**Rules by Which to Meet Peacefully**

The purpose of this document is to set some basic ground rules or guidelines for meetings that will help facilitate everyone being heard respectfully and the work of the organization being speedily concluded. As with all guidelines, there may be exceptions, but these will be determined by the meeting facilitator. Please contact the SILC Governance Committee if you see a need for changes to this document.

1. **SILC Chairperson or designee shall facilitate the meeting.** This means that he or she generally does not take part in the discussion other than to clarify or summarize.
2. **Members need to wait to be recognized by the meeting facilitator.** This allows for members who are deaf and hard of hearing to more easily follow the conversation and discourage several people talking at once, which is difficult for all to follow.
3. **The Facilitator will make sure that everyone who wants to speak on a topic does so before second comments from the same person are taken.** This will discourage the effect of a few speakers dominating the meeting or a topic and give everyone a chance to contribute.
4. **The Facilitator will make sure that the comments of SILC Members and invited guests are taken first during discussions.** If time allows, members of the public may also have an opportunity to comment during discussion. There will also be several opportunities for public comment on any agenda item throughout SILC meetings.
5. **Meeting Attendees will not give audible signals of approval or disapproval during discussions.** This includes cheering, clapping and other noises. This disrupts the meeting, uses limited time available for discussion, and can make those with dissenting opinions reluctant to bring points forward.
6. **SILC Members, Guests, and Members of the Public will not yell or raise their voice as a means of emphasizing their point or for any other reason.** Microphones are provided so recognized speakers can be heard by all attendees while using their normal speaking voice.
7. **Discussions should be focused on the issue at hand; no side conversation.**
8. **Members are reminded to use “I” statements when speaking.** “You” statements are often received as attacks and can derail a fruitful discussion. Such statements inhibit participation.
9. **Participants will not make generalizations about individuals, organizations, or other groups.** While it can be helpful to reference specific events or actions taken, generalizations typically shut down productive conversation.
10. **Every member is encouraged to help keep the agenda moving and gently enforce meeting behavior by reminding the group or the individual of the guidelines for meeting peacefully or the agenda item at hand.** This will support the facilitator and make everyone share the responsibility for a successful meeting.
11. **Cell phones and pagers will be silenced during the meeting.** Members and attendees will turn off ringers or use vibrate mode to avoid interrupting the proceedings. If a call must be taken, the member agrees to leave the room.
12. **Members need to let the speaker finish his or her statement.** Interruptions are rude and can sidetrack the speaker from his or her train of thought.
13. **Members are reminded to focus on the principle, not the person.** Personal attacks usually don’t change people’s views.
14. **Believe in people’s best intentions.** Ask questions to better understand anything that is unclear or of concern.
15. **Take care of yourself.** If you need to step out or take a break, do it. The group values your participation, so do what you need to do so you can devote your full attention.
16. **SILC maintains a scent-free environment.** Members and attendees will refrain from using scented personal products when attending the meeting. Doing so will allow those with chemical sensitivities to participate.
17. **Reaching a consensus of members is SILC’s preferred method of making decisions.** If a consensus is not possible, the facilitator will postpone the item and ask the parties who disagree to come to a solution during a break in the meeting and present it to the group. If necessary, the facilitator may call for a vote of the members.
18. **SILC Members will always sit around the table.** SILC staff and invited guests or consultants will be welcomed to sit at the table when room permits. The facilitator will determine which guests or consultants may sit at the table, with input from the Council when appropriate. This assists the facilitator and the group in making sure that members have the first opportunity to participate in the meeting. Anyone needing to sit at the table for reasonable accommodation reasons should indicate that to the facilitator, who will try to make the accommodation. However, it must be clear that all who sit at the table and are not SILC members cannot vote and may have a limited role in the discussion or business at hand.
19. **Anything that is important to you is important to us!** If you have strong feelings about a topic that is not addressed during the meeting, please bring your feelings to the Chairperson of the SILC or to the Chairperson of the appropriate committee to handle the topic. Gossip and other talk behind closed doors will not lead to the positive solutions we embrace.