Consensus Guide

Marylyn Wentworth

Consensus means reaching unity or concordance. It has been described as a pianist blending complementary notes into a chord. Consensus reaches for the highest collective consciousness. It is a sophisticated form of decision making that is an agreement among members of a group to support one another for the common good. It takes longer than other forms of decision making, but decisions are generally more productive and there are no losers, thus no sabotage of the decision. Because we are accustomed to majority rule, with competition, winners and losers, many of the most important features of consensus are difficult to get accustomed to. Some of the important points:

- *Each person has the capacity for understanding truth;* *truth is not the sole property of any single individual or group; truth is not fixed but constantly emerging and evolving. Thus, the group seeks the truth together rather than fight to be the winners. Hundreds of years of Quaker experience says that the truth resides in a group committed to working together and will rise through someone in the group. Thus, a person is not necessarily to be congratulated for the brilliance of his/her proposal, but rather respected as the one through whom the truth rose.*

- *Consensus means that everyone can "buy into" a decision* *because the decision in some way meets the common mission or goals of the group. Even those who do not agree can at least support the group decision, if only for a trial period.*

- *A new decision takes as long as it takes to emerge.* *Until a new decision is made the old one stands, without argument. Patience is VERY important in consensus.*

- *Everyone is expected to participate in a consensus decision.* *Should a member disagree, that member has the responsibility to help the group meet his/her objections. Gone are the belligerent minority who speak their piece, stomp out, and sabotage the decision. Working together takes on new meaning.*

- *Are there any objections to the proposal as read?* *The group is asked for objections, not whether they agree with the proposal. If there are no objections, consensus is reached.*

- *Several forms of objection are part of consensus:*
    1. *Blocking:* *For **serious** reasons a person cannot go along with a decision and will object to the consensus, despite all efforts to meet the objection by the group, thus blocking its passage. Blocking is done on moral grounds, or when a member sincerely feels the decision will be harmful to the common good.*
    2. *Standing Aside:* *A group member can register his/her objection and agree to stand aside and not join the consensus, while not blocking the group consensus, nor sabotaging the decision later. Often a person standing aside will ask for a trial period for the decision and a date to review its effectiveness.*
    3. *Going Along:* *A group member can express doubt about the decision but agree to go along with it, joining the consensus and may ask for a trial period and review.*

- **Silence is the friend of consensus.** *A silent pause during a particularly difficult or conflicted decision process can help the truth to rise. Silence gives people time to think, reflect and to reassess their position. Silence just before asking for consensus tends to join the group.*

Strategies to Assist Consensus Decision Making

Affinity Groups

*The **Affinity Group** approach makes it possible for all voices to be heard in large groups. The Affinity Group approach can be used to gather input, generate new ideas or strategies for solving problems, or for consensus decision making.   Many think it is impossible to use consensus with large groups, but that is not so. Affinity Groups are both efficient and very personal.*

- The room is divided into small Affinity Groups of 5 to 10 people.
- Each group selects a representative to the Consensus/Dialogue Circle. If a decision is to be made, the representative group is called the Consensus Circle. If ideas or input are being generated with no decision anticipated, the representative group is called the Dialogue Circle.
- The Consensus/Dialogue Circle forms in the center of the room. The Affinity Groups surround the Consensus/Dialogue Circle.
- The large meeting is led by a general facilitator or facilitation team.
- When it is time for dialogue on a topic, the dialogue happens first in the small Affinity Groups. The representatives go to the Consensus/Dialogue Circle, bringing the voice of their Group members.
- The business of the larger group is conducted in the Circle, based on the dialogue that has happened in the Affinity Groups.
- Everyone listens to the Consensus/Dialogue Circle, taking notes if necessary.
- When the Circle is in progress, if clarification is needed for anyone in the Affinity Groups, he/she may request permission to join the Circle, or Circle members may invite someone to join the Circle who can provide information. Listeners (Affinity Group members) are not permitted to "invade" the Circle proceedings or speak from outside the circle.
- After the "public dialogue" in the Circle, representatives return to their Affinity Groups for the next phase of the work. The next phase of the work for the Affinity Group may be:
    - to offer more input based on the Circle dialogue.
    - to work out objections to the proposals generated in the Circle
    - to clarify objections that cannot be worked out in the Affinity Group
    - to offer alternatives for Circle consideration
    - to give consensus on the decision proposed in the Circle
- Dialogue can go back and forth between the Circle and the Affinity Groups as often as necessary. Strategies like "fist to five check-in" can be used in either group to help the process.
- An effective process is to begin with one round of open dialogue, beginning in the Affinity Group and going to the Circle in order to get a "sense of the meeting." Given the "sense of the meeting" two choices exist. 1) If it is obvious a decision can't be reached due to widely differing opinions, an ad hoc committee made up of the range of opinions can be formed to come up with a proposal outside the Affinity Group process. The next time the Affinity Groups meet, the proposal can be presented by the ad hoc committee and the Affinity Group process followed. 2) If it seems apparent from the "sense of the meeting" that a decision is likely to be reached, the Affinity Group process continues.
- If the Affinity Groups are being used to generate ideas or strategies for problem solving, or for getting input/feedback, then the proper work group takes the information generated to inform their work.
- If Affinity Groups are used to arrive at a consensus decision, there are 3 possible processes:
    1) Circle representatives can ask for objections in their Affinity Group and then go to the Circle to formalize the consensus. 2) Circle representatives can ask for objections within the Circle, then turn to their Affinity Group and ask for objections. 3) Circle representatives can rise and face the Affinity Groups and ask if there are objections to the proposal, thus reaching consensus as a united group.

* Note 1: The Affinity Group Process assumes that the members know how to make consensus decisions.

Tips for Facilitation of Consensus

Good guidance is very important to the consensus process. A good facilitator is very often the difference between a meeting working well or not working at all. There are a lot of tools that a facilitator can learn to use, but only experience can tell a facilitator which tools will work best in a given situation.

1. **The Agenda**. Post the issues in order. Do not leave important decisions until the end. Try to set time limits on each agenda item. The group can help this process.

2. **Frame the question or proposal with neutrality.**

3. **Elicit comments from silent members present.**

4. **Sharing facilitation with committees.** At times a specific committee will have done preliminary work on a proposal, issue or problem. The facilitator should work out an agreement with the committee as to how leadership will be handled. A workable way is for the facilitator to manage procedure and the committee to facilitate content.

5. **Poll participants.** Go around the circle for comments from each member present if the issue warrants, especially if making a major policy change. The five finger check is useful for a quick check or for a large group. If using the Affinity Group process, go back and forth between Affinity Groups and the Consensus Circle as often as seems necessary for all voices to be heard and the involvement to be a total as possible.

6. **Discipline.** Ask someone to cut short their comments if they are repeating themselves or talking too long. It is fine to ask someone who has spoken on an issue to wait until others have had a chance to make comments. Everyone in the group has to help with this area. For groups working together over time, it is best if the group makes a list of agreements to cover these areas so the facilitator only has to refer to the agreements.

7. **Diplomacy.** The facilitator must be responsible for dealing with a chronic objector. Deal with this person considerately. This might be the time to say that we are aware of your disagreement, but it seems that the sense of the meeting is to accept this proposal. Would the person be willing to stand aside? Be gracious, but firm.

8. **Silence.** Allow a pause when a decision has been made before rushing on to the next agenda item.   Call for silence when there is conflict over an issue. This gives members a chance to think of a way to rephrase a statement or to cool off if angry. Sometimes the truth will rise during silence.

9. **Resolving Conflict.** The facilitator might ask for individuals to meet outside the meeting to resolve conflict or misunderstanding if resolution cannot be found in the meeting. The facilitator

might ask a smaller group representing several views to work outside the meeting on an issue that is at impasses and to bring back a proposal for the whole group.

10. **Clearness** It is sometimes important to ask the recorder to read back the decision to make sure it is clear to everyone what has been decided. Paraphrasing helps.

Tips for Facilitation, continued.......

11. **Judging what is important.** Be careful not to be so goal oriented that the decision becomes more important than the process. The trust and sense of community that comes from thoughtful process work can make future decisions much easier.

12. **Decisions.** If the decision is a change in present policy, the old policy stands, uncontested, until a new decision is made, no matter how long it takes. If the decision is about a new issue it must take as long as it takes for the truth to rise.

13. **New members.** When new members join the group, or when a member was absent at a previous meeting, it pays to take the time to get the new members up to speed. This can be done by asking for a short summary if it is a matter of catching up with an issue. If a new person(s) doesn't know how the group does consensus, he/she can be partnered with an "old" member who will act as a guide and mentor throughout the process.

14. **Informing Participants.** Do not assume that all participants know the process you will be using. If you intend to use a five-finger check, or the Affinity Group process, or any specific strategy, be sure you have handouts, teach the process or put it on an overhead. Avoiding confusion due to using facilitation strategies that the participants do not understand is the responsibility of the facilitator.

15. **The Most Important Role of the Facilitator** is to judge the sense of the meeting. It is the facilitators role to articulate the unity that he or she discovers in the community and to facilitate the formation of that unity.

Notes from the Author, Marylyn Wentworth

I have been using and learning about Consensus for over 25 years. I use it in my home, which is a cooperative farm, in my work, and as a consultant to school groups who wish to learn to use consensus as their decision making process of choice. Much of what I offer you in this pamphlet comes from accumulated experience. Some comes from odds and ends of handouts I have picked up over the years, often with no indication of the publisher or writer. Following are some of the sources that have been helpful to me, or are the names on one of my treasured handouts. This is the second publication, October, 1999.

- "Consensus Education Packet for Non-Violence Education, Research and Training." *(That is all that is listed on this wonderful handout. If anyone has more information about this packet, contact me)*
- Educators for Social Responsibility, 23 Garden St. Cambridge, MA 02138-9990
- NEA Mastery in Learning Project, Washington, DC.

- Sheeran, M.J. <u>Beyond Majority Rule: Voteless Decisions by the Society of Friends</u>, Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1983.

If you wish to get in touch with me, call (207) 967-2863, or write me at 259 Log Cabin Rd. Arundel, ME 04046, or e-mail at marylynw@gwi.net.

Please feel free to copy any part of this document and spread the good word about Consensus.

Guideline for Consensus Decision Making

Consensus means *reaching unity* **or** *concordance.* Consensus is not about compromise until reaching the lowest common denominator. It is the highest collective consciousness. Consensus decision making is guided by a facilitator/chairperson. However, since consensus is an agreement by a group to work together for the common good, everyone is responsible to assist with the process. The following steps seem to satisfy the needs of most group decisions.

STEPS:

1. The facilitator **states the issue** for which a decision is sought, or invites a committee to present a proposal that has been prepared for decision.

2. The facilitator **opens the floor for dialogue**, making sure to include all group members. If the group is small it can be done as a whole group. If the group is large, the Affinity Group (see page 20 can be used either totally or after preliminary dialogue by the whole group. Main points of the dialogue should be recorded for all to see.

The next steps are slightly different for whole group and Affinity Groups

Whole Group

3. When dialogue appears to have satisfied all group members, or people begin to repeat points, the **facilitator asks if anyone can state a proposal, or does so him/herself.** The proposal is written so all can see it. If an already written proposal being presented, this stage is about refining and amending.

4. **Facilitator asks for additions, changes, clarification** to the proposal. If a committee has presented the proposal, the group facilitator guides the process, and the committee facilitates the content dialogue.

5. Additions or changes are added, and/or objections worked through. **A new proposal**

is constructed. Facilitator writes proposal in its new form and speaks it aloud.

6. Facilitator asks someone to **paraphrase the proposal** to assure group understanding. *(Continue to paraphrase until it's right. It is surprising how often group members think they understand a proposal and two or three different perceptions emerge when paraphrasing)*

Affinity Groups

3. **The Affinity Groups dialogue. Facilitator circulates to judge when dialogue appears to have satisfied** all groups. If the dialogue is about an already written proposal being

presented, this stage is about refining and amending.

4. **Group representatives hold the dialogue in the Consensus Circle**. When complete, facilitator asks if anyone can state a proposal, or facilitator does so him/herself. The proposal is written so all can see it. If a committee is in charge, the facilitator is responsible for the overall process, the committee facilitates the content.

Guidelines for Consensus, continued........

Whole Group

7. Facilitator may ask for a fist to five (see page 9) **check for the "sense of the group."**
  • If the majority is showing a fist to three fingers, return to dialogue. *Those who show a fist or low fingers are responsible for helping the group meet their objections.*
  • Even if the majority is showing three to five fingers, if there are ANY fists or ones, those have to be taken care of before consensus can proceed.
  • If the majority of fingers are three or above, with no fists or ones, it can be assumed that consensus can be reached.
  • Taking this step early in the process gives a clear picture of the work to be done. Sometimes consensus is obvious so long dialogue is avoided.

8. When acceptance looks certain, facilitator asks for **a minute of silence to clarify minds** and then asks**: "Are there any objections to this proposal, which reads....** (*read it aloud).*

9. **If there are no objections, consensus has been reached**. *(There shouldn't be any objections at this point, but occasionally a flaw in the proposal will suddenly hit someone and an objection will be raised, often with positive results)*

10. **If there are objections**, those should be clearly stated by the objectors, along with alternative suggestions.
  • return to #2 and begin again, or

5. Representatives return to their **Affinity Groups to review the proposal**, eliciting additions and/or changes, or objections.

6. Group representatives **return to the Consensus Circle to discuss additions, changes and/or objections.**

7. **A new proposal is constructed**. Facilitator writes proposal in its new form and speaks it aloud.

  • ask the objector(s) to consider "standing aside" to let the proposal go into effect, if a date is set to review the decision. *(Standing aside is a very powerful contribution to a group. The*

Affinity Groups

8. Facilitator asks someone to **paraphrase the proposal** to assure group understanding. *(Continue to paraphrase until it's right. It is surprising how often group members think they understand a proposal and two or three different perceptions emerge when paraphrasing)*

9. **Representatives return to Affinity Groups and follow #7 under "Whole Group."** If there are any fists, or ones, an attempt should be made in the Affinity Groups to meet objections. Ideas for meeting objections go to the Consensus Circle for proposal changes. It may require several sessions between Affinity Groups and Circle to come to an acceptable proposal. It is assumed that the participants know the consensus process of *objections, standing aside, and going along,* which keeps this part of the process manageable.

10. **Once a proposal has been written that shows a majority of 3 to 5** in the five finger check, proceed with #8, 9, 10 and 11 under the "Whole Group." Consensus is best reached by the total group, but can be done in

various ways as described in the Affinity Group process on page 2.

process can be repeated, or the objection can be dealt with inside the Consensus Circle with the objector(s).

11. **If there are objections during the final call for consensus**, the Affinity Group
11. **If consensus cannot be reached**, the decision should be:
   • go to a small group for in-depth work, including those who cannot consent, with a proposal to be brought to a future meeting.
   • postponed until people have had time to think it over, then begin again.
person says that they do not agree with the decision, but will not block it now sabotage it)

Personal Check-up
for Successful Participation in Consensus

Remember that Consensus seeking is a decision making process which allows all parties to state their ideas and feel they have been heard. Consensus is based on the term "to consent" as in "to grant permission." To arrive at consensus is to give permission to go along with the total group. The implication of consensus is that an individual can negotiate the terms by which he or she will grant her or his permission. Each individual has the right and obligation to make his or her terms known. When one has given consent, it is like a group contract to abide by the joining of all the consents given.

Check yourself from time to time to see how you are doing on the following guidelines:

A Quick Check to get in touch with yourself during consensus:
1. **Wait in silence**. Look inside for your own truth while listening to others.
2. **Be sure before sharing**. Think it through.
3. **Put it in plain language**, free of elaborate rhetoric, or hidden messages.
4. **Throughout, ask yourself** both, "will this work for the most good?" and "does this idea *feel* right?" Intuition is valuable!

A Detailed Self-Check

1. **Respect**: Listen to what others have to say. Trust them to act responsibly.

2. **Responsibility:** Block consensus only for serious, principal or moral based reasons. "Stand aside" or "go along" if you just don't like something, have doubts or questions, or prefer another solution. Help others find ways to satisfy your objections.

3. **Cooperation**: Avoid arguing for your own position. Present your ideas clearly, then listen to others' reactions, considering them carefully before you press a point. Look for areas of agreement and common ground; avoid competitive, win/lose thinking.

4. **Clarity:** Inquire of others to see that you understand what they are saying. Paraphrase, ask for clarification and explanation. Don't assume anything.

5. **Synergy**: Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate. Instead, look for the next-most-acceptable alternative for all parties, or be willing to take some time off to let the truth rise when it will.

6. **Flexibility:** When there are differences, look for good points in both positions. See if they can be combined to take advantage of both. A <u>new</u> position may include ideas of each and may yield totally new ideas. An attitude of curiosity is helpful.

7. **Conciseness:** Try very hard not to go on and on about a favorite point, nor to repeat what someone else just said. It takes long enough to do consensus without adding unnecessary verbiage. Asking someone to cut their speech or not to repeat is one of the most difficult things for a facilitator to do, so monitor yourself.

8. **Honesty:** Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict and to reach agreement. Giving your consent to something you do not actually consent to, can cause more problems than an honest objection or standing aside. If you make this mistake, don't sabotage!

Personal Check-up, continued....

9. **Conflict Acceptance:** Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the decision making process. With a wide range of information and opinions presented, there is a greater chance that the group will hit upon more adequate solutions. If you are part of a continued conflict, stepping back and really listening to others can help, or ask for time to let the conflict subside to renew clear perspectives. Avoid conflict-reducing techniques like majority votes or coin-tossing.

10. **Self Control:** If you feel overly emotional about an issue, take time out and listen for a while. Consensus works best when dealing with facts, not emotions. Excessive emotion usually means a personal need is not being met, and personal needs are important. Stepping back can help define the unmet need which can then be offered to the group discussion without excessive emotion.

11. **Working for the Common Good:** Be willing to stand aside if you disagree and are the only one (or two). Make an agreement with the group for a time to check back in on the effectiveness of the decision. Think about joining a person who loves the decision to form an observation team to report back on how the decision actually works, or doesn't. Blocking consensus that is agreed to by nearly everyone is a serious position, but blocking is necessary if you truly can't live with a decision.

12. **Expectancy:** Faith that there is a "third way" (synergy) and that the group will be led to it if they remain patient enough and work together, is a vital factor in finding that third way. Expecting to fail increases the likelihood of failure.

More Strategies to Assist Consensus

<u>The Tuning Protocol</u>

The Tuning Protocol is a formalized way to get feedback on work in progress. It enables work to be refined before becoming a proposal for decision making. It informs and includes the larger group in the development of proposals. As with music, this is a rehearsal where the tuning of the "instrument" is vital to the quality of the "music." The process requires an hour. This approach for use with consensus has been adapted from the original intent as a protocol for educators to look at student work together. See end note.

The Preparation:

    1. A committee or a person (the Tunees) brings a proposal in progress to a small group of peers or the entire community (the Tuners).

    2. The Tunee(s) provide the Tuners with a written description of the work in progress.

    3. A facilitator is chosen.

    4. The facilitator meets with the Tunees to decide on times for the protocol.

The Process:

    1. The facilitator introduces everyone, posts and goes over the protocol process and times. (5 min)

    2. The Tunee(s) present their work to the Tuners. No interruptions or questions are allowed, just listening and note taking by the Tuners. Tunees may ask for specific feedback on particular areas, or pose questions or dilemmas, but do not need to. (10 minutes)

    3. Tuners ask clarifying questions. Clarifying questions are usually yes/no or factual questions and do not illicit conversation. (5 minutes)

    4. Tuners look at the work presented if necessary - there may be charts or graphs, for example which were not easy to see during presentation. (up to 10 minutes)

    5. Tuners discuss the work presented, referring to any issues, dilemmas or questions posed by the Tunees. Tunees do not speak at all. They often pull their chairs away from the table to clearly mark their role as listeners and note takers. The Tuners respectfully speak as if the Tunees were not present.

    Feedback is given in two forms: 1) **Warm feedback** is given first. Warm feedback is positive points; what works. 2) **Cool feedback** is given second. Cool feedback is questions, doubts, gaps. If Tunees asked for advice, ideas, refinements, that may be done at this time as well. (15 minutes)

Tuning Protocol, continued......   More Strategies to Assist Consensus

    6. Tunees respond to the feedback given by the Tuners. Responses should be about changes that might be made, realizations, clarifications, new thoughts. Response is not an opportunity to defend the work. (5 minutes)

    7. Debrief the Process. Review what worked and what didn't. (10 minutes)

Origin Notes: *The Tuning Protocol was developed by Dr. Joseph MacDonald of New York University, for the Coalition of Essential Schools Exhibition Process. It has been refined and adapted by many people, most particularly David Allen of Project Zero, Harvard University and the National School Reform Faculty of the Annenberg Institute, Brown University.*

<u>Fist to Five</u>

    When a proposal is being refined, or seems close to ready for consensus, the "sense of the group" can be checked by raising hands with the number of fingers raised that indicates level of agreement:

- A fist means, "Objection, I'll block consensus."
- 1 finger means, "I'll just barely go along." or, "I don't like this." If it's during proposal refinement   time, 1 finger can mean "more work to do, I'm not ready."
- 2 fingers raised means "I don't much like this but I'll go along."
- 3 fingers means, "I'm in the middle somewhere. Like some of it, but not all."
- 4 fingers means, "This is fine."
- 5 fingers means, "I like this a lot, I think it's the best possible decision."

Points to note:

    1. A group can make agreements for the number of fingers raised to mean whatever they need them to mean. The point is to get a clearer sense of the level of agreement.

    2. Hand are held VERY high and the room is scanned by all. That way everyone is checking the sense of the room and not individual opinions.

3. People with fists, ones and twos, should be asked to speak to their objections and possible solutions to overcome objections, so as to move the process along toward decisions making.

4. It is wise to check early in the proposal dialogue, as sometimes a group is actually ready for consensus earlier than expected and time can be saved. An early check might find all 4 and 5 fingers except for two 1's, meaning no one would block consensus and only two people have needs to be met.

5. When consensus has been reached it can be wise to check the quality of the consensus. Ask "how much do you like the decision we reached." A consensus of mostly 2 and 3 fingers is quite different than one with 4 and 5 fingers. A low quality consensus tells you the decision is probably a stop gap measure and will need to be watched closely or revisited soon.

Fist to Five Voting as An Alternative to Consensus

Using the same process as "fist to five" checking for consensus, the check becomes a "yes" and "no" vote, with the addition of a quality check on the "yes" votes. A fist is a "no" and any number of fingers is a "yes," with an indication of how good a "yes" it is. This moves the group away from quantity voting to quality voting. It opens the way for consensus type considerations. For example:

1. The fists **can** be given a chance to voice their objections and an attempt made to satisfy their objections, followed by another "fist to five' vote on the refined proposal.

2. Due to the quality aspect of the vote, a lot of useful information can be gleaned. For example, it might be seen how weak the "yes" vote is if it is mostly ones and twos with a lot of fists. A wise group might not want to take that "winning vote" as a very good decision and revisit it very soon.

3. If it is obvious that the vote is wildly split, with no real majority, despite a winning "yes," the group knows it has more work to do, and that the decision may not endure. They can expect more controversy.

What Consensus is NOT!

Consensus is not.......

> **..... unanimous agreement.** Differing views are welcome and contribute to a better final decision.

> **..... majority rule.** Minority opinions will still exist, but the process requires a degree of discussion that considers minority opinions, incorporates solutions to objections and elicits agreements by the minority to consent with acceptable safeguards.

> **..... compromise.**   Members do not give up something important in exchange for something else, nor do they swap votes: "I'll go with your idea, if you vote for   mine."

> **..... free from conflict and resistance.**

Do <u>Not</u> Use Consensus When.........

..... there is no group agreement to use consensus as the decision making process.

..... participants are unwilling to respect the opinion of all in the group.

..... the decision has already been made by a higher authority.

..... there is insufficient time to come to a consensus.

..... when someone within or outside the group has veto power and can override the consensus decision.

When You Begin Consensus, Don't Be Surprised If.....

..... it seems to take forever and voting looks a lot easier. It gets faster as groups build community, understand one another and trust the process.

..... some people use objections to block consensus as a means to get what they want or use the power of the minority to block the majority. For people who have used majority rule a lot, or have been in the minority too much, the feel of power given the minority in consensus can be quite a rush. It usually passes. If it doesn't, consensus may not be the right decision making process for your group at this time. "Fist to Five" voting is a transition between majority rule and consensus.

.… Decisions seem to come up again and again as a way for people to get what they really wanted or to have a voice if they weren't present when the decision was made. There is an assumption that since everyone now has power, it can be used indiscriminately. The facilitator has to be clear that when consensus is reached, that is the end of the decision unless there is a real dysfunction for the community that shows up at a later date and warrants a new proposal. If this is a persistent problem there are 3 remedies: 1) attach a date for review to a decision and the decision does not come back up until the stated date; 2) make a group agreement about how a consensus decision *ends* and don't let it come back up! 3) announce proposals at one meeting and make the decision at the next meeting with the understanding that whoever is there makes the decision eliminating the excuse of not being present, and not knowing the decision was coming up.

..... you change your ideas about how humans can interact in their own best interest and in the interest of the common good! Well done consensus feels good!