

Decision Making Playbook

Sociocracy-led decision making with Advice Process, Consent, Supermajority, and Consensus

Purpose and Scope

This playbook describes how our 10-unit community makes decisions with speed, legitimacy, and transparency. We use sociocracy as the operating system (circles, roles, consent), and we pair it with the advice process, supermajority votes, and rarely consensus for identity-level choices. This document is written for Google Docs: headings, paragraphs, bullets, and tables are designed for scanability and easy maintenance.

Decision Styles (What, Why, Who, Where, How)

Advice Process (default for operations)

Plain-English: A role holder decides after seeking input from two groups: people with relevant expertise and people meaningfully affected by the decision. Then they decide and inform. This leverages collective intelligence without slowing work to a crawl.

- Where we use it: routine operations, vendor coordination, scheduling maintenance, ordering supplies, reversible steps within budget and policy.
- Who calls it: any role holder operating in their circle's domain (e.g., Infrastructure Lead, Treasurer, ARC Reviewer).
- How it is measured: the role holder logs an advice note (who was asked, what was learned, the decision). Post-hoc review if anyone flags risk.
- Why here: fastest path that still includes the right voices; avoids bottlenecks.

Consent | Sociocracy (default for policy)

Plain-English: A proposal becomes policy when no one has a reasoned objection tied to the circle's aim and domain. We test proposals with rounds, add safeguards, and always include a review date.

- Where we use it: policies and standards (ARC guidelines, plowing standards, fines policy, communications norms, reserve study cadence).
- Who calls it: the circle that owns the domain; the Facilitator runs the process; Secretary records policy and review date.

- How it is measured: objection rate, number of integrations, on-time policy reviews, outcomes vs. stated safeguards.
- Why here: balances safety with learning speed; builds shared ownership.

Supermajority Votes (Owner legitimacy)

Plain-English: When choices affect every owner's wallet or title, we escalate to the Owners' Assembly and require broad support.

- Where we use it: annual budget and dues (3/4), bylaw amendments (3/4), major capital or multi-year contracts (2/3), reserve policy (2/3).
- Who calls it: General Circle (GC) refers items to the Owners' Assembly; Treasurer and Secretary prepare materials.
- How it is measured: quorum, vote counts, proxy tracking, and post-decision implementation review.
- Why here: confers democratic legitimacy on high-impact decisions.

Consensus (rare; identity-level)

Plain-English: Everyone agrees or no one blocks. We reserve this for charter-level or identity decisions where unresolved dissent would poison the well. If two facilitated cycles and mediation fail to land unanimity, we fall back to a 3/4 supermajority to avoid gridlock.

- Where we use it: Charter, values statements, purchase/sale of common land, structural title changes.
- Who calls it: Owners' Assembly.
- How it is measured: gradients-of-agreement straw polls, documented objections, mediated integration attempts.
- Why here: preserves cohesion on existential choices while keeping an escape hatch.

Decision Styles at a Glance

Style	Use	Who Calls / Decides	Meeting	Rule / Threshold	Measurement
Advice Process	Routine operations; reversible steps within policy/budget	Role holder in domain	No meeting required (log and inform)	Consult expertise + affected; decide; inform	Advice note; post-hoc review
Consent	Policies/standards inside a circle's domain	Domain circle (Facilitator runs; Secretary records)	Circle meeting (rounds)	No reasoned objection; review date required	Objection rate; integrations; review outcomes
Supermajority 2/3	Large spend; multi-year contracts; reserve policy	Owners' Assembly	Assembly session	2/3 of units in favor	Quorum + vote log; implementation review
Supermajority 3/4	Bylaws; budget & dues; major capital; circle map changes	Owners' Assembly	Annual or special Assembly	3/4 of units in favor	Quorum + vote log; implementation review
Consensus (rare)	Charter; identity-level choices	Owners' Assembly	Special session with facilitation	Unanimity /no blocks; fallback 3/4	Straw polls; documented integrations; mediation trail

Circles (Domains, Decisions, Projects)

We organize work in double-linked circles. Each circle elects a Facilitator, Secretary, Lead, and Delegate. Policy decisions inside a domain use consent; day-to-day actions use the advice process.

- **Facilitator: process pilot**
Runs rounds/consent; sets agenda; time-boxes.
Outcome: clear decision, owner, review date. (*Not the boss.*)
- **Secretary: memory & sunlight**
Minutes, policy library, Domain Registry.
Tracks review dates and quorum/thresholds.
- **Lead (Circle Lead): aim steward**
Prioritizes work; clears blockers; triggers advice process.
Escalates cross-domain stuff to GC. (*Also not the boss.*)
- **Delegate (Rep Link): two-way bridge**
Carries circle needs up; brings policy/context down.
Prevents surprises; flags impacts early.
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General Circle (GC) cross-domain policy hub

Domain: the overall health of governance; circle map and domains; cross-circle coordination; community-wide policies; escalation and appeals.

- Typical decisions/projects: publish Domain Registry; maintain decision matrix; refer owner-level items to the Assembly; oversee transparency and records.
- Decision methods: consent for cross-domain policy; refer to Assembly for supermajority items.
- Meetings: monthly (90 minutes) with documented agenda, rounds, and open decisions list.

Finance & Legal: money, contracts, compliance

Domain: budgets and dues proposals; reserve study/cadence; contracts and insurance; filings; fines policy (with ARC input).

- Typical decisions/projects: annual budget draft; reserve targets; vendor RFP criteria; collections workflow; fines schedule policy.
- Decision methods: consent for policy; advice for routine payments and bookkeeping; Assembly supermajority for budget/dues and large spend.

- Meetings: monthly, with quarterly pre-Assembly reviews.

Infrastructure & Maintenance: roads, water, septic, utilities, safety

Domain: maintenance standards and schedules; vendor performance; emergency protocols (two-key rule with Treasurer for urgent spend).

- Typical decisions/projects: road grading plan; winter plowing standards; well/septic service contracts; emergency response checklist.
- Decision methods: consent for maintenance standards; advice for work orders and scheduling; emergency advice with post-hoc review.
- Meetings: monthly or as needed during active projects.

Land Stewardship ecology, trails, forestry

Domain: land-use standards within easements; trail building/maintenance; invasive species management; pond/erosion projects.

- Typical decisions/projects: trail plan and signage; invasive removal schedule; pond aeration; native plant guidelines.
- Decision methods: consent for standards; advice for volunteer days and minor purchases; Assembly 2/3 for capital projects over 10% budget.
- Meetings: monthly in season; bimonthly otherwise.

Design Review (ARC) exteriors, structures, sightlines

Domain: architectural standards; review of minor/moderate/major changes; variance process; view-shed conflicts.

- Typical decisions/projects: exterior palette updates; solar install standards; fence/shed specs; variance hearings.
- Decision methods: advice for minor items; consent for moderate items; escalate to GC on appeal; Assembly 2/3 for variances affecting common interests.
- Meetings: monthly docket; applicants present facts then recuse from decision rounds.

Community & Events communications, gatherings, shared assets

Domain: community announcements; shared space guidelines; events calendar; assets checkout (chairs, projector, tools).

- Typical decisions/projects: newsletter cadence; shared-space use policy; quarterly gatherings; tool library rules.

- Decision methods: consent for community-wide norms; advice for event ops and scheduling.
- Meetings: monthly; combine with town-hall when useful.

Conflict & Care mediation and restorative processes

Domain: voluntary mediation; restorative circles; conflict education; recommendations. This circle does not enforce or levy penalties.

- Typical decisions/projects: mediation protocols; training; referral pathways.
- Decision methods: consent for process policies; advice for case handling; Finance/GC handle any enforcement per policy.
- Meetings: monthly; ad-hoc for active cases.

Examples by Circle

Circle	Example Decision/Project	Method	Why This Method
General Circle	Adopt community-wide communications norms	Consent	Policy touching all circles; safe-to-try with review date
Finance & Legal	Approve RFP criteria for plowing vendor	Consent	Standards guiding recurring vendor choices
Finance & Legal	Issue monthly payments under contract	Advice	Routine ops within budget and policy
Infrastructure	Set winter plowing trigger and route priority	Consent	Service-level definition with safety implications
Infrastructure	Authorize emergency tree removal after storm	Advice (two-key)	Urgent, reversible; post-hoc review
Land Stewardship	Adopt trail signage standards	Consent	Policy; low cost to iterate
ARC	Approve shed per published spec	Advice	Minor, standardized change
ARC	Decide on variance for height increase	Consent → Assembly 2/3 (if appealed)	Higher impact; ensure legitimacy
Community & Events	Adopt shared-space booking rules	Consent	Norms; needs group buy-in
Ombuds	Update mediation intake form	Consent	Process policy within domain

Measurement, Transparency, and Cadence

- Secretary maintains a Decision Log: proposals, objections, safeguards, owners, review dates, outcomes.
- Treasurer tracks implementation metrics for money-related decisions (budget vs. actual, reserve levels, contract KPIs).
- Owners' Assembly meets quarterly; GC meets monthly (90 minutes). Async consent may be used for low-risk policy changes with a 72-hour window.

Who Calls What (Trigger Rules)

- If it's a one-off action inside policy and budget: advice process by the role holder.
- If it sets a repeating rule or standard inside a domain: consent in that circle.
- If it crosses domains: consent in the General Circle (get advice from affected circles first).
- If it affects every owner's wallet or title: refer to Owners' Assembly (2/3 or 3/4 as specified).
- If it defines identity (charter/values/common land): consensus (fallback to 3/4 if two cycles + mediation fail).