



LLI Council Special Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2021

Via Zoom

11:00 a.m. - 12:38 p.m.

Council Members Present: Robert Beaury, Tom Esposito (ex officio), Carmela Gersbeck, Robert English, Nanci Kryzak, Deborah Lanser, Jill Lundquist, John Mathews, Emily Michael, Chuck Mishaan, Marge Moran, Cathy Reinis, Deborah Schwartz, Linda Stanley, Anne Sunners

Council Member Absent: Marge Moran

Also Present: Felice Gelman, Carol Goss

[Secretary's note: These minutes do not include discussion from the first half hour of the meeting. My internet was down and I was only able to join the meeting by moving to another house. Thank you, Cathy.]

Proposed Amendments to LLI Mission Statement

"LLI is an inclusive organization which welcomes members of all backgrounds."

Some points made in discussion:

- It says we are inclusive even though we have very few members of color. It implies we have taken positive steps to be inclusive.
- "Inclusive" could mean we are aiming to provide equal access to persons of different backgrounds.
- We need to say "inclusive" if we are trying to attract members of different backgrounds.
- Our local population has very few people of different backgrounds.
- Saying "inclusive" and "welcomes members of all backgrounds" is repetitive.
- Members were divided over whether to say "we are inclusive" or "we aspire or strive to be inclusive."

Action point: Cathy agreed to rewrite this sentence and submit it to Council for approval.

"We are committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion at the institutional and interpersonal levels through our membership, courses, leadership, and culture."

Some comments made in discussion:

- Laura Brown and Barbara Danish agree that adding this sentence right now is premature.
- Our options are to include this statement now, reject it now, or table it until the future. Council members were divided about what to do.

Council members had some general comments about changing the mission statement:

- We should not be too hasty to make permanent changes in the mission statement without carefully considering the implications.
- Are we going to change the way we operate? What will we do differently, regardless of what we add to the mission statement?
- The two sentences are very different and need different consideration. The first is consistent with our current mission statement. The second sentence indicates an agenda and possible changes from our current mission.
- The mission statement has to be consistent with the bylaws.

May 2021 Annual Member Survey Relevant Responses

Nanci pointed out that almost 70% of respondents expressed interest in course content that included perspectives of persons of color and more than 61% encouraged more diversity in the membership. Nineteen members who were not in the Who, Us? Class said they would be interested in working on the DEI initiative.

When asked what social issues they were interested in exploring in LLI classes, members often mentioned race (and many related issues such as prison reform, food insecurity, restrictive voting) and climate change. Nanci pointed out that the role of Council is to decide what we want to do about member interest in social justice topics.

Possible Social Justice Task Force

Council agreed to set up a Social Justice Task Force to merge issues of diversity and social justice as a new group that would report to P&E. It would be tasked with researching appropriate paths towards increasing diversity among our members and presenters. It would coordinate with existing committees and teams. The members who expressed interest in working on a DEI initiative can be contacted. Formation of the Task Force depends on identifying someone to lead it. It was suggested that the Task Group be called DEI/Social Justice Task Group,

Some benefits:

- This would lead to new kinds of courses and address member interests.
- New course content could attract a more diverse membership.

Some concerns:

- Emily asked who would be responsible for planning courses. Jill responded that decisions would still be made in Curriculum. The Task Force wouldn't replace Curriculum or supersede them.
- Deborah S pointed out that we have difficulty finding volunteers to do the necessary work for running the organization. Many people are already overburdened.

- Robert I said that during this year's membership drive, we reached out in areas with a larger black population. We need to determine what else we can do. Special Programs? A discussion group? Social events?
- The Task Force can't just dictate to committees what should be done. And it will have to develop concrete proposals.
- In the revised DEI proposal, increasing diversity of our membership was the last item on the list.

The charge for the Task Force should be clear. Social justice is an overarching phrase that incorporates a broad range of issues, e.g., racism, sexism, climate change, Palestinian rights, water quality, voting rights, and many more.

Action point: Nanci will work on a charge to the Task Force, which she will send to all Council members. It can be discussed at the next Council meeting.

Cathy suggested that the second sentence of the proposed revision to the mission statement be included in the charge to the Task Force.

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Cathy, seconded by Carmela, and agreed to unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 12:38.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Lanser
Secretary