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The Use of Nominating Committees

This document was written by the Transitional Board (Rob Foxcroft, Robert Lee, Cynthia Callsen) in July, 2014.

This method of appointment through a process of nominations may not be very well known. Perhaps it may be natural for people who are not familiar with the process to feel a little suspicious of it.

So why use this method?

Briefly, because we are widely spread and many of us do not know one another very well. We are a world-wide polyglot community. Many of us cannot afford to travel to international meetings, and could not speak one another's languages if we did.

The present Board believe that the methodical, focusing-oriented process of nominations is "more democratic" than a simple election. But the word democratic has many meanings. We will try to say what we mean.

(1) In an election, many people have to vote on a very superficial knowledge of the candidates. It is impossible to have a reliable felt sense of a candidate whom you have never met. Everybody knows that elections can lead to poor choices.

(2) Sometimes elections are divisive. When appointments are made using a nominating committee, the process avoids the competitive struggle that takes place when there is an election, which may leave behind it a residue of bad feeling and faction.

(3) A Nominating Committee does not recommend single individuals, but tries to build balanced groups of people with complementary strengths and qualities.

(4) In our experience, many excellent people would never seek office. There is a great strength in the fact that a Nominating Committee is free to approach modest, busy or retiring people who would hesitate to put themselves forward for office.

(5) And any good Nominating Committee will engage in a long, spacious process of focusing and mutual listening, always bearing in mind the views and feelings of the community.

Bearing these five points in mind, we decided that, in our circumstances, the method of nominations would be far more likely than any form of election to result in the appointment of wise, balanced and respected groups of people to the Board and Council.

We believe that the good choices made by our Nominating Committee speak for themselves.