



ICC Austin Fall 2015 General Membership Meeting Minutes

October 24th, 2015

2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

University Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall
2203 San Antonio Street, Austin, TX 78705

Overall Theme: Essential Learning: Member Education in a Democracy

Agenda:

Part 1 - Introduction and Reports

Welcome and Icebreaker

The State of ICC:

Update from President – Dawson Weehunt, President

Financial Status – Huyler Marsh, Treasurer

Report from Vice-Presbyterian – Tyler Rhodes, Vice-President

Report from staff – Billy Thogersen, General Administrator

Part 2 - Board Perpetuation and Bylaws Referendum

The Importance of Board Perpetuation and Election Process – Charlotte Carpenter, Secretary

Spring Board Officer Recruitment – Charlotte Carpenter

Bylaw Revision Referendum – Luca Masters

Part 3 - Cooperative conversation/activity based on theme

Attendance trophy awarded

Pizza and donuts

Attendees: Luca Masters, Noah Vaughn, Tyler Rhodes, Dawson Weehunt, J.T. Harechmak E.J. Dorrian, Cmryn Kessler, Judy Albrecht, McKenzie Martin, Jacob Garcia, Beth Aavang, Amanda Casco, Missy O'Sullivan, Maximilian de Rozieres, Jessica Barszczak, Michael Zhang, Alberto Aamatong, Patricia O'Brien, Gaby Joseph, Elisa Friedmann, Luis Cataldo, Annie Biondi, Carolyn Haskins, Giancarlo Besa, Alessio Mancillas, Daniela Munoz, Brett Davis, Huyler Marsh, Connor Healy, Jacob Bruner, Cameron Miller, Taylor Osarogiabon, Anne Claire Brewer, Alex Aviles, Matthew Diamond, Carina Mata, Cody Adams, Audrey Hankins, Erin Dowd, Gregory Cerna, Marina Chazco, Michael Brown

Part 1

2:19 Anne Claire welcomes everyone to the Fall 2015 GMM

2:20 Tyler Rhodes introduces the icebreaker. He splits the room in half and has members choose between list items by moving to one half or the other.

2:33 Board Structure/Function/Perpetuation Presentation by Tyler Rhodes

What is the Board? What is the ECC? Who are the Community Trustees?

2:40 State of ICC Austin Presentation by Dawson Weehunt

ICC Austin is expanding soon with a new house. The Avalon lease is ending at the end of the school year, but it's something we've prepared for.

How has ICC Austin been working towards member education?

Dawson discusses the impetus for the Board focus on increasing diversity and inclusivity in the organization. The Board has been in contact with AORTA – Anti-Oppression Resource Training Alliance – to help with the development of this committee. Dawson encourages everyone to think about joining this committee and any other committee of the Board or organization.

2:46 Financial State of ICC by Huyler Marsh

Where does your rent money go?

Paying staff (18-19%), utilities (14%), Avalon lease (5%), interest on loan to build new house, maintenance work, consulting for the Board, credit card processing, membership engagement.

What is the financial status of ICC as a whole?

We probably won't be able to renew the lease on Avalon, but there's a good chance that in 2017 we'll have the new Ruth Schulze house. In the gap, there's going to be a house shortage, which means there are 20 fewer people paying rent. It will be a hindrance, but it won't put us in jeopardy. There have been scheduled rent increase. Huyler explains why the rent will be going up gradually from this year to next (and in the few years to come).

One member asks that staff set up a Facebook event for upcoming Board Meetings.

2:52 Report from Staff by Billy Thogersen

Billy addresses the challenges facing ICC Austin right now. The end of the Avalon lease will sting financially. There is also the new expansion project on the horizon. The Avalon lease ending is a certainty, whereas the new house is something that could potentially not happen. However, this would result in a major change to ICC Austin. Avalon has been essential over the years to the organization.

Why does ICC have GMMs every semester? It's a time for members to come together and elect officers, consider changes to the Bylaws, and a time for reports from the Board. Another reason is to celebrate ICC Austin's success. GMMs also have transformative value for the organization.

What does it mean when everyone comes together to talk and listen? Things change in the organization. Billy gives an example of how a conversation on House Autonomy at the Fall 2014 GMM influenced the decisions and direction of the Board and staff.

Billy discusses two topics that have come up as important to members at previous GMMs and how staff has responded to these concerns. 1) members wanting to attract better co-ops to the organization, and 2) members wanting to address issues of diversity/inclusivity/equity in the organization.

Regarding members' concerns about needing better co-ops, staff realized that they needed to deal better with marketing and have incorporated some ways of addressing marketing into the business plan (such as updating the website, updating house videos, new signs, etc). Staff is also creating an online orientation that everyone has to take before signing their very first contract.

Regarding diversity/inclusivity, Billy notes that this is a topic that student-housing cooperatives have been dealing with since the get-go. It is a societal problem, not just a problem with ICC Austin. Staff started educating themselves as staff (attending trainings on these issues, partnering with College Houses on this issue) in order to be a resource for members. Members and staff also incorporated safe-space training into New Member Orientations. Staff also recently started "equity lunches" where members and staff can come together (once a month) and talk about issues of equity and diversity. Some members express that they weren't able to attend the equity lunches because of scheduling conflicts or because they weren't aware of it. Billy notes that staff will work harder on scheduling to better accommodate members' schedules.

Staff is also incorporating an outreach plan into the business plan. ICC Austin currently doesn't do any official outreach.

3:06 Anne Claire calls for a 10 minute break

3:18 Importance of Board Perpetuation with Dawson Weehunt (Charlotte could not attend GMM)

The Board is integral to the operations and success of ICC Austin. Dawson emphasizes the importance of finding and electing Board representatives who do a good job and stick around for as long as possible. It's important to find representatives who are dedicated to the Board and organization. He briefly explains the structure of the ECC and how the schedule of elections for ECC officers is changing to a staggered schedule. Dawson also encourages all members to consider joining a committee.

3:25 Bylaws Revisions Presentation by Luca Masters

Luca starts with an explanation of what the Bylaws are. The Bylaws set out the foundational structure of the organization. They can only be changed by a vote of the general membership. Proposed changes to the Bylaws are presented at GMMs and the membership then votes on whether to accept these changes.

Luca explains why the current Bylaws (in some ways) don't make sense. ICC Austin is no longer structured in the way that it was when the Bylaws were originally written. "Financial obligations" of the houses to the organization don't apply in the same way, because individuals (not houses) pay rent to the organization as a whole. The new Bylaw states that an ICC policy can limit what

a House does only when the action of the House would screw over ICC Austin financially or would be unfair to an individual member.

Luca explains the appeals process for if a member disagrees with an action of staff or the Board. First step is to tell staff that the policy is bad. If staff disagrees, next step is to go to the Board. The Board will either direct staff to get rid of the policy or will agree with staff. Last step is to get 10% of membership (roughly 19 people) to sign a petition to overrule any policy.

3:37 Small group discussion on theme

Membership breaks up into six groups to discuss the questions/prompts

Questions/Prompts for the Small Group Discussion:

1. Learning about ICC Austin as a co-operative:

A membership educated about co-operatives in general, and ICC Austin in particular, is essential for ensuring the success of the organization. How has ICC Austin been effective, and what could be improved, in the following areas?

- Training at the organizational level
- Training at the house level
- Information flow within the organization

Notes from groups

- *Communication is frustrating sometimes between board members and houses*
- *Facebook page for ICC Austin*
- *Social media chair*
- *Better kitchen manager training*
- *Awareness and inclusivity*
- *Realistic scenarios*
- *New member anti-oppression; house officer anti-oppression*
- *Officer communication*
- *Conflict mediation*
- *All officers/more officers to participate in trainings*
- *Convince more people to go to meetings*
- *Not enough people at GMM*
- *Inclusivity talk at 1st house meeting every semester or discussed at every meeting*
- *Good board representatives; better board reports*
- *Online trainings*
- *Use the zine*

2. Formal and Informal Learning Events:

As an educational organization, ICC Austin supports student members in their formal university studies, and informally in various forms. How has ICC Austin been effective, and what could be improved, in the following areas?

- Supporting the ability of students to be successful in their formal studies
- Training and learning at informal house events
- Training and learning to improve interpersonal relationships in the house communities

Notes from groups

- *hold events for all ages and different groups*
- *more advertising; advertising outside of other co-ops*
- *diversity and education talks for teach for America; working with non-profits; NGOs*
- *holding events to spread the message of cooperatives*
- *art-related events*
- *use facebook events*
- *NASCO, Yellow Bike Project, monkey wrench books, college houses, Malvern, yoga, meditation, spitshoe, urban roots, permabitz*
- *Study rooms: up to each house, icc-austin wide study group, New Guild may have room, create a facebook group, study at coffee shops*
- *Substance-free house – perhaps Ruth Schulze*
- *ICC-wide education problems: scheduling and motivation*
- *Legal training*
- *First aid training*
- *Around the universe (galaxy)*
- *ICC Austin prom*
- *Party barge*

3. External Learning Events:

The cooperative principle of education and training, when combined with the principle of concern for community, means reaching outward to inform the general public both about cooperatives and anything else that improves the world. How has ICC Austin been effective, and what could be improved, in the following areas?

- *Holding events at houses open to the general public*
- *ICC Austin or house-sponsored participation in events in other organizations*
- *Inviting and reaching out to potential people and groups who could benefit from these events*

Notes from groups:

- *more general public events semesterly*
- *advertising to different Austin organizations – what a co-op is; what we are*
- *informal/informational events*
- *open houses*
- *co-op crawl -> breaking it up*
- *ICC Austin “ambassadors” go to organizations and groups underrepresented; these could be ICC-wide elected positions and/or assistants to Membership Director*
- *tabling with good materials (pamphlets that describe houses/cooperatives)*
- *ICC Austin informational videos; individual house videos*

4:00 J.T. Harechmak asks members to form a big circle with everybody in it

4:02 J.T. Harechmak introduces the large-group discussion.

From group 6 - Training and Communication.

Erin from French House -Training is great in ICC at the coop level, though there's some trouble at the individual house level, particularly in kitchen training. It is unevenly implemented in houses across ICC Austin. People are also frustrated with information dissemination in the organization in general. It would

be great if there was a central location for all the information that is getting dispersed piecemeal through emails.

From group 1 – also training and communication

E.J. from Eden – importance of encouraging officers to go to trainings. It's hard to get everyone to come to events like GMMs and trainings. If officers can be held accountable for attending trainings, they can go back to their houses and teach what they have learned. He wants to make sure that people in ICC Austin houses are aware from the get-go about the importance of topics such as inclusivity, equity, and diversity. He also stresses the importance for houses to have good board representatives.

Max from French House announces that they are having a party tonight.

Amanda from Helios- in terms of safe spaces and sensitivity training, she thinks it would be a good idea to have someone who is very well-versed in the topic (either an ICC member or someone from the community) to come to house meetings. Since it's such a serious topic, she doesn't think it's a good idea to leave that responsibility to the house officers.

Audrey from New Guild – her group talked about kitchen training, and how to emphasize it more in the beginning of the semester. Such as hands-on training and making people aware of the dangers of the kitchen.

Michael from Avalon – Facebook has a screwed up privacy policy. He prefers that communication go through emails or through iccaustin.coop.

Gregory from French House – his group brought up an ICC chess club, which he had no idea about. He is also frustrated with communication, and thinks that there should be better communication about when board meetings or committee meetings are occurring.

Lisa (Board administrative assistant) spoke about the emails that she sends out regarding upcoming board meetings and highlights from the board meetings. She acknowledges that the board website is being worked on (and needs more work), but that the calendar of board events is live and regularly updated for people to see what events the board has scheduled. Staff will continue to work to get better at disseminating information to the members.

Dawson from Seneca – he spent a lot of time last semester making a Google calendar for ICC Austin and other community events. He gets a lot of emails about events the community, and if you're interested, he would be happy to work with you to pick it back up.

Gaby from New Guild – she thinks we should take the concern about Facebook privacy seriously. She asks that people talk with her if they want to help set up an online private forum.

Amanda from New Guild – she thinks there's still a disconnect between houses in terms of disseminating information. She thinks we could either have people sign up to volunteer to be a social media manager, or pay someone to do it. It needs to be a coordinated effort, whether it's through Facebook or somewhere else. House events, board meetings, general ICC information should all be in one place.

Taylor from New Guild – she likes the idea of Facebook because it is easy. It's how she gets a lot of her information. Meeting people and remembering the people you meet at parties/events.

Group 5 – ICC and the external community

Jessica from French House- semesterly general public events to be advertised to the public. They talked about doing info events where we explain what co-ops are, in order to put a face to ICC and talk about what ICC Austin is. They talked about doing open houses and/or a co-op crawl. They talked about having ICC ambassadors to go different organizations at ACC and UT to talk to groups to people that we aren't bringing into the organization already, talking about who we are, what we do, and why we're different from other organizations. It's important for it to be a member who performs this function. ICC Austin needs to start tabling at events and having materials and handouts to explain who we are and what we're about. They talked about having an ICC-wide video (in addition to the individual house videos).

Matthew from New Guild - Likes the idea of the co-op crawl. He thinks it would be great to get an opportunity to see all the different houses and get a feel for what the options are.

Noah from Avalon – he thinks the Ends policy for ICC should be better communicated and disseminated. He thinks it will help people understand and learn about what we are and what we stand for.

Gregory from French House – they have a jazz brunch every other Saturday.

Beth from Helios – if diversity is a big issue, then we need to be direct about addressing it. She likes the idea of ambassadors to ensure that diverse groups of people are being exposed to our organization.

McKenzie from Eden – she would like to know what events we would table at and who would be at the table?

It could be at a welcome to UT event (College Houses does tabling on west mall).

There is a question regarding UT's housing fair and why it would be cost prohibitive to participate in it.

Dawson brings up working with organizations outside of ICC and introducing ICC as more than a place to party and find cheap rent. He suggests having an event (like a cooperative fair, West by West Campus-style) bringing together organizations from the community like MonkeyWrench, YellowBike, etc.

Nick Hill (financial director) notes that he and Ashleigh (membership director) run the ICC Austin facebook page, but they are not FB friends with everybody in the organization. He encourages people to "friend" him and Ashleigh on Facebook. They don't know about specific House events, so if you want them publicized organization-wide, you need to let staff know about those events and they can incorporate them into the Austin co-ops group.

Alessio from New Guild – suggests it could be part of house officers' position to be responsible for adding people from the House to the ICC Austin facebook page. The house and staff can work together to keep it up-to-date.

Matthew thinks there should be an ICC Austin specific Facebook page where house officers are admins.

Erin from French House – asks a question about setting up a UT club for co-op members in order to get around the expensive tabling issue. Lisa notes that ICC Austin does already have a student organization status at UT. Nick Hill gives some clarification about the issue of tabling at the UT housing fair.

Gregory from French House- two things 1) public outreach. Group 4 talking about having "Learning man" – you get together and someone with a skill (pottery, making kombucha, basket-weaving) shows people how to do it or lectures on something they think is really cool. That could be tied in to Dawson's idea of a co-op festival 2) Gregory is the admin of the Austin Co-ops group and he's happy to pass that

off to someone in ICC Austin. He thinks that it would be beneficial to keep the information central and to not split off to a different page.

Giancarlo from New Guild – likes the idea of “Learning Man” – it reminded him a lot of what was talked about at NASCO. He thinks it would be good for ICC Austin to have our own set of workshops.

Dani from Seneca – she thinks it would be just as effective to table throughout the semester and not have to do it at the housing fair. She was also wondering if there was an organized way of doing that, like through a tabling committee, so that it can actually get done.

Gaby from New Guild – she thinks the co-op festival idea is really exciting, and her group talked about asking ICC alumni to come to “Learning Man” and share their skills and experience. She suggests having a more limited ICC-only event before holding a larger-scale community event.

Amanda clarifies that Learning Man is actually already a thing (so we wouldn’t be able to use that name). It’s a festival that, instead of having musical events, it’s organized around volunteers volunteering to set up workshops. You can host a workshop to teach other people skills. It wouldn’t have to be just among ICC members. You could have a professor come give a lecture. It could be a really cool community-oriented event if there were enough people who would put in the work to make it happen.

Tyler from Seneca – membership, education, and communication have all been focused on in this discussion. When Dani mentioned the tabling committee, he realized that all these issues have the same core problem. We’ve been talking about tabling for a year or longer, and there’s no way to keep up that momentum without an incentive. He suggests creating a standing committee that houses could give labor hour towards helping out.

Dawson – he’s heard a lot of great ideas, but it takes effort and time. If you can contribute house labor (especially from a larger house), and set it aside for organizational committee work, that would be great.

Group 3 – ICC-wide education

Tyler - Supporting the ability of students to be successful in their formal studies. It would be cool to have study rooms, or an ICC-wide study group or study space. His group mentioned the idea of a substance-free house to try to inspire different house cultures and expand the idea of what a co-op can be. ICC wide first-aid training would be very valuable. In terms of parties and informal housing events, they think it would be cool to have an around the universe, or an ICC-wide prom.

Huyler from French House – the rationale for the around-the-universe, prom, etc. is that there’s not too much inter-house activity. He wants to increase communication between houses, and make sure they all know each other and feel comfortable with people from other houses.

J.T. suggests an inter-house prank war.

Michael from Avalon – thinks CPR and first-aid training would be expensive but worthwhile. He thinks each house should have a defibrillator.

E.J. – Eden did potlucks in the past with other houses, and it was a great way to get to know the houses around them.

Huyler – knows someone who lived in ICC and graduated from law school and is interested in holding a “know your rights” seminar for people in co-ops. He wants to gauge people’s interest, and they are generally very interested.

4:54 Group picture with T-shirts

4:57 Attendance trophy – Seneca wins

5:00 Pizza and donuts