

Occupy Portland Structure Proposal

Submitted by the Facilitation Team and Ad Hoc SpokesCouncil/GA Working Group
(A Living Document) - [DRAFT 11/2/11]

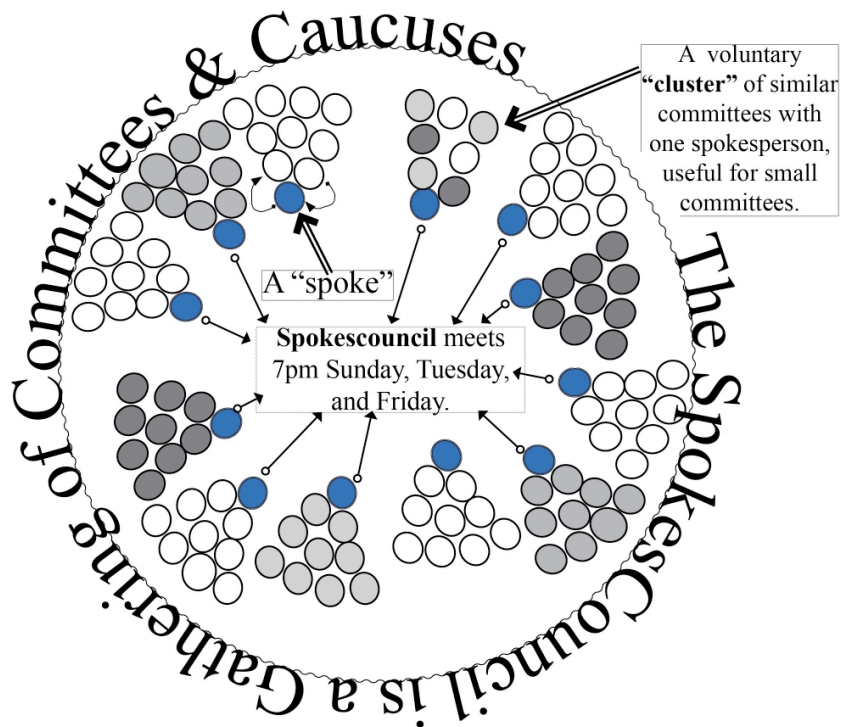
BACKGROUND: BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SPOKESCOUNCIL MODEL

A SpokesCouncil is a structure that has been used widely by democratic movements since the Spanish Revolution. It draws inspiration from many indigenous struggles, such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. It was used effectively and for many years in the Women's Movement, the Anti-Nuclear Movement, and the Global Justice Movement in the US. It was also used effectively for years in China in the movement that grew out of Tienanmen Square.

WHAT DOES A SPOKESCOUNCIL LOOK LIKE?

OPEN ACCESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- Anyone may witness a SpokesCouncil.
- Anyone may participate in a SpokesCouncil by joining any Committee or Caucus in the SpokesCouncil. Non-affiliated individuals may also participate, without decision making powers, in the Open Caucus.
- The SpokesCouncil will take place in a well-publicized location.
- Amplification and signing will allow everyone to follow the discussion, participate through their Spoke, and ensure that their Spoke correctly communicates the sentiment(s) of their group.
- Each SpokesCouncil will be broadcast over the Livestream.
- Budget details and complete minutes from each SpokesCouncil will be posted on the OccupyPortland.org website.
- All decisions made in the SpokesCouncil are reported back to the GA.



A **SpokesCouncil** is structured similar to the spokes of a wheel. It is designed to combine large group participation with small group discussion and consensus process. Each committee or caucus selects a "Spoke" to sit with the other Spokes in a circle in the middle of the meeting space, with the rest of the spokes group sitting right behind them so they are available for consultation and discussion.

Committees are groups that are contributing to the operations of Occupy Portland on a consistent basis. They are open and accessible for people to join and can only exclude people for either repeatedly disrupting the group's process or behaving in such a way that violates any of the GA's agreements.

Caucuses are self-determining groups of people that share a common experience of being systemically oppressed in society at large. This oppression may be based on, but not limited to, their real or perceived race, gender identity, sexuality, age, economic status, or ability.

A **Spoke** is a spokesperson for their committee or caucus. This role is filled by a different person at each meeting.

HISTORY OF THIS PROPOSAL

The SpokesCouncil model adopted by Occupy Wall Street was used as a starting point for this proposal. It has undergone many revisions since it was announced at the Portland General Assembly on October 26th. It has gone through consensus processes at several publicly announced meetings, in 4 working group meetings, and 2 All-Committee meetings.

Contact this ad hoc group at: pdxspokescouncil@gmail.com

Available online at: www.occupyportland.org/spokes-council

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND EVOLUTION BEYOND THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Since October 6th, Occupy Portland has grown in solidarity with similar movements nationally and globally. The General Assembly (GA) is at the heart of this movement, as it provides a critical forum for political discussion and for the full expression of our ideas. It is, however, struggling to meet some of the day-to-day needs of Occupy Portland. In order to expand and evolve, we propose, in addition to the General Assembly (GA), to create a directly democratic SpokesCouncil of Committees and Caucuses.

- **Access:** The GA is a difficult place for new people to find a committee or caucus they want to join. The SpokesCouncil provides an easy way for individuals to find working groups or caucuses they want to join and participate in decision making.
- **Transparency:** The SpokesCouncil creates a space for all of Occupy Portland to understand the roles, responsibilities, and work of all the committees and caucuses
- **Participation:** There is little space within the GA for committees or caucuses in the community to effectively communicate their needs, either to the broader movement or with each other. Many of the groups doing the day-to-day work of the occupation no longer regularly attend the GA. The SpokesCouncil intends to bring together members of all active working groups and caucuses into a direct dialogue about implementing actions to achieve our goals.
- **Functionality:** Decisions take so long to be made in the GA that there is insufficient time to address the many logistical needs, and those working on committees are often left feeling unsupported. The intention of the SpokesCouncil is clearly delineated as dealing with the logistical needs of the camp and occupation, giving the meetings a clear focus, with opportunity for understanding and supporting the needs and aspirations of committees and caucuses.
- **Decision Making:** Attendance at the GA fluctuates from night to night, which makes it difficult to make well-informed, consistent, and strategic decisions. SpokesCouncils encourage more focused participation.
- **Financial Accountability:** There is no accountability for the spending of finances granted by the GA. The SpokesCouncil would be responsible for approving major spending decisions.
- **Marginalization:** The existing structure has not been an empowering space for marginalized voices. Seats for Caucuses as spokes in the strategizing and decision making creates opportunity for our movement to include the voices of oppressed people as an equally necessary perspective as the voices of people engaged in specialized work for the movement.
- **Time for Visioning:** Broader political and community visions are rarely discussed in the GA because it gets bogged-down with logistical decisions. Having a dedicated space for the nuanced and detail-oriented discussions of managing logistics in a SpokesCouncil will free up the GA for movement building and political discussion.
- **Trust and Solidarity:** The GA does not currently offer its participants the time to get to know each other and build meaningful relationships. More open movement building discussions in the GA can help us know each other's visions better, while the transparent collaborations of the SpokesCouncil will build trust among our committees and caucuses through continued interaction.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

GA: 7pm on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday; SpokesCouncil: 7pm Sunday, Tuesday, and Friday

Barring the need for emergency decision making, this proposal envisions Thursdays as a gathering space to welcome new folks to the movement. We intend to nurture the spirit of social transformation and political thought through soap box expression and open discussion.

SPOKESCOUNCIL PROPOSAL IN DETAIL

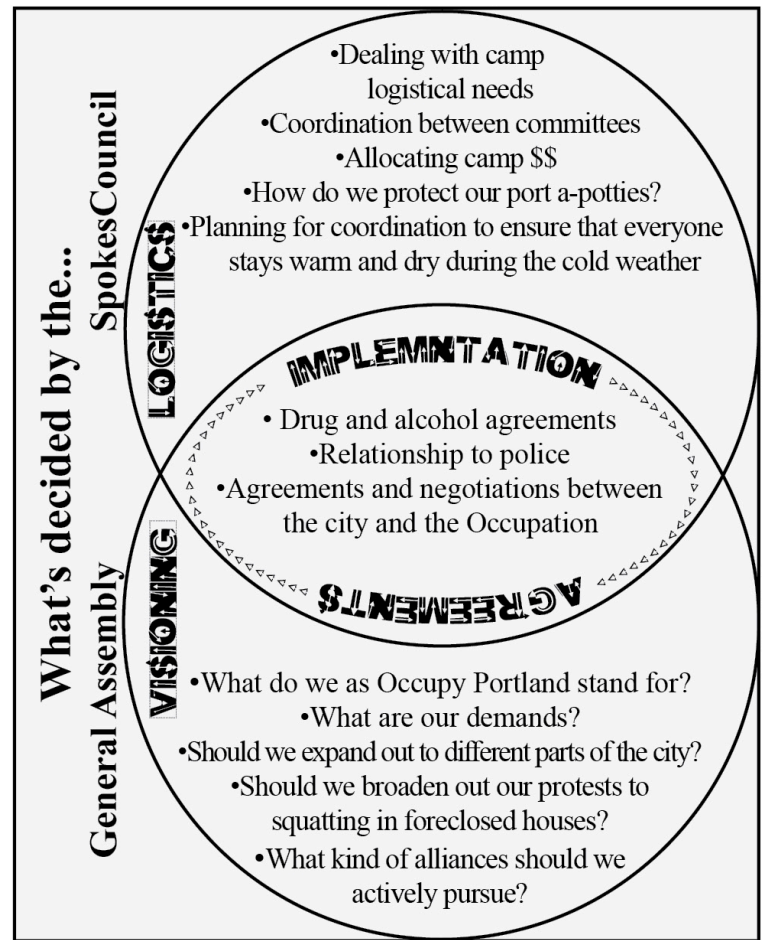
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SPOKESCOUNCIL AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly defines the spirit and character of Occupy Portland as a whole including our declarations, principles, and vision.

The SpokesCouncil discusses practical, logistical matters that often require detailed plans, coordination between committees, and more reliability from participants.

There is sometimes overlap between these two areas of concern! Whenever SpokesCouncil decisions could have a major impact on the spirit of Occupy Portland, those decisions should be brought to the General Assembly for consensus before being enacted. Similarly, whenever General Assembly decisions could have a major impact on the logistics of Occupy Portland those decisions should be brought to the SpokesCouncil for further discussion and consensus.

The General Assembly can revisit any decision of the SpokesCouncil. The General Assembly can dissolve the SpokesCouncil with at least one week notice prior to the proposal. This notice must be given in both the GA and the SpokesCouncil.



SPOKESCOUNCIL DECISIONS & DECISION-MAKING

The four types of decisions of the SpokesCouncil are:

1. Decisions related to the logistical operation of Occupy Portland.
2. Approval of Occupy Portland budgets and expenditures.
3. Amendments to the functioning of the SpokesCouncil that do not alter the power of the GA.
4. The addition or subtraction of Committees and Caucuses to the SpokesCouncil.
 - All Committees and Caucuses that adhere to the above definitions of a Committee or Caucus and that agree to abide by any Principles of Solidarity* set forth by the GA will be accepted upon a decision by the existing SpokesCouncil.
 - A lack of consensus to accept a group is *not* a rejection of the group. Relevant committee people, facilitators, and/or mediators will be available to meet with members of the group in question to further discuss their work, and, if useful to connect them with pre-existing Committees or Caucuses, as concerns may be about duplication of existing committees.
 - A group may only be asked to leave the SpokesCouncil for:
 - Repeatedly disrupting the SpokesCouncil's process or for behaving in a way that seriously violates the GA's Principles of Solidarity*.
 - For missing three consecutive meetings.
 - No longer fulfilling the criteria laid out for Committees and Caucuses in the section above.

Both proposals and blocking concerns to proposals are brought to the SpokesCouncil by committees or caucuses as a whole. Caucuses may delay any proposal that has potentially negative consequences for their caucus until the next SpokesCouncil, in order to give them enough time to discuss the proposal with their caucus as a whole.

*Principles of Solidarity, also known as points of unity, encompass the values of our movement, locally and globally. This reference is from the original SpokesCouncil proposal from Occupy Wall Street, and can be found here: www.nycga.net/resources/principles-of-solidarity. Our hope is that by including them here, Occupy Portland will develop its own Principles of Solidarity.

THE OCCUPY PORTLAND SPOKESCOUNCIL

Criteria for any group participating in the SpokesCouncil:

- The group actively participates and is engaged in ongoing work of Occupy Portland.
- There are enough active members in the group to ensure the person representing the spoke does not repeat for at least three meetings. There should be at least 2-3 additional members present at each SpokesCouncil meeting as well.
- Committees must produce a written description of their roles and responsibilities and how people can get involved.
- Committees and Caucuses have autonomy to make decisions for their group as they please but should inform the spokescouncil of the process used in their group, the number of active committee members, and the time of their most recent meeting.
- Committees are encouraged to join with other Committees that have similar missions to form a Cluster of Committees, to foster communication and coordination between committees engaged in similar work, especially if they do not meet the criteria listed directly above. A Cluster acts as one spoke for each meeting of the SpokesCouncil.

The Role of the Spoke:

- The Spoke is not a decision-maker for it's members but rather a spokesperson - they actively discuss all agenda items with all other members of their group who have joined them for the SpokesCouncil.
- The Spoke is responsible for communicating diversity of sentiments that may exist within their group to the rest of the SpokesCouncil.
- The Spoke for each group rotates at every meeting, and can be recalled by their group at any time. The same person can only serve as the spoke once every three meetings.
- If for any reason a group cannot consent on a spoke person, a facilitator will be asked to serve as the spoke for the group with the *sole* role of communicating the diversity of opinion within the group to the SpokesCouncil.

Open and Fluid Structure:

- During the SpokesCouncils, individuals in multiple groups are free to sit with any group that they are a part of and can move around at will.
- For anyone wanting to participate in the SpokesCouncil who is *not* affiliated with a Committee or other Caucus, there will be a "Open Caucus" with fluid membership. This Open Caucus will be able to participate as a spoke but will *not* be able to block or otherwise impede consensus. A facilitator will serve as the Spoke and help the Open Caucus by encouraging discussion and communicating the diversity of opinions to the rest of the SpokesCouncil.

Proposed List of Spokes for the 1st SpokesCouncil

1. Communications Cluster (Website, Social Media, Livestream, Video Collective) 2. Public Relations 3. Diagnostic 4. Engineering Cluster (Main Engineering, Electricity) 5. Facilitation 6. Finance 7. Food Cluster (Kitchen, Cafe, Sanitation) 8. Information	9. Kid Camp 10. Sexual Assault Response 11. Library 12. Medical Cluster (Main, Mental Health, Wellness) 13. Action 14. Arts and Culture 15. Outreach Cluster (Local Community, Other Occupations, Street Team, Union Outreach) 16. Peace and Safety Cluster (Main, Police Liason)	17. Legal Defense (Occupy Portland Legal, National Lawyers Guild) 18. Goals and Stances 19. Solutions 20. Volunteer Coordination 22. Winter Strategy 23. Conflict Resolution CAUCUSES: Latino Veterans
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The following list of identified committees were thought to be too small for independent participation or their status is unknown. They are encouraged to cluster with relevant Committees or join at a future date.
Community Needs, Earth Guard, Elder Council, Fashion, Free Labor, Free Therapy, Inreach, Interfaith Camp, Mobility, Multilingual / ASL, Spending, Transportation / Logistics