

To the GSNEO Board of Directors,

It has been suggested that if the board were to consider any alternative to its current property plan, it would need a proposal to consider.

I have been hesitant about making such a proposal because the resolution that has already passed gives full discretion to the board other than requiring final approval from the assembly – approval that would likely be given following a reasonable re-evaluation.

While this in no way seeks to limit that, I would like to submit some factors for consideration:

1. According to the recent presentation by Branstetter Carroll, the projected cost of developing Ledgewood ( LW ) , Sugarbush ( SB ) , and Timberlane ( TL ) , will far exceed the income derived from selling Crowell Hilaka ( C/H ) , Lejnar ( LJ ) , and Pleasant Valley ( PV ) .
2. Retaining C/H, LJ, and PV will eliminate the need to develop additional capacity at LW, SB, and TL . It will also eliminate the need to enlarge the ponds at LW and SB, since C/H and LJ each feature two large lakes.
3. The Western Reserve Land Conservancy, which has a purchase agreement for Camps Crowell Hilaka and Lejnar, seeks to preserve land, not to own it. It has been suggested that selling camps to WRLC would mean they would be preserved as parkland and still be accessible to Girl Scouts. However, this is not necessarily the case. The land would not be developed, but there is no guarantee that its ultimate owner would allow public access.

On the other hand, it is very likely that WRLC would consider offering generous conservation easements on the properties if the title remained with GSNEO . Such an easement at Crowell Hilaka could be enough to pay for the major repair items on that property, including the increased capacity of the lower lake required for flood control. It may be possible to accomplish this with a retaining pool downstream of the dam, which, if I understand the ODNR report correctly, is basically structurally sound.

4. Income earned through the Chesapeake lease at Great Trail Camp ( GT ) that can be used first for the repair and maintenance of that camp before other properties.

5. The membership property survey indicated that families are OK with longer travel times for resident camp programs than for troop camping. It may be possible to meet our council needs for resident camp at SB and TL alone until the sewage treatment issue at LW is resolved. This can take the time pressure off from getting these repairs completed immediately.
  
6. Close regional offices. Even if the properties are not sold immediately, the savings could be significant. This was true when the north region office was closed. Much business can be conducted electronically. Regional staff could work out of their homes and still be available to visit their clients on site as needed. Mobile offices can be available from time to time at the camps.

The membership is fully aware that large sums of money are required for basic upkeep of all camps, for needed safety certifications, and for ADA compliance. (Note: ACA certification is nice, but not required by the state) However, the membership has also clearly demonstrated their belief in the importance of these places, as well as their willingness to support them. We have a very strong volunteer base in Northeast Ohio, one that insists on justice flowing both ways. This can work to the good of all.

7. Make the Friends groups for each camp hold shared responsibility for the camps.

Given the success of FoCH and Camp Friends to build community relationships, raise money, maintain trails, organize events, provide programming for girls, provide campership for girls, monitor and maintain the property, I believe there would be very strong support for and participation in such responsibility.

If the Friends groups were to raise money for repairs at camp, there would need to be some assurance that the properties would, in fact be kept. This would need to be negotiated. No one wants to see their donations squandered or disrespected.

I believe most members would accept a "use it or lose it" contingency. If volunteers were not willing to help out at a property, or if a property was not

being adequately used, it would need to be relinquished in accordance with the resolution and any subsequent GSNEO policies .

GSNEO would maintain a centralized, online registration system, be responsible for collecting usage and program data, allocating council funds to each camp proportionate to its program usage. It would act as fiduciary sponsor for groups that require it.

GSNEO would facilitate a standing committee of Friends Groups to be under the direction of the GSNEO board. This group would work with council administration to co-ordinate programs, publicity, and projects, to discuss shared issues. Not only would this be an excellent avenue to for working together on issues dear tot eh membership, it would also be an excellent way for girls to get beginning experience in committee work .