



501c3/c4 Council Meeting Minutes
6:30/7:00 pm, Monday, April 15th, 2019
Metro Justice Office

Attendance: Aaron, Andrew, Julie, Evelyn, Marcus, Michael, Christine, Crescenzo, Denise, Jack, Mohini, Robert, Mahima, Rohith.

(Andrew informally reminds us all to buy Annual Dinner tickets and, if possible, to donate items or services for the auction.)

Called to Order: 7:03pm

- **Minutes Approved** (as Amended by Marcus) - Crescenzo moved, Christine seconded.
- **Opening Remarks:** (Aaron) Today's a special meeting to focus on strategy. This is a necessary and natural discussion we need to have to figure out next steps post-FF15. As a result of FF15, MJ was a leader in local and statewide communities on a key issue. This built our membership, coincided with the Strategic Plan, and brought in funds. Since then, we've made short-term decisions about where to put our energy and resources. We now have the opportunity to refocus on strategy in the long-term. We didn't have a strategic plan back when we adopted the FF15 campaign. Members raised question of how FF15 built MJ, how'd it fit with MJ's other work. With this conversation, we have a chance to look at our goals and possibilities of next core campaign. Should build the organization, bring in funds, and fit with our strategic plan. Keep in mind our deficit challenge. Due to error in how we'd counted some of the JLUSA grant money, our deficit is even bigger than we budgeted. When we don't have cash flow, we have to dip into reserves for payroll, budget notwithstanding. We may have to look at staff-time reductions. This can also be the beginning of a conversation about how to transition to more member-driven model that relies less on staff. We have a lot of ideas to discuss. We're asking each campaign committee to do their own internal strategic evaluations. We tend not to monetize things like food, space, and transportation. We should take advantage of grants to cover some of those things we're already doing.
- **Strategy Discussion:** (Andrew) Quick review of Strategic Plan (more detail in Exec. minutes). Education for Liberation is our popular education work - did one workshop around Trump election, but not much activity since. Hoping can catalyze new campaigns and internal development. Need to revitalize that. (Mohini) (had surgery - doing her best) Youth organizing goal was to hire 2-3 youth organizers in '17 and double for '18. Instead we just hired for '18. Had 3 great folks, but didn't keep them engaged after. Important to develop youth as tomorrow's leadership, and interest in RCSD Student Unionism. Need funding to hire student staff. FF15/1FW, had maintained low-wage worker coalition with

unions and other allies. MJ was cornerstone of that and since we lost FF15 grants, those have lain fallow. Low-wage worker organizing is part of plan that applies to most people. Possibility of low-wage worker organizing (alongside Workers United), but nothing solid so far. Keep union messaging even though we're not doing it right now. (Andrew) New Member Orientations have been reasonably successful. Hope to do more, but having staff capacity issues. It's an easy thing that doesn't have to be staff-run. Had reached out to People's Action for national affiliation at time of Strategic Plan. Went through the whole affiliation process, then they ghosted us. We realized that People's Action didn't really align with our goals in similar vein as CANY. Left Roots alternative, as is Right to the City Alliance. Something to consider. Communications committee autonomously can do media work for MJ. Exists, is member-run, has had some turn-over resulting in somewhat sporadic work, but has stayed focused on building content for MJ. Built a protocol for how to share messaging between committees, leadership, membership. Climate Justice was broadly articulated in Plan, that we'd try for intersectional just transition perspective. We've been building relationships with others - mainly RPCC, also Our Streets. We've learned a lot about the environmental movement in town. Aaron and Mohini came up with vision statement for how MJ should engage, using this to build Climate Action committee.

- Developing Core Campaigns (mohini) Want main fight to not just be issue fight, but to build public organizations of grassroots power. Also that it fit into our issues/politics. Revolutionary Edge of Reform (fights that are critical victories and lay the groundwork for next fight). As we evaluated our work, looked at all these things. Found that Healthcare, Elder Justice remain issue-based committees, should focus on building MJ membership and issue fights. Climate and Criminal Justice - lots of potential for finding next big fight. Student union, LGBT still in early stages. Read over Climate Justice report section, then Criminal Justice section. (Christine) LGBT coming along well thru summer, but at the end of summer when shit hit the fan it fell apart in an ugly way. Things now looking up, but Mohini's right that it's not ready to be source of a big fight as of yet. (Mohini) RCSD Student Union has lots of potential on many issues. Julie suggests intersection between RCSD student organizing and climate justice issues, given how youth-led the global climate justice movement has been. (Rohith) Understand our take on Climate, but harder to see way forward given the wide variety of pre-existing groups, etc (personal capacity). (Aaron) Education critical starting point for Climate Justice. (Marcus) Environmental racism is easily quantifiable. Always gonna be hard to conceptualize the issue globally, but should concretely focus on local, local historical polluters in/around black and brown red-lined communities. (Jack) The question that'll come up outside of MJ is "why do we need another environmental group?" Sierra Club, Chamber of Commerce supporting carbon tax and other market solutions. Giving over climate strategy to corporate sector. Hope folks will go ask hard questions. So there's ideological terrain here. (Aaron) Question of core campaign is essentially the question of Mohini's time. (Andrew) Core campaigns have advantages, but also some drawbacks (other campaigns feeling sidelined, etc). (Mahima) Seems both Climate

and Criminal sections have Neighborhood assemblies as a major option. (Mohini) This is largely new/uncharted territory. Would require lots of research both on local neighborhood groups and success stories both historical and elsewhere. (Michael) About 10yrs ago, head of Brighton neighborhood association wrote up something awful about “city kids” - 8 years later Michael had BLM sign defaced 2x and the association urged members to all put BLM signs up. The point is that the political character of these spaces is largely coincidental based on current leaderships. (Aaron) Cooperation Jackson one of the stronger examples of this. Local-level electeds accountable to assemblies. (Crescenzo) There’s also a (whiter) new england town hall tradition. (Michael) Hard for Ciudad Hermana to do long-term planning because so much of the work isn’t here and depends on folks on ground in Nicaragua because they set the agenda for us to support. Probably good idea for RJI. We should never again get to a place where majority of our funding comes from external grants. (Rohtih) Healthcare committee leaders were largely trained thru FF15. (Mohini) Lack of prioritization means less effectiveness. (Michael) When Jon Greenbaum left he’d been working on 11 campaigns at once - we don’t wanna get to that point. (Aaron) Having lots of smaller grants rather than one big one is more stable. (Michael) We can get 10% of grants for allied groups w/o tax ID to use MJ as a fiscal sponsor. (Mohini) We have such potential to lead not just follow/help, we need to use it. (Denise) In favor of a core campaign. Need to be careful about the care for existing campaigns and task forces. Can’t imagine MJ w/o being forefront of single-payer. Positioning ourselves as leading on critical issues can have broad transformative ripple effects. Moment is now, we’re well-positioned. Gotta busily recruit core leaders. (Christine) Understanding of interconnectivity of struggles is a key selling point, especially for those most marginalized. We all win more when we all win more. (Rohith) Coming up with new campaign will take a lot of creativity, may not be us capable of that. We should solicit membership input more broadly.

- **Funding:** (Andrew) \$178k to maintain current status. We raise ~100k. If want to expand our staff to FF15 levels, need to raise \$2-300k. If there’s a plan to go another way (less staff-reliant, more member-reliant). We’ve had to dip into reserves to make payroll last few months (never happened before). May happen again around summer. Whatever focus/structure we choose should bear in mind to energize our fundraising as well. Easier to fundraise around stuff people are passionate about. Need to revitalize grassroots fundraising events, leaders to run point. (Aaron) RPCC’s seemed interested in more of Jay’s time, which will reduce his time spent on grants for MJ. One of the ideas from Exec. meeting was looking at doing more frequent Orientations (originally planned for 6 per year). Can easily be led by folks who aren’t staff, and more often. (Mahima) Was at the first one and the last one. Meeting people, cross-pollination super useful. (Aaron) Also useful to retain people beyond a single issue/point of engagement. Better sense of the whole. (Jack) Movement built on sense of community. (Denise) The hard nut to crack here is building members to begin with, then feed them into orientations, film series, etc to help bond people to a sense of collective belonging. We know how to do this - it’s a question of getting our process lined up and

stating clear goals. (Andrew) 490-550 MJ members at any given moment. (Mohini) This relates to still-open question of minimum dues. Gotta sell people on value of dues. We should consider raising it. (Christine) Suggests \$5/month, which is \$60/year. Don't be afraid to ask high. (Jack) In PJEC, there'd been resistance to pledge system, but eventually found that it worked. We always made clear that we're not gonna turn anybody away for lack of funds. Being able to cover those who can't afford dues can also be selling point for higher-target donors. (Marcus) Majority of donations are \$30-50. (Crescenzo) We'll need clearly public-facing single point of contact to reach out to for sub-minimum dues/waivers for membership. (Rohith) Suggests testing a transition up to higher minimum over course over a few years. (Denise) Suggests referring this to Finance and Membership Committees. Jim Bearden head of Membership, Marcus for Finance. Back in the day when we didn't have money staff sometimes didn't get paid. (Aaron) Important for Council to stay on membership retention. Whether or not we spend Council time making calls, lapsed members should get calls from leadership. (Julie) Question about getting funding through United Way. (Marcus) Lots of bureaucratic hoops to jump through, plus somewhat centrist politics. (Crescenzo) Suggest that that should be approached from a position of strength, not our current one. (Jack) Remember critique of United Way as system of system-supporting charity. Important to stay independent. (Denise) After Annual Dinner, what about a mailing to members making specific appeal based on deficit. Target specific funding needs. Call around to bigger donors. We have to build a sense of urgency without scaring people, but challenging them to give a little extra push. (Marcus) That's good, transparent. (Rohith) Healthcare emails automatically have nationbuilder donation link. (Denise) Couple this with what we want to do, be specific. (Andrew) Big mailing (1000~) costs about \$100. (Robert) Gotta frame as issue of value of membership control/independence/autonomy. Important for members to progress over time in their contributions, not just level out. Not saying to scare people, but membership goes up under GOP presidents - so we need to galvanize around threat. (Andrew) Harder question is what're we gonna do? Jim Bearden's working on a donation-matching grant. Easier to get money when it's for specific organizing goals. (Evelyn) We've been talking about minimum dues issue for months. Let's move on this. Maybe we need to challenge ourselves to give more. (Crescenzo) Suggests once we have dues decision, Communications could make a PSA-type thing of leadership talking about our own giving. (Jack) Better to make these kinds of changes as infrequently as possible. Suggests giving tiers with cute names. (Denise) Important to separate a few questions. Dues question is independent of current funding crisis, and of core campaign question. Attach urgent fundraising campaign to the struggle. (Marcus) We didn't spend much time on the worse-case scenario, having to reduce staff-time, etc. This funding crisis is an existential threat to MJ. If we don't beat the deficit this year, we're gonna be in a really bad position next year. We spend \$105k in personnel costs. Halving that would yield less savings the longer delayed the decision. (Robert) If we establish core campaign, it's first step but in and of itself doesn't solve money problem. (Aaron) Increasing dues will be a slow build that'll

keep us independent, but isn't an immediate solution either. (Denise) Is the additional 20k deficit what tipped John Keevert into panic mode. What kind of metrics would we need to buy us some time/morale. (Andrew) At present, no systematized fundraising goals by Finance and Membership/Fundraising Committees. (Mahima) Sounds like we're talking about a 1-time big fundraising ask, and secondly increasing membership dues overall. Let's concretize this. (Andrew) Can get a call-every-member list to us by next Council meeting. **MOTION PASSES.** (Crescenzo) Moves we expect a Minimum Dues Proposal from both Finance and Membership/Fundraising by next Council. Christine seconds. **MOTION PASSES.** Suggestion to revisit the core campaign question in more depth next Council.