KV would then be presented in 1 to 3 sentence format, not as single key words)

2. The candidates will present their specific issues and solutions, i.e., their agendas

3. The candidates, if they want a platform, could pick and choose items from the various existing state platforms to put together a candidate's platform not a party platform.

Appendix B --- By-laws amendment proposals:

Number one:

Amend Section IV A to read as follows:

A local is a group of three or more Virginia residents who meet together on some regular basis to advance the Ten Key Values (Article II). Locals may be defined geographically or by common interest. Locals may accept members as they wish, consistent with their own rules. For the purpose of representation in the Green Party of Virginia, a person can claim membership in only one local at any given time.

Number two: Amend first sentence of Section IV F to read as follows: The GPVA may disaffiliate a Green local for valid reasons by passing a motion to conduct a mail ballot of all locals of the GPVA.

Number three: Amend the temporary amendment of Section XV by striking the original wording and replacing with the following:

The GPVA may join or affiliate itself with regional, national, global, etc. Green organizations which share the values of the GPVA. The GPVA may choose to send delegates to these organizations. The delegates should represent the policy of the GPVA to the extent possible and, where possible, should seek explicit direction previous to representation. Decisions and rules of other organizations which the GPVA is affiliated with or a member of will in no way be considered binding upon the Green Party of Virginia.

<Latest Update: June 24, 2010