

Transition Sooke – Decision-Making Policy (Approved by Active Members December 14, 2022)

Who makes decisions?

Transition Sooke is a non-hierarchical organization, hence decisions are not made by the Steering Committee; decisions are made by the Active Members (as defined in the membership policy).

How do decisions arise?

Decisions arise primarily in two different ways:

1. Someone comes to a meeting with a proposal or sends a proposal in advance of a meeting and they are seeking a decision.
2. A discussion takes place in a meeting and it becomes apparent that in order for the discussion to move forward, a decision must be made.

How are decisions made?

As indicated in Transition Sooke's bylaws, decisions are made using a modified consensus approach that utilizes the tools and approaches of consensus to review and discuss the motion, including the possibility of deferring the motion, but ultimately makes the decision by a majority vote.

Decisions usually begin with a motion, which is proposed by one member and seconded by another. The motion, which is best presented in writing to the members before or during the meeting, may be modified by the group provided the person who made the motion agrees to the changes.

Most decisions are straightforward and can be made by a "loose consensus" process. For example: approving meeting minutes, accepting a financial report, etc. This is easier when we are face-to-face, but also possible when we are meeting virtually.

If there appears to be some disagreement in the room, there is a need to spend some time with the decision including

1. Have more inclusive discussion
2. Consider breaking into smaller groups to discuss in detail
3. Consider referring the motion to a committee
4. Consider deferring the decision in order to seek more information, etc.

At a certain point, the facilitator could do a straw poll to gauge the level of support for a motion. If the room was quite divided, the four options above could be considered. If was not divided, then a vote would be called. The results of the vote are determined by a simple majority.

As indicated in Transition Sooke's official bylaws, the quorum for decisions is five members.

Historically, Transition Sooke has referred to its decision-making process as a consensus process (unanimous consent) although the parameters around the process have not been well defined). This decision-making policy is endeavouring to incorporate many aspects of the consensus decision making, but in the end, the actual decision is made by a majority vote.

There are a number of reasons why a pure consensus decision-making process is problematic for a group like Transition Sooke:

- Active membership is constantly changing
- Consensus relies on a clear understanding of a “basis of unity” that would be hard to attain in such a dynamic group
- Consensus can be time-consuming and may lead to frustration that things are not getting done fast enough

Where are decisions made?

Decisions are made at both in-person or virtual meetings — regular monthly meetings, annual general meetings (AGM), and special general meetings.

In some situations, in between regular monthly meetings, a situation may arise where a decision needs to be made before the next monthly meeting. These decisions are made by email. Anyone who wants a decision made, would forward the decision to one of the Steering Committee members who would send an email to all Active Members and ask them to respond in two days. The email is sent out to the Active Members list with a subject line that clearly says “DECISION.” Following the decision, the Steering Committee member sends out a record of the decision, including the result of the vote and how many people voted for and against the motion.

As with in-person meetings, the email vote is by simple majority and quorum is five members.

How are decisions recorded?

The wording of the motion, the person who moved it, the person who seconded it, and whether it passed, failed, was deferred or removed are all recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Decisions made by email would be recorded in the minutes of the next regular monthly meeting.