

## **Attachment O**

### **Report of the All Star One Governance Task Force**

October 2012

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#### **1. Introduction**

This report sets forth the findings and recommendations of the governance task force established in October, 2011 for the purposes of exploring issues related to the governance of the All Star One conference associated with the Star Island Family Retreat and Conference Center. The past chairs group of the All Star One conference charged the task force with researching various issues associated with conference governance and making recommendations for change as warranted. Following delineation of the task force's background, mission and organization, and a process of discovery, this report sets forth the results of its information-gathering process, along with its analysis of those results and a number of recommendations. In addition, this report proposes an approach to implementation of its recommendations, including specific changes to the existing bylaws of the All Star One past chairs group.

#### **2. Background**

The All Star One family conference was conceived by a group of former young adult visitors to Star Island who envisioned a place for a restorative family conference each summer. They created this new conference model out of their own needs: they had started families and "aged out" of their Young Peoples Religious Union gatherings and wanted a way to keep Star Island in their lives. They further aimed to create a conference that would offer both stimulating adult discussions and an excellent program for children, along with all the other benefits of a Star Island retreat. The brainchild of Ginny and Fred McGill, Roly and Poly Greeley, and Fred and Jeanne Kimball, the All Star One conference convened for the first time on Star Island in 1946.

Over the years, the All Star One conference became a model for all other family conferences on Star Island. There would be morning lectures, morning and afternoon children's programs at multiple age levels, evening chapel services, family entertainment and activities, and time for rest and reflection. Those who had chaired the All Star One conference in the past would select the chairs for the next year, and that group (hereinafter referred to in this report as the "past chairs" group) would also handle the year-to-year business of the conference.

All Star One grew under this model for decades (in the 1960s, a second All Star week was created), with the group of past chairs increasing. In the 1980s, the past chairs group began to meet in the fall as well as at least once during the conference week on Star Island, for the purpose of conducting business and making decisions. By the mid-1990's, the past chairs group had grown so large that it became challenging to conduct business by the "committee of the whole." After some years of discussion and consideration, the past chairs group decided, early in the new millennium, to elect an executive committee of nine (later, ten) members – all of them past chairs – who would help move business decisions along and act as a central point of contact for information and mentoring of new chairs. The past chairs group approved a concise set of by-laws which set forth the general mandate and authority of the new executive committee.

Over time, the executive committee created a healing and reconciliation task force and a financial aid committee. It also made certain other appointments, such as representatives to attend meetings and individuals to take on particular tasks. Beginning in 1993, conference leadership launched an annual community ("town") meeting during the All Star One conference, for the purpose of sharing information and gathering feedback from the wider All Star One community. Since 2006, the past chairs group has opened its fall meeting to all members of the All Star One community.

### **3. Mission and organization**

During the 2011 off-Island meeting of the past chairs group, discussion of issues pertaining to the governance of the conference resulted in the creation of a special task force for the purpose of exploring perceived concerns of past chairs and other conferees pertaining to conference governance, examining those concerns, and reporting back to the past chairs group. The past chairs group charged the task force with making recommendations for change as warranted.

To this end, the conference's executive committee solicited and nominated a slate of candidates to serve on the governance task force. The following conferees were nominated and ratified by a vote of the past chairs group: John Best, Sally Blount, Tom Coleman, Jim Prochaska, Jane Trudeau, Deborah Weiner Soule, and Louise Williams. Two members of the task force (Blount and Williams) are non-past chairs, whose perspectives were desired to balance the process. At the task force's request, Jim Prochaska served as chair of the group. Early in the process, Sally Blount resigned from the task force due to time conflicts, conveying her regrets.

#### **4. Process of discovery**

The task force convened by telephone conference on 9 occasions, and once on-island, between February and September 2012. (An additional meeting is planned for October). Early in the process, task force members agreed to follow a sequential process of discovery and analysis. The task force began with personal interviews with all current and former members of the executive committee, followed by an electronic survey of past chairs and an electronic survey of the non-past-chair body of the conference. This report analyzing the results of the discovery, including the task force's specific recommendations, emerged following comprehensive discussion at each stage of the process.

For the purposes of the interview phase, the task force identified 26 people who had served or were currently serving on the executive committee. Of this group, two individuals declined to be interviewed, but all others participated, with each task force member assigned to speak with two to four interviewees, using an outline to guide their interviews. Based on the preliminary issues articulated by the past chairs and discussion and consensus of the task force, the interview questions were as follows:

1. What are some of the good things that you have seen in terms of our decision-making process? What are some of the weaknesses you have seen in the process?
2. Could you give me an example of a good decision that was made, and a not-good decision that was made?
3. What do you see as the positive aspects of our current governance and decision-making process?
4. What do you see as less positive aspects?
5. What changes do you think would improve our governance and decision making process?
6. What also can you share that would be helpful in our study of governance?

The task force conducted its interviews in February and March, 2012. Task force members reported back on the responses of the interviewees, which helped inform its preparation of two guided-choice, online surveys. One survey was directed at the past chairs as a body, and the other sought the opinions of the remaining body of conferees. Although the surveys were not identical, they both contained certain parallel questions to aid in comparison. Both surveys allowed free-form comments to each question.

During March and April, 2012, the task force administered the online survey of the past chairs. In late April, the task force discussed and analyzed the results of that survey, after which it prepared a second survey of non-past chairs. The task force administered the second survey in May 2012, and past chairs were asked to exempt themselves from participating in this survey.

The task force met in person during the All Star One conference in July 2012, where it confirmed the general nature and scope of its recommendations. In August 2012, the task force notified the executive committee of its provisional findings and recommendations.

## **5. Analysis, discussion, and recommendations**

Each survey contained ten questions. Twenty-five past chairs completed the “All Star 1: Decision Making, Governance, & Well-Being” (“chairs”) survey, and 43 conferees completed the “All Star 1 Community” (“community”) survey. The survey results, along with task force observations, analysis, and recommendations are set forth below. Survey questions have been grouped according to topic, with responses identified as having come from either the chairs survey or the community survey. The percentage results follow each question. All percentages are rounded to nearest whole number.

### **a. Governance**

**Chairs:** *“I am satisfied with the current governance and decision-making structure and practices of All Star I.”*

Strongly Agree	8 %
Agree	42%
Disagree	38%
Strongly Disagree	12%

**Community:** *“I am satisfied with the current governance and decision-making structure and practices of All Star I.”*

Strongly Agree	10%
Agree	69%
Disagree	17%
Strongly Disagree	5%

**Chairs:** *“The current governance structure is sufficiently transparent.”*

Strongly Agree	4%
Agree	48%
Disagree	39%
Strongly Disagree	9%

**Community:** *“The current governance structure of All Star I is sufficiently transparent.”*

Strongly Agree	15%
Agree	42%
Disagree	37%
Strongly Disagree	7%

**Community:** *“I consider myself to be familiar with the current governance and decision-making structure and practices of All Star I”*

Strongly Agree	12%
Agree	45%
Disagree	38%
Strongly Disagree	5%

**Discussion:** Perhaps the most important finding from the above five questions pertaining to governance in general (two answered by the chairs group, three by the community at large) is the overall satisfaction with the current state of conference governance – nearly 80% – among the community respondents. In fact, the community at large reported considerably greater satisfaction than the past chairs. These results are likely due to the fact that conferees who do not participate in formal governance activities may not have been privy to the more challenging episodes of conference governance in recent years. On several occasions, executive committee members and past chairs have found themselves charged with making difficult and sometimes painful decisions, about which their members did not always agree. This led some to question the system of governance itself, including the respective roles and authority of the executive committee and the past chairs group. A recommendation pertaining to this issue is set forth below.

Of greater concern to the community at large – although not the majority – is the matter of governance-related transparency. On this issue, the chairs are equally concerned. Task force members agreed that conference leadership has worked hard in recent years to make governance more transparent. Governing bodies posted reports of past chair group decisions and other governance-related documents on the All Star One website. They promoted further transparency through the on-island town meeting and by inviting non-past chairs to the annual off-island meeting.

Nonetheless, there remains room for even more direct communication about governance-related activities and decisions. Opportunities for increased transparency include more direct communications through email; more in-depth on-island discussions; and greater documentation placed on the conference website. At the same time, the task force agreed that conferees who wish to be informed about governance issues have an opportunity through

existing means to inform themselves. Some survey comments acknowledged that their self-reported lack of knowledge about conference governance is indeed attributable to their own relative lack of curiosity on the matter.

**b. Structure**

**Chairs:** *“We spend too much time on business issues like finances and governance.”*

Strongly Agree	8%
Agree	29%
Disagree	58%
Strongly Disagree	4%

**Chairs:** *“The model we should have would include the largest group (like past chairs) making policy, the smaller elected executive committee implementing policy and an appointed group, like the Healing and Reconciliation Committee, adjudicating conflicts over implementation.”*

Strongly Agree	25%
Agree	38%
Disagree	33%
Strongly Disagree	4%

**Chairs:** *“The executive committee that meets monthly should have more decision-making authority, including making some changes in policy if needed.”*

Strongly Agree	8%
Agree	21%
Disagree	46%
Strongly Disagree	25%

**Discussion:** These questions pertaining to the structural aspects of governance, all of which were directed to past chairs only, elucidate some degree of frustration and disagreement over the hard work of managing a complex conference. Based on other findings of the survey, as well as on logistical considerations, the majority of the task force agreed that more decision-making authority is warranted for the executive committee under certain conditions. These conditions are as follows: (1) if the decision concerns shorter-term matters that directly impact the upcoming conference; (2) if the current chairs, rather than making the short-term decision themselves, have asked the executive committee to make the decision; and (3) the executive committee makes the decision in consultation (in all, or nearly all cases) with the healing and reconciliation committee. Within the task force, a minority opinion on this issue was also expressed, suggesting that the executive committee, with its regular meetings and in-depth

study of issues, was in a better position to make recommendations and certain longer-term decisions that would benefit the health and welfare of the conference, than is the body of past chairs who meet far less often and study issues in far less detail.

**Recommendations (Governance and Structure):**

- Revise existing by-laws to clarify with even greater precision the authority of the executive committee, vis-à-vis the authority of the past chairs group. In particular, grant the executive committee clear “emergency” authority over conference-related, short-term decisions that the current chairs have stated that they do not wish to make themselves.
- For long-term decisions impacting the conference – that is, decisions that do not pertain directly to that summer’s conference – reserve the authority to the past chairs group.
- Charge the executive committee, with respect to emergency decisions, to consult with the healing and reconciliation committee.
- Continue to promote improved systems of transparency, including updates of the website at least two times each year. Strengthened transparency and communications should become an express responsibility of the executive committee.

**c. Policy-making**

**Chairs:** *“The policy-making process should include representation from ASI community members and not just past chairs.”*

Strongly Agree	46%
Agree	33%
Disagree	21%
Strongly Disagree	0%

**Community:** *“The policy-making process for the conference (e.g., discussing issues, forming policies, and developing practices) should include representation from members of the entire All Star I community and not just former chairs.”*

Strongly Agree	39%
Agree	42%
Disagree	20%
Strongly Disagree	0%

**Discussion:** At nearly the same rate of consensus (80%), the chairs and community agree that a mechanism ought to exist through which members of the community who have not served as chairs should nonetheless be included in the policy-making process. Even among those who disagreed, not one person disagreed *strongly*. The task force agrees that inclusion of non-past

chairs in the policy-making process can strengthen overall governance for a variety of reasons. Among them, such inclusion may honor the long-term participation of individuals who did not happen to serve as chairs during their years spent coming to All Star One. It may also foster greater interest on the part of younger or newer shoalers who have a sincere interest in “giving back” and investing in the future of Star Island over the years to come.

**Recommendations:**

- Expand the membership of the past chairs group to include up to five non-past-chair representatives, holding terms of no more than three consecutive years each, which shall be non-renewable unless the representative becomes chair. The non-past chairs members would hold all rights and obligations of past chair group members for the duration of their membership in the group. For the purpose of implementing this recommendation, those initially elected would take office with one person serving for three years, two persons serving for two years, and two persons serving for one year. These individuals would serve for one year without their terms expiring, and then their term limits would begin. These members would be selected by the existing past chairs group from a slate of nominees prepared by a nominating committee, along with self-nominated or otherwise nominated individuals.
- Formally re-name the past chairs group as the All Star One Governing Council.

**d. Inclusivity**

**Chairs:** *“The governance structure provides adequate opportunity for all voices to be heard.”*

Strongly Agree	4%
Agree	52%
Disagree	32%
Strongly Disagree	12%

**Community:** *“When I am on Star Island for the All Star I conference, I feel generally welcome and valued by the conference leadership, including the chairs and past chairs.”*

Strongly Agree	54%
Agree	42%
Disagree	5%
Strongly Disagree	0%

**Community:** *“I believe that the process for participating in the governance and decision-making concerning our conference is accessible to all conferees.”*

Strongly Agree	5%
Agree	45%
Disagree	40%
Strongly Disagree	10%

**Chairs:** *“Special efforts should be made to have more young adults involved in ASI decision making process.”*

Strongly Agree	30%
Agree	57%
Disagree	13%
Strongly Disagree	0%

**Community:** *“I would be interested in serving on an ASI governance body, such as the executive committee (currently comprised of current and past chairs) or another task force or committee. (Note; answering in the affirmative does not automatically commit you to participating in such a venture!)”*

Strongly Agree	3%
Agree	55%
Disagree	37%
Strongly Disagree	5%

**Discussion:** The survey responses pertaining to inclusivity (two answered by the chairs group, three by the community at large) provided interesting insights. Above all, the task force was heartened to find that the majority of non-past chair conferees feel welcome and valued by conference leadership when they are attending the All Star One conference. Among other benefits of the warmth and good feelings that community members associate with their time spent on Star Island is the very sustainability of the conference and Star Island as a holiday or retreat destination in the future. The question about including more young adults in the

conference's future governance activities also pertains to conference sustainability, and the past chairs' solid support for this idea (87%) is instructive.

At the same time, half of the community members do not feel that the process for participating in conference governance is particularly accessible, which is unfortunate in light of the slight majority's stated interest in participating. Especially concerning is the notion, as suggested by a very few comments submitted with the responses, that certain conferees may be perceived as favored for participation in governance based on "family connections" or other non-relevant considerations. The task force agreed that, for all governance-related conference activities, a formal nominating committee may bring greater depth and diversity to, and confidence in, the participation of conferees in the governance of the conference. The task force further agreed that the nominating committee should be large enough to reach into the many communities within the conference at large, and it should serve to nominate participants on all governance-related bodies.

Another issue arose during consideration of conference inclusivity. There has long been an interest in acknowledging the contributions of long-standing conferees (over 20 years), who have clearly demonstrated their commitment and service, who have not been elected chairs, but whose wisdom and counsel is greatly valued by the conference. Such members would participate on the governing council through nomination by the nominating committee, who may propose up to six persons per year for this honor.

**Recommendation:**

- Create a nominating committee consisting of five members – three "past chairs"/members of the governing council and two "non-past chairs"/non-members of the governing council – for the purpose of nominating members of (currently named) past-chairs committee (to the extent they are not in fact past chairs); the executive committee; the healing and reconciliation committee; and other positions and opportunities related to the governance of the All Star One conference. Approval and/or election of nominated candidates would remain in the authority of the past chairs group/governing council pursuant to terms agreed upon by that body.
- For the purposes of short-term implementation, charge the governance task force with "nominating the nominating committee" within six weeks following the October 2012 meeting of the All Star One past chairs group/governing council. The slate of nominees would then be voted up or down by the chairs via email.
- Act on the proposal (see Article III, By-Laws) for formally acknowledging the contributions of up to six long-term conferees who have not served as chair in the past and who are unlikely to serve as chair in the future.

**e. Election of conference chairs**

**Chairs:** *“The election for New Chairs should be more inclusive with the larger community of ASI having a vote in the on-island election”*

Strongly Agree	12%
Agree	21%
Disagree	50%
Strongly Disagree	17%

**Community:** *“I am satisfied with the method under which the selection of new conference chairs is made.”*

Strongly Agree	18%
Agree	54%
Disagree	21%
Strongly Disagree	8%

**Community:** *“I would support greater diversity among persons chosen to serve as chairs, with individuals or two or three friends, along with married or established couples, routinely considered as candidates for the position.”*

Strongly Agree	55%
Agree	40%
Disagree	5%
Strongly Disagree	0%

**Discussion:** The results of the two surveys show that the All Star One community believes, and the past chairs believe even more strongly, that the method for selecting new conference chairs is “not broke.” Thus, the task force does not see the need for any “fixes” with respect to this matter. On the other hand, the surveys reveal a very strong feeling in the community that diversity among the candidates considered to be the new chairs ought to be a priority. In this regard, the selection of a “non-traditional” group of three “old-shoaler” friends as chairs of the 2014 conference is enormously welcome. The task force agrees, however, that it should not be regarded as the final word on the matter. Rather, it should mark the beginning of a new tradition of full and informed consideration of both couples and non-couples for the position of conference chairs.

**Recommendation:**

- Continuously encourage all experienced and interested conferees, whether as an individual, as part of an established couple, or as a set of friends, to consider future leadership positions in the conference, including as future chairs.

**f. Island citizenship**

**Chairs:** *“Decision-making groups for ASI (like past chairs and the executive committee) should base decisions on what would work well for our larger Star Island community as well as for ASI.”*

Strongly Agree	40%
Agree	36%
Disagree	20%
Strongly Disagree	4%

**Community:** *“Decision-making groups for ASI (including the past chairs and the executive committee) should base decisions on what would work well for our larger Star Island community as well as for ASI.”*

Strongly Agree	39%
Agree	53%
Disagree	7%
Strongly Disagree	0%

**Discussion:** The strong affirmative response to the survey questions pertaining to consideration of the larger Star Island community indicates a continuing interest on the part of nearly all conferees in the long-term sustainability of Star Island as a summer conference destination. The task force observes an appreciation for the idea that All Star One, however vibrant and healthy, cannot exist over time in the absence of a host of other vibrant, healthy, and well governed conferences.

**Recommendation:** Although no obvious change in practice is warranted, the All Star One Conference should continue its proud legacy of support and contribution to the Island.

**6. Proposed implementation of recommendations**

The task force recognizes that the various questions involved in of how its recommendations, if passed, would be implemented into the All Star One governance structure. To that end task force recommends that the past chairs group should do the following:

1. Agree in principle to the foregoing recommendations, along with any modifications that it may see fit to make.
2. Conform the recommended changes to the current By-Laws of the All Star One Chairs, an example which is set forth as an addendum.
3. Vote on changes to the By-Laws as well as on those recommendations that do not implicate a change in the By-Laws.
4. For the purposes of short-term implementation. The Chairs would charge the governance task force with “nominating the nominating committee” asap following the October 2012 meeting of the All Star One past chairs group/governing council. The slate of nominees would then be voted up or down by the Chairs via email. If elected by the Chairs, they would identify individuals willing and able to serve on the EC. These nominated individuals would then be voted on by the chairs/council by email and if elected, up to two would start immediately on the EC. One member of the EC is prepared to step down, but would wait until a non-chair is elected and a second would be open to stepping down if needed. Nominations and elections of non-chairs and “honorary” chairs to the council would occur later, since they would not be meeting until months later.
4. Publish all changes and actions emerging from the work of the governance task force on the All Star One website, and send an email to the All Star One email list summarizing these changes.