

NASCO BOARD MEETING PROCESS

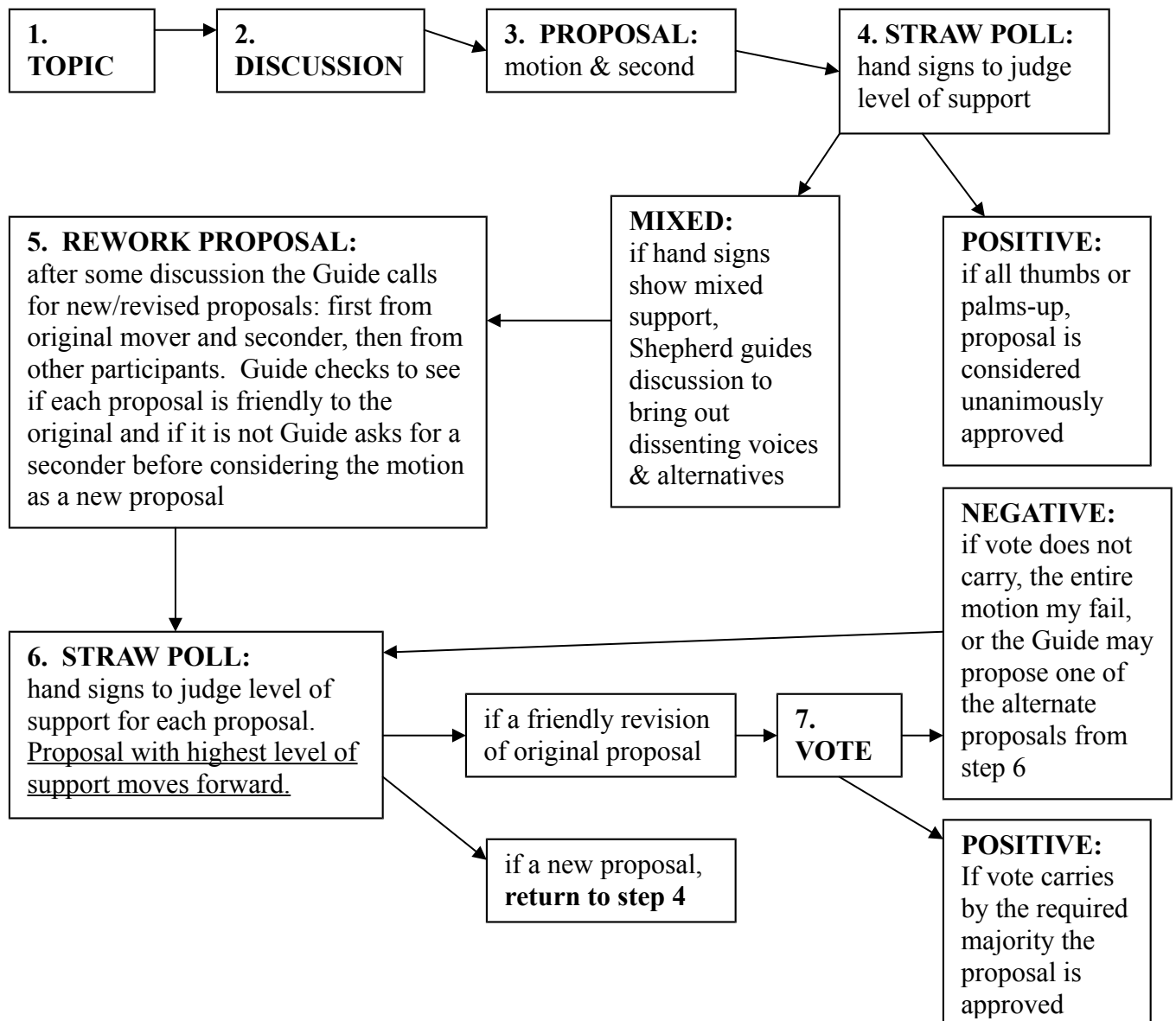
A work in progress, Feb. 2007

Overview: The following approach to facilitation and decision-making outlined in this document is a modified consensus process which came out of the June 2006 NASCO Board meeting after a good deal of discussion and experimentation with different meeting processes. The process outlined below is something of a hybrid, which attempts to combine some of the clarity and formality of Roberts Rules with the participatory and flexible nature of consensus processes.

Guidelines for this NASCO Board meeting process are broken down into:

- Decision-making process flow chart
- Overview of facilitation roles
- Additional guidelines

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FLOW CHART:



OVERVIEW OF FACILITATION ROLES:

GUIDE:

1. Familiarize yourself with the agenda before the meeting to get a sense of length of discussion for each point and flow between points.
2. Quickly present the agenda or the structure of the discussion at the opening of the meeting and invite brief feedback.
3. Keep the discussion and decision-making focused on agenda items throughout the meeting.
4. Act as an overall meeting time-keeper and interrupt the meeting to alert the group when discussion stretches on longer than the expected or allotted time.
5. Proactively phrase and rephrase proposals and try different approaches to questions or issues to help guide the group through difficult discussions and decisions.
6. Experiment with different approaches to a discussion or decision such as splitting a larger group into small groups to begin to work through a difficult issue or question.
7. When using hand signs for consensus it is your responsibility to make sure that all the participants have clearly indicated their sign and in the case of consensus, to announce to the group that consensus has been achieved and a decision has been made.

SHEPHERD:

1. It is your responsibility to pass the speaking turn at the meeting carefully and equitably around the group.
2. Take careful note of the nature of contributions from all participants and strive to maintain a diversity and equality of opportunity for discussion contribution for all participants. For example if participant W tends to dominate the conversation at the expense of other participants, then the Shepherd may adopt an approach to speaking rights that privileges the contributions of other participants over those of participant W.
3. Try passing the space to speak around the group through such means as:
 - Speakers Stack in which participants indicate their desire to speak and are placed on a speakers list to be called on in turn.
 - Go-around in which the turn to speak is passed circularly around the group.
 - Duck Duck Goose in which the Shepherd passes the turn to speak around the group at random or at their discretion.
4. Do not be afraid to focus on a single meeting participant to enable and encourage them to speak. Some people need this kind of explicit space to be able to effectively contribute. Remind everyone that they can always pass if they do not feel like speaking.
5. Keep track of overall energy, emotions, and tensions in the group and interrupt the discussion to suggest breaks, group hugs, periods of silence, or anything else that is needed to maintain a positive and focused meeting environment.
6. When using hand signs for consensus it is your responsibility to call first on participants whose signs indicate the most dissent from the overall feeling of the group. (When using "process point" and "fist" hand signals, remember that these signs take precedent over all the rest.)

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES:

Principal Hand Signs:

- Thumb Up = complete support and good feeling, no doubts, questions, or concerns
- Palm Up = high support and definite positive feeling, but with some small questions, doubts, or alternative ideas. This sign is often used in a “stating for the record” function where an individual feels they have to voice some sort of personal dissent even though they believe a decision is best for the group.
- On the Fence = a vertical hand sign directly between palm up and palm down is used to express perfectly divided feelings. **Note that if you think a proposal is okay but you are not really invested in it you should use a palm up or a thumb up instead of “on the fence” because “on the fence” indicates that you have some negative feelings about the proposal as well as some positive.**
- Palm Down = strong negative feelings, doubts, and concerns, but with an indication of some small positive feeling and support
- Thumb Down = complete doubt, discomfort, or negative feeling, with many questions, challenges, and concerns
- No hand sign = abstention from the decision because of a conflict of interest or another serious concern that prevents you from participating in the decision. **You will be asked to explain your reason for abstaining to the degree that you are comfortable doing so.**

Additional Hand Signs:

C for Clarification: When the Guide calls for a straw poll to judge the level of support for a proposal, participants can make a C hand sign to indicate that they have a clarification question which must be answered before they can indicate their level of support for the proposal. Participants indicating a C hand sign will be called on first by the Shepherd to ensure that their clarification question is answered before the Guide moves ahead with the Straw Poll.

Process Point: At any point in the meeting any participant can place their hands together in front of them forming a triangular Process Point to indicate that they have a serious concern with the meeting process. Example's of process concerns include: if the Guide accidentally skipped a point on the agenda, if it is too noisy outside the room and a participant cannot hear the meeting discussion, if the Shepherd missed a C hand sign and went ahead with a Straw Poll without first answering the clarification question, etc...