

Belfast Transition Constitution

As adopted Jan. 14, 2012 and amended Mar. 12, 2014.

Purpose of this Constitution

Articulates key understandings guiding the development of the Belfast Transition (BT) and defines the organizational structure enabling BT to be equitably governed by its participating Members.

Locale

Belfast and neighboring towns in Waldo County, Maine.

Objectives and Values

To inspire, encourage, network, support and learn with our community as we consider and implement constructive, peaceful responses to the challenges of energy, climate and economic change.

We have faith in the collective genius, skills, and goodwill of our neighbors to cope with these challenges and produce thriving, resilient communities of self-empowered individuals.

BT collaborates with an inclusive and diverse set of community-based initiatives involving people of various ages, faiths, and political affiliations.

We support an ethic of:

Concern for people, demonstrating regard for the feelings and needs of others.

Fairness, ensuring that our relations with each other and the Earth are equitable and compassionate.

Stewardship, recognizing that the Earth is the essential basis of all life and its natural integrity is worthy of our protection.

Organizational Structure

BT consists of a Coordinating Circle, several Working Groups and individual Members.

A Member with voting rights is an individual who is recorded as attending at least one prior meeting and who subscribes to the Objectives and adheres to the Values enumerated in this Constitution.

BT may selectively choose to collaborate with independent community organizations on projects and co-sponsor events; this does not imply endorsement of all activities of either party.

Externally, BT is a formal or informal member of several local and global networks that are in harmony with our Objectives and Values.

Meeting Requirements

All BT meetings are free, and at least 4 per year are open to the general public. The minimum agenda includes:

- determination of a record-keeper and facilitator

- introductions
- adoption of past minutes with any corrections
- agenda review
- other variable items, such as entering reports into the record, votes and announcements.

Coordinating Circle

The Coordinating Circle maintains a comprehensive perspective to ensure that BATI maintains a high level of integrity consistent with its Objectives and Values.

The purview of the Coordinating Circle includes:

- approving Working Groups
- deciding issues brought for resolution
- considering proposals brought to their attention
- raising and disbursing the General Fund, accounted in full by the Treasurer
- representing BT, in co-ordination with the Working Groups
- amending the Constitution

The General Fund may appropriately be used to maintain and expand the activities of BATI. Disbursements over \$50 require Committee approval.

Membership of the Coordinating Circle consists of:

at least one Spokesperson, Treasurer, Archivist and Calendar person; these positions may be jointly held by two people, Representatives from each Working Group

The Coordinating Circle is open and accountable to all BT Members. Meetings are held at least monthly. A quorum of 5 is required for valid decisions. Any BT Member, as well as non-members, can request addition to the agenda and will be provided a “voice without a vote.”

Working Groups

Working Groups are self-organized by interested BT Members and formally approved by the Coordinating Circle.

Project areas around which Working Groups might form include: Food, Energy and Transportation, Health and Healing, Local Economy, Heart and Soul, Housing, Outreach (public education, meetings with other groups, print and electronic publications), BT Structure and Process.

Membership consists of at least a Coordinator, and if any funds are managed, a Group Treasurer. Working Groups determine the times and places of their meetings, which are open to the general public and run according to the Objectives and Values of BT. Working Groups may raise and disburse their own funds, but must provide summary reports monthly, and all details upon request, to the BT Treasurer.

Public Meetings

Public BT Meetings will be convened on an ad hoc basis to:

- share Working Group reports
- foster discussion and elicit public input
- feature topical presentations or invited speakers.

Decision Protocol

Giving consent to a proposal means being willing to support that proposal because you feel it is consistent with the Objectives and Values of BT.

Each Member has one vote, including Members representing multiple Working Groups on the Coordinating Circle. A quorum of 5 in the Coordinating Circle is required for a decision to be valid.

Decisions will be made after thorough discussion and all viewpoints are understood. A sincere effort must be made to explore alternatives and make adjustments to proposals that could yield wider support.

The decision process produces one of the following results:

Adopted by unanimous consent

Adopted with concerns: The proposal is approved and concerns are listed in the minutes.

Amendment required: The group will explore if the amendment can be incorporated into the proposal. If not, it becomes a concern.

Blocked by objection: The proposal is not approved as is. Appropriate people are assigned to explore if a new proposal may be generated that is more likely to be adopted.

Records

The Archivist shall keep a register of Members, stating when Members were admitted and any appointed roles or committee memberships held.

The Archivist shall keep a record of minutes, in which the dates, times and places of all meetings, along with decisions reached during those meetings and Members present.

The Coordinating Circle and each Working Group shall designate someone (could be the Coordinator) to provide information (such as upcoming agendas, minutes, event info), for dissemination on the BT website, online calendar, e-mail lists and discussion forum in a timely manner.

Accounts

The Treasurer shall keep a record of expenditures and receipts of monies. This record shall always be open to the inspection of all Members at reasonable hours and a summary report entered into the minutes of the monthly Coordinating Circle meeting.

Amendments

This document may be amended at any time by unanimous consent of the Coordinating Committee, a quorum being present.

Dissolution

If BT decides to terminate its work, any funds or other assets should be passed on to a nearby Transition Initiative or to TransitionUS.

Legal Status

Belfast Transition is an unincorporated, not-for-profit association, which does not, at the present time, have 501(c)3 tax-exempt status.