

**ZONTA NORTH AMERICAN INTER-DISTRICT MEETING**  
**Session on Leadership and Consensus Building**  
**June 7, 2009**

**SUMMARY OF PIP MARY ELLEN BITTNER'S REMARKS:**

- Leadership and members must agree on what Zonta is about.
- Consensus makes for a strong organization
- Communication is needed to achieve consensus. There is a need to discuss issues and candidates beyond the current information available.
- Use of online tools, such as Google, to translate is useful in promoting discussion among districts with different language preferences.
- Section 2 of the ZI Rules of Procedure, 3. Circularization, prohibits internal discussion needs to be abandoned:

“Zontians will not use membership lists to contact other Zontians for the purposes of lobbying for proposals that will be voted on, or candidates who are running for office, at international conventions, district conferences or other Zonta meetings.”
- Zontians discuss and advocate; they do not “lobby” as a lobbyist is paid for this type of activity.
- Prohibiting speech is not enforceable, so why try; freedom of speech is an inherent part of a “democratic” organization.
- People need to be informed in order to build consensus and make good decisions.
- Leadership training is part of consensus building and promoting free discussion.

**FEEDBACK FROM BREAKOUT GROUPS ON THIS QUESTION:**

**What can be done to further promote leadership and consensus building within Zonta at Club, District, and International levels?**

**1. COMMUNICATIONS at all levels to promote leadership and consensus building**

- Increase online discussion boards (with security), as building consensus takes more time
  - Club level online; multicultural aspects
- Idea to use annual surveys to get member's input on club goals/service projects, etc. - what do members really want from their club
- Lack of communication between club leaders and members and International/District and members
- Structure of communications:
  - Formal structure: ZI -> Governor -> Area -> Club member
  - Revise: what communications
    - must be “limited” or changed to formal structure
    - can be open and direct to members
  - Role of newsletter in communications is unclear if not disseminated widely
  - District “rules” and policy and politics can have a negative impact on communication.

## **2 – DISTRICT’s role in promoting leadership and consensus building:**

Current weaknesses in leadership and consensus building: District boards are political and a popularity contest. Zontians must wait to be asked to run for a leadership position. Club image is important in being selected, and there is a pecking order.

Recommendations:

- Must have a functional board
- Use ZI manuals
- Use succession planning with workshops
- Promote skill building through mentoring
- Start early to identify leaders (succession planning)
- Share area meetings – all area meetings should have the same agenda so if you cannot make yours, you can attend another in the district.
- Leadership training for consistency in roles
- Board retreat promotes consensus building
- Set district goals with consensus
- District leaders: inter-district meetings are important
- Rules and Roles:
  - Governor – nurture, support members, area
  - Area: nurture, support clubs
  - President: nurture, support clubs

## **3 - Issues pertaining to ZI BOARD in promoting leadership and consensus building:**

- Need by-law amendment circulation issue re discussion and election of candidates:
  - prevent any restriction of discussion;
  - an explanation brings clarity of issue.
- Discussed importance of having International provide the template/outline of leadership training that should be done at the district and club levels; concern expressed about termination of work done by Leadership Training committee
- Concern about future of our organization to survive and/or be successful long-term
- Despite what/how recent issues occurred and were handled by ZI/ZIF boards, we need to move forward and work together to ensure we can continue as an organization and be successful in advancing the status of women locally and globally
- Ongoing succession planning must be done at all levels
- Leadership training must be done at club and district levels