

Orientation for AFSC-NH Support Committee Members

The American Friends Service Committee is a Quaker organization which works for peace, social justice, the relief of suffering, and the non-violent resolution of conflict. Founded in 1917 as an agency to provide conscientious objectors with an opportunity for constructive service in war-ravaged Europe, the AFSC has conducted diverse programs throughout the world aimed at alleviating poverty, ending racism, reconciling groups in conflict with each other, and educating the public about the dangers of war and the pathways to peace. Basing its work on a profound Quaker belief in the dignity of all people, and a faith in the power of love and nonviolence to bring about change, the AFSC is staffed and supported by individuals from many religious and cultural backgrounds.

The New Hampshire Field Office was opened with one staff person in 1975 by AFSC's New England Regional Office (NERO) in cooperation with the state's Friends Meetings. As the only AFSC office in the state, AFSC-NH deals in some way with the whole range of issues with which the organization is concerned.

The early years of AFSC-NH are noteworthy for the organization's contribution to the movement against the Seabrook nuclear power plant, in particular the incorporation of nonviolence training into the Clamshell Alliance's approach to civil disobedience. In the early 1980s, AFSC launched the state's nuclear freeze movement which led directly to the creation of what is now NH Peace Action. AFSC also played a statewide leadership role in efforts concerning Central America, South Africa, and issues related to the draft and military service.

In the mid-'80s, AFSC became active in commemorations of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and led efforts to make the day a state holiday, which was finally observed for the first time in 2000. Examination of the state's resistance to the holiday moved AFSC to adopt counter-racism work as a programmatic theme.

While continuing to find ways to support efforts for change in US foreign/military policy, AFSC-NH has since the late 1980s paid more attention to economic concerns, especially housing and employment. This focus led to the development of the Banking and Community Reinvestment Project, which became the Housing and Community Development Project and then the NH Economic Justice Project. It was out of concerns about workers' rights and economic globalization that AFSC launched education and action projects dealing with sweatshop abuses and the effects of international trade agreements.

In 1999 we received a major gift and launched a fellowship focused on youth activism, which began in the fall of 2000. After the initial gift was used up we raised additional funds to continue this project for ten years, but suspended it in 2010 after the AFSC Board decided the organization needed to be downsized.

In times of international crisis, such as the aftermath of September 11, 2001, AFSC-NH works closely with other organizations to support peace and reveal the underlying causes of violence.



Arnie Alpert and Maggie Fogarty are Co-Directors of the program. Arnie has been on the staff since 1981. Maggie joined the staff in 2007, initially as coordinator for the NH Economic Justice Project. She and Arnie became co-directors in 2014. The co-directors are responsible to the NH Support Committee and also to the Cambridge-based Regional Program Coordinator and Regional Director.

In 2013 AFSC leaders approved a project to lift up strategic priorities during the period

The AFSC-NH Support Committee -- Roles and Responsibilities

The NH Support Committee was formed in 1975 to work with the regional office and make it possible for AFSC to hire a staff person and open a local office. Since that time, the Committee has been involved with fundraising, determining program priorities for the NH Program, and serving as a liaison to other parts of the AFSC.

Program Priorities - Of the many issues of concern to AFSC and to people in New Hampshire, the Committee works closely with staff to determine which issues the NH Program will emphasize and how they will be approached. The issues and approaches are

prior to the 2016 presidential election, with a focus on Iowa and New Hampshire. This decision enabled the NH Program to hire additional staff for what is now known as the “Governing under the Influence” project, or GUI. Within this project, Olivia Zink serves as Grassroots Engagement Coordinator and Eric Zulaski serves as Grassroots Education Coordinator. Miranda Myers is a half-time intern. The GUI project is expected to run through March, 2016.

described in work plans (generally covering 3 year periods) which require the approval of the Regional Executive Committee.

After adoption of the plans, the Committee makes short-term adjustments, and helps staff juggle approved priorities with each other and with responses to events beyond the AFSC’s control.

Fundraising - The Committee works with staff raise necessary funds. In recent years, this has focused on the annual fundraising dinner. It may also include mailing appeal letters, phoning AFSC supporters, and organizing other benefit events.

Hiring - Should there be need or opportunity to hire new staff, members of the Committee would approve job descriptions and participate on the search committee.

Liaison - The Committee serves as the official “voice” of the NH Program in relations with other branches of the AFSC, such as the NER Executive Committee. NH Committee members (and former members) may be asked to serve on other AFSC committees, too. Members also link



AFSC to the state's Friends Meetings and other important constituencies and organizations.

Volunteers - Committee members also serve as volunteers, when possible, for AFSC projects and in the office.

The Committee Clerk(s)

The Support Committee clerk (or co-clerks) provides leadership to the committee by preparing agendas, facilitating/chairing meetings, and making sure that appropriate minutes are kept and distributed. The Clerk may have a special liaison role with NER, and may be consulted by staff between meetings to help resolve dilemmas or sort priorities.

The NERO Program Committee approved a policy in 1997 to define and describe the roles and responsibilities of Support Committees. This document provides additional information on the relationship between staff and committee roles, clerking, and the degree of autonomy of local programs.

Membership

Support Committee members are chosen in two ways. Some are appointed by the state's Friends Meetings, with others chosen "at large" by the Support Committee. In both cases, AFSC's Affirmative Action guidelines should be taken into account.

Members are asked to serve for a three-year term, beginning in September. Members may serve a second three-year term, as well. Following six consecutive years on the Committee, members will leave the Committee for at least one year before serving again.

Affirmative Action and Diversity

AFSC's Affirmative Action Plan was adopted in 1978 in order to move the organization

beyond its long-standing non-discrimination policy. As described in the Affirmative Action Plan at that time:

"The need for an affirmative action program derives from the fact that discrimination is embedded in our societal patterns of education, housing, employment, social interaction, and political participation. These patterns are so pervasive that frequently neither their perpetrators nor their victims realize when and how discriminatory acts are being committed. AFSC is part of this society and has, generally unwittingly, fallen into some of the very activities and behavior patterns it seeks to avoid in itself and change in others. *In these circumstances, policies of nondiscrimination alone are inadequate to achieve inclusiveness and full participation. Special efforts and procedures to reach out to previously excluded groups are necessary.*" (emphasis added)

The focus of the Affirmative Action Plan is on increasing the participation of people of color, women, people with disabilities, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender persons. (The focus for programs operating outside the USA is described differently.) At times the NH Support Committee has also looked to other "previously excluded groups," to serve, including youth, and people from poor and working class backgrounds.

AFSC also applies affirmative action principles to programmatic decisions, for example by considering whether proposed activities involve and/or meet the needs of groups mentioned in the affirmative action plan, using wheelchair accessible sites for program events, and encouraging coalitions to pay attention to diversity.

How the Committee functions

The Committee typically meets once a month at the Concord Unitarian Universalist Church. Some years, meetings have included food. In recent years, some members have arrived early for informal conversation with the meeting starting at 6 pm.

Meetings are chaired by the Committee Clerk or co-clerks. (See “roles and responsibilities.”) Decisions of the Support Committee, like all other AFSC committees, are made by consensus.

A typical agenda includes discussion of written staff reports and in-depth discussion of major program initiatives. Fundraising is discussed prior to major fundraising efforts,

such as the annual dinner. Meetings may also include reports from other AFSC committees on which members serve and discussion of



other matters of concern to members.

The Committee has held retreats on occasion, and often holds an annual Extended Family Picnic in the summer.

Introduction to the AFSC Bureaucracy

The NH Support Committee and Program exist within a complex and changing web of AFSC committees and departments. For the moment the following will serve as an introduction to the key positions, offices, and committees that interact with the New Hampshire Program.

North East Regional Office, or NER

The North East Regional Office in Cambridge is AFSC headquarters for programs based in 6 New England states plus New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. (Sometimes NER is used to refer to the office itself and the staff based there, rather than all of the North East AFSC programs and committees.) Working at the Cambridge office are the Regional Director, Regional Program Coordinator, administrative staff, and other program staff.

NER is one of 4 AFSC regional offices. Others are West (Los Angeles), Midwest (Chicago), and South (Atlanta). This structure was adopted in 2012 when 9 US regions were compacted into 4. At that time New England (the old NERO) was grafted

onto the other 3 northeastern states to create the new NER.

NER Executive Committee

This group is responsible for overall direction of AFSC programs in the North East, including approving work plans and budgets for all programs and departments. They are able to “lay down,” or terminate a program due to budget constraints or changes in program priorities.

NER Regional Director

This staff person oversees all AFSC staff and programs in the region, and works closely with the Executive Committee and Administrative Committees. Keith Harvey has been Regional Director for many years.

Regional Program Coordinators

Joseph Gerson works out of the Cambridge office and supervises the New Hampshire Program staff, plus other Regional program staff.

The Union

NER has been a unionized workplace for about 25 years. Staff (including Maggie and Arnie) who are not on the management team are in the bargaining unit, covered by a collective bargaining agreement. The AFSC union is part of UNITE-HERE's New England Joint Board, most of whose members work in hotels, industrial laundries, manufacturing, and food services, but which also includes staff at OXFAM and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

Central Office

AFSC headquarters in Philadelphia is the base of operation for administrators, fundraisers, public relations, and special programs.

Strategic Plans and "Goal Groups"

AFSC keeps changing the way it coordinates work among diverse and dispersed program offices. At this time, an overall Board-approved strategic plan outlines 2 "strategic initiatives," but states that programs do not have to work in those areas. The 4 "goal areas"-- peace, economic justice, human migration/mobility, and healing justice -- defined by the previous strategic plan still have some utility as ways to group staff doing work in common fields. Maggie and Arnie participate in meetings of staff who focus on issues relevant to the NH Program, including migration, economic justice, and the prison system.

As the organization seeks to become better coordinated and more strategic, the decisions made at national and international levels will have increased impact on the NH Program.

The latest incarnation of AFSC planning methods seeks to have plans be more specific and more closely integrated with budgets and reporting/evaluation.

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