

By-laws of the Berks County Green Party

Preamble

Embracing our responsibility to our community and our world, and in the hope of creating an organization that will participate in making Berks County a model for a just and sustainable society, we, the members of the Berks County Green Party, establish these by-laws to govern the operations and functions of this Party.

I. Declarations

The name of this organization shall be the Berks County Green Party (BCGP). The Berks County Green Party is both a political party and a grassroots political activist organization. Only bodies formally empowered by the BCGP, or the Green Party of Pennsylvania, shall be recognized as having any formal power within the structure of the Green Party.

II. Membership

- A. All residents of Berks County who are registered as Green Party voters are considered members of the BCGP. Registered members are encouraged to fill out and submit a membership form.
- B. Individuals who are not registered as Green Party voters may become members by filling out and submitting a membership form to the Organizational Secretary. Membership for individuals who are not registered Green does not begin until the second General Meeting attended. Members who are not registered Green are encouraged to do so.
- C. Only members may vote at General Meetings.
- D. At the discretion of the members present at a meeting, non-members are welcome to participate in discussion.
- E. Members shall be encouraged to make financial contributions, however, recognition of membership is not conditioned on making such contributions.
- F. A complete list of the members of the BCGP shall be kept and maintained by the Organizational Secretary.

III. General Meeting

- A. The General Membership, meeting together at a General Meeting, shall be the highest governing body of the BCGP.
- B. General Meetings are gatherings of the members to consult together, share knowledge and information, and communicate in order to make decisions and otherwise declare, maintain and further the ideal, policies and objectives of the BCGP.
- C. As the main deliberative body of the BCGP, the General Meeting shall have the following functions:

1. Define general goals, policies, and priorities of the BCGP;
2. Make endorsements of candidates and ballot measures;
3. Make recommendations, proposals, and provide direction to the County Committee [Steering Comm.]
4. Review and approve the decisions and actions of all committees, Working Groups, and Neighborhood Groups;
5. Establish and dissolve Working Groups and approve the establishment and dissolution of Neighborhood Groups as required;
6. Issue public statements in the name of the BCGP and approve or retract statements made by any other BCGP body or by any individual claiming to be a representative of the BCGP;
7. Nominate, elect, and recall members of the County Committee;
8. Elect delegates to the Green Party of Pennsylvania;
9. Discuss, deliberate and make decisions on any fundamental issues of policy, strategy, or structure that face the BCGP;
10. Delegate decisions as required to the County Committee, the Finance Committee, a Working Group, or a Neighborhood Group.

- D. General Meetings shall be open to all members of the BCGP and interested observers, but only current members may vote or present concerns that require a vote.
- E. General Meetings must be held at least once every three months, but may be held more frequently at the discretion of the General Meeting or the County Committee with the following exception:
 1. To allow for County Committee Elections, the first General Meeting of each calendar year shall be held before January 31. The second General Meeting shall be held before February 28, at least four weeks after the first meeting.
- F. The quorum necessary to conduct business shall be 5 (five) members exclusive of the County Committee.
- G. Each General Meeting shall be facilitated by a member selected by the County Committee from a pool of Members who have indicated their willingness to discharge this task.
- H. The General Meeting date and location may be set by the County Committee or a General Meeting.
- I. Reasonable effort shall be made to hold all meetings of the BCGP in locations that are accessible to the physically disabled.

IV. County Committee

- A. The General Membership shall elect, from within its body, a County Committee to carry out the will and effectuate the decisions of the General Membership and be responsible for the general administration of the BCGP. The County Committee corresponds to the Steering Committee in other organizations.

- B. The County Committee shall consist of the following seven members; two Co-Chairs, Treasurer, Organizing Secretary, Recording Secretary, and two At-Large Members.
- C. Elections to select the members of the County Committee shall be held every year. The term of the County Committee members shall commence upon election. Each term will last one year.
- D. Only members of the BCGP who are registered with the Green Party may be elected to the County Committee.
- E. In the event of a resignation from the County Committee, the effective date of the vacancy shall be the next General Meeting, to ensure all members are notified. Nominations will begin on the date of the vacancy up until the date of the next General Meeting, when a Special Election will be held to fill the vacancy.
- F. If a vacancy occurs in the office of the Chair, Treasurer, or either Secretary, the County Committee shall insure that the duties of the vacant office shall be carried out until the special election can be held.
- G. The quorum necessary to conduct County Committee business shall be at least four of the seven members. If, due to resignation or recall, the County Committee temporarily has fewer than seven members, the County Committee quorum shall be equal to one less than the total number of remaining County Committee members.
- H. The duties and powers of the County Committee shall be as follows:
 - 1. To propose the agenda for the General Meeting;
 - 2. To monitor all financial activities of the BCGP;
 - 3. To be ultimately responsible for seeing that all financial and legal responsibilities of the BCGP are met;
 - 4. To notify all members and interested parties of all General Meetings and all other BCGP events;
 - 5. To select and train facilitators for General Meetings;
 - 6. To make recommendations and proposals to General Meetings (this power is not exclusive to the County Committee);
 - 7. To ask for and receive reports and recommendations from Working and Neighborhood Groups and standing committees;
 - 8. To coordinate the efforts of the various Working and Neighborhood Groups;
 - 9. To act as a conduit for information between Neighborhood and Working Groups, and to make recommendations to these Groups as indicated;
 - 10. To propose to the General Membership, the creation of new Working and Neighborhood Groups or the dissolution same;
 - 11. To make such decisions as are normally reserved to a General Meeting but which, owing to the need for a timely decision, cannot be delayed until the next scheduled General Meeting. Such decisions shall be subject to revision, rejection, or retraction by a vote or by consensus of the next General Meeting.
 - 12. To issue statements for or to authorize individuals, other than the County Committee Chair, to speak for the BCGP, within the general parameters of established BCGP policy and platform, the Pennsylvania, and Green Party U.S. policies and platforms, and recognized Green values;

13. To make any other decisions which, within reason and without abusing either the spirit or letter of these by-laws, can help to carry out the will of the General meeting or the powers of the various Neighborhood and Working Groups, subject to the approval of the General Membership;
 14. To enter into contracts on behalf of the BCGP. The Co-Chairs and the Organizational Secretary have signatory power, but they may not sign any document on behalf of the BCGP without the approval of the County Committee;
 15. The County Committee is not allowed to authorize any contract or any closely related group of contracts committing the BCGP to expenditure greater than 1/10th the value of the treasury without the prior approval of the General Membership;
- I. It is preferable that the County Committee uses the consensus process for decision-making. The County Committee may, however, establish its own rules of procedure.
 - J. All County Committee meetings shall be open to all Members of the BCGP. These members may participate in the discussion and the consensus process, however, only members of the County Committee may vote, unless the County Committee chooses otherwise.
 - K. The County Committee shall meet on a regular basis and shall make a reasonable effort to schedule meetings at the same time and location, and on the same day of the week. This location and time shall be announced at General Meetings.
 - L. The County Committee shall make a good faith effort to publicize to the General Membership the time and location of any irregularly scheduled meetings.
 - M. Minutes of County Committee meetings shall be made available to all members of the BCGP in a timely basis.
 - N. The County Committee may delegate any of its duties and functions to Internal Committees when needed. Those Internal Committees may contain non-County Committee BCGP members and may act in all other respects as if they were a Working Group of the BCGP, except they shall be directly responsible to the County Committee.
 - O. Roles and Responsibilities of the Officers:
 1. The Co-Chairs of the County Committee shall be responsible for the management of the County Committee. The duties and powers of the Chairs shall be as follows:
 - a. To schedule County Committee meetings;
 - b. To develop an agenda for County Committee meetings;
 - c. To facilitate County Committee meetings, alternating responsibility;
 - d. To act a spokespersons for the BCGP;
 - e. To sign contracts on behalf of the BCGP;
 2. If either Chair is unavailable for a short period of time, the other Co-Chair will perform these functions solely in the interim.

3. The Treasurer of the County Committee shall be responsible for management of the finances of the BCGP and shall be the Chair of the Finance Committee.
4. The duties and powers of the Recording Secretary of the County Committee shall be as follows:
 - a. To record minutes at all County Committee meetings and to see to it that minutes are recorded at all General Meetings;
 - b. To make the minutes of these meetings available to all Members of the BCGP in a timely fashion;
 - c. To ensure that all Committee, Neighborhood, and Working Groups keep minutes and that these minutes are made available to all Members of the BCGP in a timely fashion;
 - d. To provide training in minute taking to committees and groups as requested or as needed;
 - e. To maintain the records of the BCGP in an orderly fashion;
 - f. To ensure that the Membership is informed of the dates and locations of the General Meetings and the County Committee meetings in a timely manner;
5. The Recording Secretary may appoint other members of the BCGP to assist with these tasks.
6. The duties and powers of the Organizational Secretary shall be as follows:
 - a. To maintain complete and accurate information regarding the names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail address and other vital information about the Membership of the BCGP;
 - b. To distribute, collect, and keep records of membership pledge cards;
 - c. To sign contracts on behalf of the BCGP when the Chairs are unable to do so;
7. The duties and powers of the Members at Large shall be as follows:
 - a. To attend and participate fully in all County Committee meetings;
 - b. To ensure that decisions are based on a broad spectrum of the views [General Membership];
 - c. To become fully knowledgeable about all the County Committee offices in order to perform these offices if called upon;

V. Working Groups

- A. Working Groups are associations of members of the BCGP organized to carry out work on a particular issue of interest.

- B. Non-members may also take part in Working Groups. It is up to the discretion of the Working Group whether non-members can participate in decision-making.
- C. By default, Working Groups shall make decisions by consensus, but they may establish their own rules of procedure, according to the specific needs of the Group.
- D. Working Groups shall be established or dissolved by the General Meeting.
- E. Working Groups are responsible for making an annual report to the General Meeting, as well as any other reports that are requested by either the General Membership or the County Committee.
- F. The County Committee will be responsible for keeping track of which groups are active, and which are not.
- G. No working may make any financial commitment or statement on behalf of the BCGP, unless previously authorized by the General Membership or County Committee to do so.

VI. Neighborhood Groups

- A. Neighborhood Groups are Working Groups of the BCGP based in a particular neighborhood or municipality, and focusing on issues concerning that locality.
- B. Any group of members may start a Neighborhood Group. Once they have at least five ongoing, active members, they may submit a mission statement and proposal of responsibilities to the County Committee. The County Committee will be responsible for making sure that the proposals and activities of the new group reflect Green values and are in accord with the goals and purposes of the BCGP. Once a group meets the above criteria, the County Committee shall recommend to the General Meeting that the new group be recognized.
- C. Responsibilities, financial accountability, and other aspects of the relationship of each neighborhood group with the rest of the BCGP, will be negotiated separately by each Neighborhood Group and the County Committee, according to the needs and abilities of a particular neighborhood.
- D. Each Neighborhood Group will have a mission statement and decision-making structure, both of which must conform to recognized Green values and the goals of the BCGP.
- E. Neighborhood Groups must remain active to retain their status.
- F. In all matters pertaining to a Neighborhood Group not governed under this article, or under the terms by which the Neighborhood Group was recognized by the BCGP, the rules set down for Working Groups under Article V shall apply.

VII. Consensus

- A. By default, all bodies of the BCGP shall seek consensus in all decision-making.
- B. Any item or resolution presented to a body of the BCGP which has not chosen another process as provided for under these by-laws must be passed through the following formal process of consensus.

- C. Within the judgment of the facilitator and the limits of the agenda, any item presented to the meeting will be given adequate time for discussion and consideration.
- D. When satisfied that the proposal is sufficiently understood by the membership, the facilitator will ask for, and recognize members to present concerns. Each concern may be addressed by further discussion and proposals to amend the item.
- E. When, in the judgment of the facilitator, concerns have been addressed as well as possible, the facilitator shall call for consensus by asking for any unresolved concerns.
- F. If there are no unresolved concerns, then the proposal has passed.
- G. If unresolved concerns remain, then the facilitator shall ask if the member presenting the concern will stand aside. If the member is willing, then the proposal has passed, and the concern will be recorded verbatim in the minutes of the Meeting.
- H. If, however, the member is unwilling to stand aside, then the Meeting shall proceed to vote on the proposal. The total number of votes for and against the proposal, and the number of abstentions, shall be recorded in the minutes of the Meeting.
- I. A 2/3 majority is required for the proposal to pass.
- J. If the number of members abstaining from a vote is more than 25% of the number of members voting yes and no, then the proposal has not passed.
- K. At the request of any two members, the vote shall be taken by secret ballot.

VIII. Elections

- A. This article describes the nomination and election procedures for County Committee members and State Delegates. For other nominations and elections within any body of the BCGP, the body is free to choose the election procedure.
- B. County Committee Elections
 - 1. Nominations for all members of the County Committee shall take place at the first General Meeting of each year, which shall take place in January.
 - 2. Any member may place names in nomination for any of the seven County Committee seats.
 - 3. Any registered Green may be nominated for a single officer position, an at-large position, or both a single office position and an at-large position.
 - 4. Nominations shall be confirmed by the Organizational Secretary and placed on the ballot.
 - 5. Candidates may make brief speeches to the General Membership at the time of nomination.
 - 6. Nominations shall be posted on the BCGP web site within one week of the first [January] General Meeting.
 - 7. If, for good and sufficient reasons, it is impossible to nominate a candidate, or for a candidate to accept or decline nomination

during this meeting, nominations shall be accepted and confirmed by the Organizational Secretary at any time up to and including the General Meeting at which the balloting occurs. These late nominees may make brief speeches to the membership at the discretion of the Organizing Secretary.

8. If a valid nomination occurs between the meetings, the Organizational Secretary shall notify the entire membership of the name of the new candidate as quickly as possible, using telephone tree and e-mail.
9. Balloting shall take place during the second General Meeting, to be held in February of the same year, no less than 4 weeks and no more than 6 weeks after the January nominating meeting.
10. Voting for all County Committee positions shall be by Secret Ballot.
11. The election of officers occurs before the election of at-large positions because it is possible to run for both an officer position and an at-large position.
12. Each voter selects one candidate for each office. Each election that has a majority winner is over and the candidate who received the majority of the votes is elected.
13. If there is not a majority winner for an officer position, every candidate besides the top two are eliminated, and there is an immediate runoff election between the top two candidates.
14. For the at-large positions, each voter ranks their top three choices in order of preference, assigning "1" to their first choice, "2" to their second choice, and "3" to their third choice. The total number of first choice votes, second choice votes, and third choice votes shall be tabulated for each candidate. Each candidate's total votes shall be the sum of the candidate's first choice votes multiplied by three, the second choice votes multiplied by two, and the third choice votes multiplied by one. Only the two candidates receiving the most total votes described in the process above, shall be elected as the At-large members.

C. Election of State Delegates

1. Four delegates to the General Assembly of the Green Party of Pennsylvania are to be elected using the same method as for County Committee at-large members.
2. State Delegates shall serve one-year terms beginning the date of the statewide Primary Election and ending one (1) day before the following Primary Election.
3. If a delegate resigns or is removed, nominations for a replacement shall be made at the next General Meeting and an election held at the following General Meeting. The County Committee may temporarily fill any vacancies by appointing individuals to be alternate delegates. It may also elect delegates if the General Meeting fails to elect or provide for the election of sufficient delegates.

IX. Candidates for County and Municipal Office

- A. As per Rule IV, Section 2 of the Pennsylvania Green Party: The County Committee holds the exclusive authority to nominate Green Party candidates for county and municipal offices in districts wholly within the counties of their jurisdiction. As soon as possible after the nomination of candidates for public office by the County Committee, the officers of the Committee shall deliver to the county Board of Elections an Authorization of Candidacy listing the officers for which candidates have been nominated and the names and addresses of such candidates. The county Board of Elections shall not certify the nomination of any Green Party candidate for whom such Authorization has not been received. Such authorization may be supplemented at any time prior to the last date on which nomination papers may be filed.
- B. As per Rule V, Section 2 of the Pennsylvania Green Party: Any vacancy happening or existing in the Green nomination for any County or Municipal Office, by reason of death or withdrawal of a candidate, the calling of a special election, or other cause shall be filled in accordance with the rules of the County Committee.
- C. As per Rule III, Section C – 2 of the Berks County Green Party By-Laws: The General Meeting shall make endorsements of candidates and ballot measures.
- D. Based on the principles contained in our 10 Key Values, specifically Decentralization and Grassroots Democracy, nominations and endorsements shall be governed by the following rule:

Registered Greens who live within the district, ward, or precinct shall determine who is their candidate. Those who cannot vote “for or against” the candidate in the subsequent municipal election cannot decide in the endorsement and nomination process. If the only person meeting the criterion of this rule is the actual candidate, the County Committee shall retain the final decision.
- E. The Chair and / or the Secretary shall be responsible for delivering an Authorization of Candidacy to the county Board of Elections on or before the last day for submission of the candidates’ signature petitions. Such authorization may be supplemented at any time prior to the last date on which nomination papers may be filed.

X. Conflict Resolution

- A. Each new County Committee will nominate, and with the consent of the General Meeting, appoint three Arbiters to a Board of Mediation & Arbitration. The term of office of the Board will be the same as the County Committee, except that current Arbiters will continue to serve

- until the new County Committee appoints their replacements. No more than one of the Arbiters can be a member of the County Committee.
- B. The Board of Mediation & Arbitration will have the final say within the BCGP about disputes arising over interpretation of these by-laws. The Board will also mediate disputes between Groups within the BCGP if the County Committee is unable to resolve them, or if the County Committee is a party in the dispute.
 - C. The Board may, if the Arbiters choose, accept an appeal by individual members to mediate a dispute between them.
 - D. The Board will, at the request of the County Committee, a General Meeting, or any Working Group, consider accusations of malfeasance by any Group or individual member, No action on such an accusation may be taken without giving the parties involved notification and ample time to prepare to speak for themselves. The Board will attempt to effect a reasonable solution to the situation and may make recommendations to the Party regarding the matter and related issues. In extreme cases, the Board may censure a Group or member and, with consent of the County Committee, may remove a member's active status.
 - E. Any member of the County Committee who is censured may be removed from office [recall] during the term of the current County Committee by consensus or a 2/3 vote of two consecutive General Meetings, held at least 7 days apart.
 - F. Unless all parties waive this rule, any Arbiter who is a party to any dispute brought before the Board shall stand aside and the remaining Arbiters will appoint a temporary replacement acceptable to all parties in the dispute.

XI. Finance

- A. The Finance Committee of the BCGP is a standing committee of the County Committee.
- B. The Finance Committee is responsible, under the County Committee, for the sound management of the finances of the Party. The duties and responsibilities of the Finance Committee include financial planning, development and monitoring of the budget, financial record keeping, day-to-day fiscal management, and fundraising.
- C. The Finance Committee is empowered to make decisions only within the parameters set down in this Article; the County Committee reserves the right to approve all business decisions made by the Committee. The Finance Committee shall report to the County Committee every month. The Finance Committee is empowered to propose specific rules and guidelines to implement its duties and responsibilities as set down in these by-laws, subject to the approval of the County Committee.
- D. Meetings of the Finance Committee shall be open to all active members.
- E. The Finance Committee will consist of the Treasurer, at least two permanent members, and any other active members of the BCGP who wish to participate.
- F. The County Committee shall appoint, for one-year terms, at least two permanent members to the Finance Committee. The elected members are responsible for attending Finance Committee meetings and insuring that the work of the Committee continues.

- G. The Treasurer will be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee and can, but need not be, a permanent member of the Finance Committee.
- H. The Treasurer is responsible for seeing to it that the day-to-day bills of the BCGP and any other duly budgeted and authorized expenses of the BCGP are paid. The Treasurer is also responsible for insuring the timely reporting of all campaign related financial activities to the governmental authorities. The Treasurer must maintain familiarity with all guidelines and regulations of local, state, and federal government, and for insuring that the BCGP is in compliance with campaign reform laws.
- I. The Treasurer may, with the consent of the County Committee, appoint one or more Assistant Treasurers to help the Treasurer carry out his or her duties.
- J. All revenue and expenses of the BCGP are to be deposited and withdrawn from a single bank account or group of linked accounts. The Treasurer, and at least one other member of the Finance Committee, must be Co-signers on the account.
- K. No transaction may be made with the BCGP funds without proper documentation. All revenue, including cash donations, is to be deposited in one of the BCGP bank accounts. No transactions may be made with non-deposited revenue; all expenses should be paid from one of the BCGP bank accounts. However, the Finance Committee may keep a reserve of petty cash no greater than \$50. Small expenses and reimbursements may be paid out of petty cash provided that all transactions are recorded.
- L. All checks for amounts greater than 1/10th of the bank balance, subject to a \$250 maximum, shall require the signature of two members of the Finance Committee.
- M. If a cash transaction is necessary, and the expense has been budgeted, then an individual may pay the expense, to be reimbursed later.
- N. Any individual who spends personal funds on an expense, which has not been budgeted or specifically approved by the County Committee, will not be reimbursed, unless the unbudgeted expense has received prior approval by the Finance Committee.
- O. All potential fundraising projects must be reviewed by the Finance Committee before implementation. The Finance Committee will evaluate all fundraising projects based on their financial feasibility, including startup costs and potential rate of return. Each fundraising project must report monthly to the Finance Committee, providing details of revenue and expenses as well as rate of return.
- P. Fundraising projects that are losing money may be terminated at the discretion of the Finance Committee.

XII. Amendments

- A. Amendments to these by-laws must be approved first by both the County Committee and then, by two consecutive General Meetings.

Unanimously adopted on July 10, 2001

Devaki Leon, Douglas Twp, Co-Chair
Dorothy Schebier, Douglas Twp, Co-Chair
Vincent Chiles, Amity Twp, Treasurer
Heather Urkuski, Centre Twp, Organizational Secretary
Rick Page, Hamburg Boro, Recording Secretary
Jennaro Pullano, City of Reading, At-large Member
Michael Morrill, West Reading Boro, At-large Member

Unanimously amended on March 11th, 2003

Stefan Kosikowski, City of Reading, Co-Chair
Danelle Bower, Port Clinton Boro, Co-Chair
Fred Keller, Pricetown Boro, Treasurer
Heather Urkuski, City of Reading, Organizing Secretary
Jim Keller, West Reading Boro, Recording Secretary
Jennaro Pullano, City of Reading, At-large Member
Natalka Wiszczur, Exeter Twp, At-large Member

Unanimously amended on December 9th, 2003

Stefan Kosikowski, City of Reading, Co-Chair
Danelle Bower, Port Clinton Boro, Co-Chair
Fred Keller, Pricetown Boro, Treasurer
Heather Urkuski, City of Reading, Organizing Secretary
Dean Hornberger, Exeter Twp, Recording Secretary
Jennaro Pullano, City of Reading, At-large Member
Kathy Edwards, Center Twp, At-large Member