

**Playa Del Fuego, Inc.**

**Board of Directors  
Retreat 2008  
Minutes- DRAFT**

**September 2008  
Highland Farm, PA**

**A. Board Structure and Responsibilities:**

**A1. Review of current responsibilities as per the bylaws.**

Summary from the Playa del Fuego, Inc. bylaws:

- *Number of Directors:* Not less than one (1) or more than fifteen (15).
- *Officers of the Board:* The board shall elect: President, Secretary, Treasurer. Other officers may be added by the board.
- *Election of Directors/Offices:* Board members shall elect directors annually or at a special meeting if needed to fill an unexpected vacancy.
- *Term of Directors/Officers:* One year or the remainder of term if filling an unexpected vacancy.
- *Removal of Directors/Officers:* Anyone can be removed, at any time, with or without cause, by an affirmative vote by the majority of the board.
- *Resignation of Directors/Officers:* Board members can resign at anytime in writing.
- *Quorum:* A majority of the entire board is a quorum for the transaction of business. Removal of directors or changes to the bylaws requires a majority vote of all board members.

**A2. Board member roles and responsibilities.**

*Planning committee departments liaisons:*

see appendix

*Nominee Contact:* Brian “Bink” Shaw

*Officers:*

*President:* Dave Diller

*Secretary:* Brian “Bink” Shaw

*Treasurer:* Jamie Love (Jamie will be stepping down as treasurer at the end of 2008, a replacement is needed)

*Event Mayor:* At the 2007 retreat, the board implemented an Event Mayor role. The Mayor is a visible representative of the board at PDF, and will be responsible for listening to positive

and negative community input. Board members take turns serving as the Mayor. At the Spring burn, the Mayor felt that they did not receive much community feedback. We will continue to implement this position, but should attempt to promote it better with things like “meet and greets” and posters.

*Regional Representative:* At the 2007 retreat, the possibility of having an official representative of the PDF board of directors at other regional events and regional discussion lists was discussed. No further decisions have been concerning this position.

Board members are responsible for reading all emails on the “Nonprofit” e-mail list. Members should respond to all e-mails, even if just to indicate that they have received the information. A specific timeframe for responses should be included in an e-mail when feedback is needed on an important issue. Members should be sure to use clear e-mail headers.

Board members are required to attend the annual retreat. Magorn was unable to attend this retreat due to a family emergency, and we discussed what measures should be taken.

**Decision:** If a board member misses the annual retreat, they will automatically become emeritus. They can (but do not necessarily have to) be reinstated to active status via vote at any board meeting following the retreat, once a discussion of the situation has taken place.

Board members may miss two board meetings per year.

### **A3. Community involvement in board member nominations.**

At the 2007 retreat, the board decided to begin soliciting nominations for new board members from the PDF community. Although we only received a few nominations from the community, we believe that this addition to the process was successful, and should remain in place.

There have been some suggestions from the community that there be a “community liaison” on the board-- a board member that is elected by the community. We do not feel that this would be appropriate, as it implies that other board members are not active members of the PDF community.

We would like to continue to find ways to increase community involvement in the selection of board members. In addition to encouraging the community to submit nominations, we would like to give the community an opportunity to comment on nominees.

**Decision:** The board will add a two week public comment period to the process of selection of new board members. After the announcement of nominees, the community may submit their thoughts on the suitability of the candidates to the board for consideration before the board makes its final selections. These comments may be anonymous.

**Action:** The board will set up a website form enabling anonymous comments, and will publicize the public comment period following the Spring burn.

#### **A4. Information packet for new board members.**

**Action:** The board will prepare an information packet for new board members at large. It should include information on outstanding issues accompanied by status updates, minutes from previous meetings, existing reference material including history of the event and organization, board member responsibilities and expectations, and member contact information. Bink will work on this.

### **B. Financial Status and Planning:**

#### **B1. Review of expenses and income.**

*Am I missing some of these notes? I have very little info here. Also, should numbers be included in publicly posted minutes? Need help w/ fact checking here, notes are not clear*

PDF, Inc.'s current savings/money market holdings currently total \$77,xxx. Currently, our policy is to keep \$10,000 in PDF's checking account for the next burn. We would like to begin keeping \$25,000 in reserve instead.

**Decision:** \$25,000 will be kept accessible in the checking account of Playa del Fuego, Inc.

#### **B2. Maximum allowance for event budgets.**

There is not currently a cap on our budget per burn. Putting a hard cap on the planning committee budget (not including fixed expenses such as rent, insurance, dumpsters, and portapotties) will make future financial planning easier.

#### **B3. Inventory tracking and control.**

There seems to be a trend of unnecessary repeat expenses in department budgets. This is likely mainly due to disorganization. Implementing an inventory system can help us save money and better anticipate future needs accurately.

**Decision:** Department coordinators will be required to fill out an inventory form following each burn and present it to the planning committee prior to submitting the budget for the next burn. The form will also track the condition and location of PDF resources.

**Action:** Booger will create an inventory form. Liaisons will discuss implementation of this policy with department heads.

#### **B4. Projections for expenses and income; budgeting for income over expenses.**

The lack of a strategic plan makes it hard to make financial decisions. Ticket prices play a part in expected income vs. expenses.

## **C. Strategic Planning:**

### **C1. Review and assessment of organizational goals.**

The board acknowledges the importance of having a specific plan for PDF funds beyond event expenses, as opposed to just accumulating savings. PDF also needs a stronger identity and sense of direction.

Goals that are not assigned deadlines should go on a “wish list.”

*Community Outreach:* One of the primary goals of Playa del Fuego, Inc. is community outreach. This can include the Baltimore-Washington area as well as other communities. We need to determine if this outreach should have a specific focus, such as general community service, art, or the environment. It is important to narrow our focus to the energy currently available and establish follow through.

Many community focused projects are time and effort intensive rather than expensive. We should explore the possibility of working with other nonprofit organizations to minimize costs. We should utilize infrastructure that already exists through other groups with sympathetic goals and ideals.

Methods of facilitating community outreach include use of the Burning Pony Express, internet radio, and a community calendar, and assigning board members to brainstorm with our different regions.

**Action:** Booger will research burner related internet radio projects. Leah will research the creation of a Google calendar. Maya will begin brainstorming with the Philadelphia area, Joanna with Baltimore, and Jamie with DC.

*Land Purchase:* Determining our land purchase goal affects what resources can go to other purposes, such as community outreach, and can affect ticket prices and fund raising efforts. Regardless of land purchase, it is important to have a fund to tap into if our situation at the VNVMC changes unexpectedly.

### **C2. Legal and organizational resources.**

We need to explore legal issues concerning defense of our name, “Playa del Fuego.”

**Action:** Ben will follow up with Magorn on this issue before the next event.

The **Maryland Nonprofit** (*actual name?*) organization can provide us with useful resources. Membership costs \$200. There may also be other helpful regional or national organizations.

**Decision:** Playa del Fuego, Inc. will become a member of Maryland Nonprofit.

**Action:** Dave will submit the application and check. Maya will research other organizations that could be of help to us.

## **D. Communication, Website and Wiki Content:**

### **D1. Board of directors communication with community.**

The board of directors recognizes the importance of effective communication with the planning committee and community as well as transparency in our actions and decision making processes. We have discussed the possibility of opening board meetings to the community; however, discussions of personal issues require confidential treatment, and it is important to avoid censorship at meetings. We could choose to have some open meetings or town hall type events. We could also make minutes from board meetings accessible to the community. We can also post board member photos and additional information about our rolls on the PDF website. We will have a board meet and greet at the burn, where the community can ask us questions and discuss issues with us.

**Action:** The board will have a meet and greet session with the community at the Spring burn.

### **D2. Planning meeting communication and accessibility.**

We should make an effort to hold some planning committee meetings outside of the Baltimore Washington area. Improving the technology for planning meetings and using resources like shoutcast, webcasts, and Skype would also make meetings more accessible. Community members in different geographic areas could also host groups to call in together to meetings.

### **D3. Interaction with the media.**

*Media Contact:* Bink

It would be helpful to have a standard press release or FAQ available for media inquiries, especially for more difficult questions. We should discuss what kinds of articles we do and do not want written about PDF.

**Action:** Bink will assemble a press package, including an FAQ, for media inquiries.

### **D4. Website review and progress.**

The board spent some time at the retreat editing and organizing the categories and menus on the PDF website to make information more accessible. We should also revise the design on the website to make it clear to visitors that the site has been updated. The website should include job descriptions for coordinators and volunteers.

**Actions:** Joanna will help Ben make design changes to the website. Liaisons will work with planning committee coordinators to write job descriptions for their departments.

### **D5. PDF forums.**

The board has considered the benefits of switching official PDF planning from the Burningass e-mail list to a forum hosted on the PDF website. A forum would allow for better organization, and it would be easier to deal with frequently discussed topics (such as comp tickets and dogs) via stickies. A forum would make it easier for new participants to get involved.

**Decision:** Official online PDF planning will be moved to a forum and Burningass will no longer be used. Planning committee departments that function on their own mailing lists will be given the choice of continuing on a mailing list or having a public or private sub-forum on the website.

**Action:** The rideshare and ticket exchange BBS that is currently hosted on the PDF website will be converted to a general planning forum and posting capabilities to Burningass will be suspended prior to the Spring burn planning cycle.

#### **D6. General community involvement.**

We should have a concrete procedure for releasing community announcements, including an announce list, the webpage, the Burning Pony Express, and community e-mail lists. The implementation of a community calendar on the PDF website would facilitate community interaction, (see C1), as would inclusion of community events in the Burning Pony Express.

**Decision:** The Burning Pony Express will become active again. It will serve as one source for board and planning committee announcements. Community members will be able to submit information about regional events and activities as well as creative writing and artwork.

**Action:** Lauren will coordinate the Burning Pony Express, with help from Joanna and Maya. The first issue will be released in 2009.

#### **D7. Pony.**

The pony is a symbol of the community. Since allowing the community artists to apply to build the pony, we have at times seen a lack of participation. We discussed the possibility of allowing the main effigy to be any art project, not necessarily a pony, to encourage more artist submissions, but we decided that the pony is an important part of PDF's identity. The pony submission process needs more publicity. We could also solicit submissions and finalize selection of the artist sooner to give the artist more time to work on the pony. It is important that there is a clear procedure for the application and selection process.

**Action:** Bink will discuss the pony application and selection process with Jill.

#### **E. Art Grants.**

For the past few years, the board has coordinated the award of grants to artists to assist in the

completion of projects that will be presented at PDF. At times, the art grants committee has seen a lack of participation as well as a lack of applications for grants.

*Solution brainstorming:*

- Allow the community to vote on art grants, although online voting is problematic
- Be sure art grant committee volunteers know what is expected of them- communication has been a problem
- Solicit feedback from the community on art grant applications and/or have the committee function on a public forum, so that the community feels involved
- Discontinue blinding of applications, to speed the process up
- Ask committee volunteers to commit to jurying for one burn instead of the entire year
- Combine the Spring and Fall submission and selection process
- Require or encourage/invite artists who have been awarded grants to join the committee for the following cycle
- Develop a rubric for judging art grants

**Decision:** The art grants application and selection process will take place once a year, prior to the Spring burn. At this time, applications will be accepted for both Spring and Fall. This will give artists more time to plan ahead, and will put less of a burden on the art grants committee volunteers.

**Action:** Jamie will take over for Andy as head of Art Grants committee, Leah, Maya, and Joanna will join the committee this year to help with judging and organization.

## **F. Land purchase and site search.**

### **F1. Review of land purchase goals and requirements.**

At the 2007 retreat, the board identified the goal of purchasing land for the PDF event in 2-5 years. A list of necessary steps was developed, including (from 2007 retreat minutes):

- Get finances in order: have at least one years worth of mortgage payments, event expenses, and down payment in savings.- *not done*
- Have one full year of organization activity to demonstrate commitment to these future goals: board members must attend meetings, respond to issues on the email list, and fulfill their rolls.- *done*
- Begin researching resources available to us in terms of grants for funding the event or for land purchase.- *not done*
- Ensure community buy-in through improved communication efforts- *done*
- Conduct mortgage research to get an understanding of what we need, as an organization and financially, to be prepared to assume a mortgage and get real number projections to work with. *Not done*
- Site Search committee must assign actions to individuals and develop a timeline, in conjunction with the Finance committee, for buying land.- *committee has met and brainstormed, but assignments and timeline not done*
- Develop a business plan and get all professional and financial documentation in order. *Not done*

Land requirements include:

- At least 40-50 acres of flat, cleared land that is suitable for camping, parking, and theme camps.
- Within 1 mile of paved roads
- Water access is not essential
- Social environment: distance from neighbors, local policies, codes, zoning, ordinances, socio-political environment
- weather
- driving distance
- access to services such as portapotties
- fences or perimeter control

Many of the requirements for land purchase outlined at the last retreat have not been met yet, and the board feels some concern that our initial time frame for land purchase was overly ambitious. Land purchase is a long term issue based on community growth, which fluctuates. This issue requires constant reevaluation based on need and ability.

We need to clarify our budget, and decide what income is earmarked for land purchase. We need serious business and funding plans. A tentative proposal is to allot 5-10% of our income to community action, 10% art grants, and to save all other income after event costs for land purchase. We need more information on our possibilities from objective sources, and we also need to research and evaluate the repercussions of failure.

**Action:** Booger, as head of the land search committee, will host a community wide meeting in November to discuss land issues, including points discussed at the retreat.

## **G. Managing Volunteer Committees and Coordination:**

G1. Review approval and dismissal of volunteer team leads.

G1a. Develop a formal process.

G2. Responsibilities of the board, planning committee and team leads

????

*Added by Jamie from big posterboard 9/20/09:*

*Volunteer Committees & Coordination:*

*Gate issues confusion from everyone getting different information.*

*cleaner site coordination link (incl on vets side)*

*hopefully their org change has calmed down*

*site contact volunteer for next event - talk about at next meeting (incl possible board member on duty)*

*Liason change - volunteers goes to lauren, others stay the same*

*firing coordinators when necessary:*

*discuss problem w/board to determine course of action*

*constructive criticism*

*rapport important*

*ego issues*



*clarity of structure - openness & expectations*  
*document roles on website for each position*  
*liasons gather info, run it by current coordinator*  
*can go under current contact info.*

## ***Appendix A: Decisions made.***

**Board retreat attendance:** If a board member misses the annual retreat, they will automatically become emeritus. They can (but do not necessarily have to) be reinstated to active status via vote at any board meeting following the retreat, once a discussion of the situation has taken place.

**Board nominee public comment period:** The board will add a two week public comment period to the process of selection of new board members. After the announcement of nominees, the community may submit their thoughts on the suitability of the candidates to the board for consideration before the board makes its final selections. These comments may be anonymous.

**Accessible funds:** \$25,000 will be kept accessible in the checking account of Playa del Fuego, Inc.

**Inventory:** Department coordinators will be required to fill out an inventory form following each burn and present it to the planning committee prior to submitting the budget for the next burn. The form will also track the condition and location of PDF resources.

**Maryland Nonprofit:** Playa del Fuego, Inc. will become a member of Maryland Nonprofit.

**Planning forum:** Official online PDF planning will be moved to a forum and Burningass will no longer be used. Planning committee departments that function on their own mailing lists will be given the choice of continuing on a mailing list or having a public or private sub-forum on the website.

**Burning Pony Express:** The Burning Pony Express will become active again. It will serve as one source for board and planning committee announcements. Community members will be able to submit information about regional events and activities as well as creative writing and artwork.

**Art Grants timeline:** The art grants application and selection process will take place once a year, prior to the Spring burn. At this time, applications will be accepted for both Spring and Fall. This will give artists more time to plan ahead, and will put less of a burden on the art grants committee volunteers.

## ***Appendix B: Actions needed.***

**Board nominee public comment period:** The board will set up a website form enabling anonymous comments, and will publicize the public comment period following the Spring burn.

**New board member information packet:** The board will prepare an information packet for new board members at large. It should include information on outstanding issues accompanied by status updates, minutes from previous meetings, existing reference material

including history of the event and organization, board member responsibilities and expectations, and member contact information. Bink will work on this.

**Inventory:** Booger will create an inventory form. Liaisons will discuss implementation of this policy with department heads.

**Community outreach:** Booger will research burner related internet radio projects. Leah will research the creation of a Google calendar. Maya will begin brainstorming with the Philadelphia area, Joanna with Baltimore, and Jamie with DC.

**Legal resources:** Ben will follow up with Magorn on this issue before the next event.

**Maryland Nonprofit:** Dave will submit the application and check. Maya will research other organizations that could be of help to us.

**Board communication with community:** The board will have a meet and greet session with the community at the Spring burn.

**Media:** Bink will assemble a press package, including an FAQ, for media inquiries.

**Website:** Joanna will help Ben make design changes to the website. Liaisons will work with planning committee coordinators to write job descriptions for their departments.

**Forum:** The rideshare and ticket exchange BBS that is currently hosted on the PDF website will be converted to a general planning forum and posting capabilities to Burningass will be suspended prior to the Spring burn planning cycle.

**Burning Pony Express:** Lauren will coordinate the Burning Pony Express, with help from Joanna and Maya. The first issue will be released in 2009.

**Land Search Committee:** Booger, as head of the land search committee, will host a community wide meeting in November to discuss land issues, including points discussed at the retreat.

### ***Appendix C: Board roles and formal committees.***

#### **Officers:**

- President: Dave
- Treasurer: Jamie
- Secretary: Bink

#### **Planning committee department liaisons:**

- Fire Team- Booger
- Volunteer- Lauren
- Rangers- Dave
- Tickets- Leah
- Gate- Ben

- DPW, Theme Camps, & Pony- Bink

**Formal Committees:**

- Art Grants- Andy/Jamie
- Community Outreach/Outside Art Grants- Magorn
- Communications- Bink
- Finance- Jamie
- Land Search- Booger

**Other:**

- Nominee Contact: Bink
- Media Contact: Bink

*Wish List (from Strategic Planning)*

*Resource Sharing*

*Grant writing/application*

*Art Grants outside PDF*

*LNT outreach*