



# BUCKS COUNTY SOCIALISTS CONSTITUTION

## Article I. The Collective

Bucks County Socialists (BCS) is a multi-tendency political organization committed to education and base-building in pursuit of justice for poor and working people and toward the advancement of a broader struggle against capitalism.

As socialists, we share a vision of a society based on the democratic control of production and resources. A society in which science, technological mastery, and the limitless creativity of humankind are leveraged to reduce the toil and multiply the pleasures of all, rather than serving to maximize the wealth and power of a few. A society where the twin forces of private property and the state have been abolished, and alternative institutions of community empowerment have arisen to take their place.

As a multi-tendency organization, we draw influence from a vast number of trends and movements within the socialist tradition, both past and present. This being the case, theoretical and practical disagreements between members do occur, and are encouraged. Though we strive for consensus decision-making, informed debate and a diversity of tactics are the essence of our democratic functioning. Members of the collective are committed to a unity of action.

We unequivocally oppose racism, sexism, xenophobia, and anti-LGBTQ discrimination. In view of this, we work to disrupt any attempt to organize in the defense of privilege and oppression in our communities.

We invite every individual to whom these values appeal to join us.

## Article II. General Membership

Members of Bucks County Socialists are expected to adhere to the constitution and to demonstrate the values contained herein. In addition, members are expected to contribute regular dues and to commit to a minimum number of hours engaged in the activities of the collective each month, barring exceptions as outlined in articles V and VI.

Any person who, fulfilling the above criteria and with the approval of the collective, expresses their intent to be a member shall from that point forward be eligible to vote for as long as they remain active and in good-standing (i.e. dues-current or exempt).

Additionally, members who are active in good-standing have the right to:

- Bring motions to a vote before the collective.
- Fill an elected role.
- Speak and *be heard* at all meetings, closed and public.
- Be treated with kindness and consideration befitting a comrade.

## Article III. Elected Roles

Members of Bucks County Socialists who dedicate additional labor in the interest and with the approval of the collective are said to be fulfilling an elected role. A member who wishes to volunteer to fill an elected role must be active in good-standing and garner two-thirds approval from membership in order to become active within that role. The status of a member being active in an elected role can be revoked at any time with a motion of no confidence backed by at least 50% of membership.

### A. Chair

The Chair is responsible for scheduling meetings, setting agendas, and reserving physical spaces as necessary. The chair is considered the primary point of contact for those reaching out to the collective and an intermediary between Bucks County Socialists and other organizations.

### B. Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for taking and recording meeting minutes and disseminating them throughout the collective. In order to ensure transparency, for the proceedings of any meeting to be valid the elected

secretary or an acting substitute must be present to record and publish the minutes. The secretary is also tasked with alerting all members not present for a vote of their right to an absentee ballot.

#### **C. Treasurer**

The Treasurer is responsible for collecting dues and maintaining a written record of all transactions undertaken by the collective. Any member who can not meet their monthly dues obligation should inform the treasurer directly, so that they may be counted as exempt. The treasurer may at no time act unilaterally to allocate funds, but rather, must abide by all resolutions enacted by the general membership concerning the budget. Nevertheless, as the individual responsible for overseeing the finances of the organization, priority consideration should be given to budget proposals brought before the collective by the treasurer.

#### **D. Mediator**

The Mediator is an advocate for individual members vis-à-vis the collective as well as the primary arbiter of any interpersonal conflicts that arise. It is the duty of the mediator to assist members in meeting their requirements for minimum engagement, whatever form they may take, and to keep track of monthly exceptions thereof. The mediator fills the role of a trusted intermediary and peacemaker, not judge and jury. It is the responsibility of the entire collective to decide how best to resolve disputes that resist attempts at mediation. While all elected roles are subject to the approval of the collective, it is of particular importance that those selected to become mediator display a history of even-handedness and empathy in their dealings with individuals throughout the organization, as these traits are essential to the performance of the role.

#### **E. Marxist Center Delegate**

The Marxist Center Delegate is tasked with representing Bucks County Socialists on the Delegate Council of the national Marxist Center network pursuant to the Collective Membership affiliation requirements outlined in Appendix B.

## **Article IV. Quorum and Majorities**

Bucks County Socialists maintains a commitment to consensus decision-making. In cases where consensus is not possible or when circumstances

dictate that a decision be made swiftly, any motion that receives greater than 50% of the vote passes. Members who do not wish to vote on a particular motion may abstain.

Proposed amendments to this constitution require a two-thirds majority of the entire membership in order to be ratified.

At this time, Bucks County Socialists defines quorum on an ad hoc basis. Any member who is in attendance when a vote is taking place reserves the right to request that a motion be tabled until a larger section of membership can be assembled, provided that a majority of the entire membership has not already been realized.

Any member who is not in attendance when a vote is taking place may vote retroactively on any motion that passed while they were not present, provided it has been no more than one week since the publication of the minutes pertaining to the meeting where the vote took place.

It is the responsibility of the secretary to ensure that minutes are made available in a timely manner and that all votes that take place in a meeting are given adequate prominence within the document.

Additionally, it is expected that the secretary will contact individual members who were not present when a vote was taking place to provide them with the opportunity to vote by absentee ballot.

In the event that a retroactive vote reverses an outcome, actions sanctioned by the motion shall cease or commence with respect to the new result.

Any member can nullify a vote that they believe, in good faith, to have not met the standards of transparency delineated above.

## Article V. Dues Structure

In order to fund the activities of the collective, members of Bucks County Socialists will be asked to pay regular monthly dues beginning May 1, 2018, to be collected no later than the 1st of each month thereafter.

Dues are to be assessed at \$1 to \$5 a month, with members expected to contribute the maximum amount they feel they can afford, not exceeding \$5.

Monthly payments to the collective in excess of \$5 can be used to fulfill the dues obligation of subsequent months at the request of the contributor, but will otherwise be treated as donations.

Dues are collected and recorded by the treasurer, who is expected to retain complete transparency in regard to the reserve and allocation of funds.

Inability to pay dues shall never be a barrier to membership in Bucks County Socialists. Any member experiencing financial hardship may reduce or otherwise eliminate their dues burden and remain in good-standing provided they are meeting requirements for minimum engagement and have informed the treasurer directly of their appeal for exemption.

## Article VI. Minimum Engagement

Members of Bucks County Socialists are expected to maintain a minimum level of engagement with the collective in the form of hours spent participating in meetings and project work. This minimum is to be set at three hours per month. It is the responsibility of individual members to keep track of their own engagement, bearing in mind that the success of the collective is contingent on the contributions of its members.

Members for whom life circumstances prevent the fulfillment of the requirement for minimum engagement can at any time request that they be exempted for a period of one month by contacting the mediator directly. It is the responsibility of the mediator to keep a record of the number of consecutive exceptions claimed by individual members.

As a participatory organization, it is important that safeguards be put in place to ensure that those who are not actively involved in the collective are not able to influence its direction. Therefore, members who continue to pay dues while having claimed the minimum engagement exception for three consecutive months will be considered inactive. An inactive member is understood to be in good-standing, but is ineligible to vote on any measure until the requirement for minimum engagement has once again been met, at which time the three-month limit will reset.

## Appendix A. Amendments

This appendix shall serve as a repository of proposed amendments to the above constitution until a time when they have been either ratified or withdrawn from consideration.

## Appendix B. Marxist Center Collective Affiliation

Collectives, organizations, caucuses, individual branches of larger organizations, and/or factions are allowed to affiliate if they meet the following requirements:

A) They must agree to points of unity.

B) They must agree to respect the decisions of elected Arbiters until such time as a full constitution can be drawn up and approved.

C) They must be actively involved in organizing efforts which broadly align with a socialist base-building strategy.

D) Collective dues will be calculated at \$1 per person per month. So for instance if an organization has 10 members, they should be contributing \$10 a month in total. In the situation that organizations can not pay for members due to financial hardship, they may appeal to the Delegate for solidarity dues.

E) If an individual is a member of an affiliate organization, they are granted full membership rights within the network.

F) The network reserves the right to reject a collective's admittance for any reason with justification provided to the individual or collective, as signaled by a majority vote of delegates from recognized affiliate collectives. This process will be organized by the network's elected Arbiters, with final oversight by the delegate council.

G) Similarly, the network reserves the right to disaffiliate with any individual or collective, with adequate due process, for any reason, as signaled by a majority vote of delegates from recognized affiliate collectives. This process will be organized by the network's elected Arbiters, with final oversight by the delegate council.

H) Finally, the network reserves the right to request that an individual be removed from a collective in order for the collective to maintain its status as affiliated. This process will be organized by the network's elected Arbiters, with final oversight by the delegate council.

