

The Precinct Community Assembly

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By Bob Waldrop

The only way ... for our community to be a better place to live is for the people of the community to understand and accept their personal responsibility for what happens. – *Davis Merritt, Jr.*

In the United States, the smallest level of political organization in most states is a “precinct” or “election district.” They usually do not have their own government organization, but are subunits of larger governments like cities or counties.

According to Wikipedia, the average number of voters in a precinct ranges from a low of 437 in Kansas to a high of 2,704 in the District of Columbia. The average voters per precinct is 1,100. In 2004, the nation had about 174,000 precincts in the states and territories of the United States.

Political parties often have organized representation at the precinct level. In some states, political parties hold meetings in precincts that elect delegates to county conventions.

A Precinct Community Assembly is a meeting of people who live in an election precinct. It's a "town meeting" of the people who live in a particular geographic area. Most areas outside of New England do not have an organized system of town meetings rooted in place.

How to Start a Precinct Community Assembly

No one needs any authority from anyone to start a Precinct Community Assembly. All you need is –

-- a place to meet,

-- a map or description of the boundaries of the precinct,

-- a way to get the word out that a meeting of the residents of a the precinct will held at a certain time and place.

This makes it an excellent strategy to use to build grassroots support for grassroots community initiatives and direct grassroots democracy. Such meetings can – and should! – talk about issues important to that neighborhood and about other issues affecting the larger community. The meetings are resolutely non-partisan. Avoid the temptation to start the process with any agenda other than, “Let's get to know and talk with our neighbors and see what happens as a result.”

It could evolve over time into a regular meeting, the equivalent of your own Neighborhood's “Town Hall” Meeting. You

could work with other Precinct Assemblies in your area. You may need to help them get started, in fact, one of your projects could be “helping start Precinct Assemblies in the precincts that border your neighborhood.

Why this is so important.

This is not, or at least, it should not be, a way to only meet people in your area who think and believe the way that you do. If it becomes a success, it will be a gathering of your community and that means people of diverse races, creeds, political beliefs, and etc.

We all need practice talking with people who don't agree with us on all issues.

And we need to understand the importance of being able to find common ground and work with others of different races, creeds, and political persuasions.

The only way this can happen is if we commit to seeing our neighbors as human persons. Even if we disagree with them about politics, religion, and economics, to name just three of the issues that typically set us in opposition to our neighbors, we can

respect them as human persons and our neighbors and learn to live with and work together with them.

Divide and conquer is the oldest tactic in the book and those benefiting from our regimes of political criminality are well practiced in keeping us arguing with each other so that we don't see our neighbors as being truly human persons.

Doing one thing and doing it well is a fine place to start.

If it turns out that your group can only agree on one thing to do, that's fine! Do that one thing and do it well. You are likely to find that in doing that one thing you will find something else that you can agree on and do. Two might lead to three, and then we are on to four, and before you know what happens, you may have Republicans, Democrats, Anarchists, Socialists, Baptists, Catholics, Atheists, Buddhists, and Muslims all working together on projects that benefit

your neighborhood, thereby increasing the quality of life and security for everyone in your area.

The Precinct Community Assembly helps you to get to know your neighbors and discern what the issues are in your area. It may jump start sustainability initiatives in your area like gardening, composting, care committees that help the elderly, the sick, the disabled who live in your area, and other self-help ideas that are important and useful for your neighborhood.

The group could start committees and task forces that focus on and research community issues. You could debate and pass resolutions to be forwarded to other Precinct Assemblies in your area and also to the government representatives responsible for your neighborhood. Find a meeting schedule that works well for you – monthly, quarterly, whatever works for the group.

As more precinct assemblies are organized, you could develop structured ways for the assemblies to work together on larger issues

that impact your entire community.

The road to a better planet starts at your doorstep.

The Precinct Community Assembly tactic creates a grassroots organization that will become a building block in a movement that will eventually grow communities that care for people, care for the planet, and have a care for the common good.

It is one of the early steps towards overturning the system of political criminality which makes all our other problems so much worse.

In other words, the Revolution starts at your own doorstep.

If you get something going, email me at pca@ipermie.net and register your Precinct Community Assembly. As this catches on, there will be some networking opportunities and resource directories made available.