

## LNC Dysfunction - Is There A Realistic Path Forward?

### **What are we doing? What is the outcome we are looking for, and what criteria are we using to make decisions?**

I mean that generally, in every way you can construe it. The board has lost focus and become extremely reactive. In the face of financial challenges, we have lost the purpose and vision of what we set out to do and are thrashing around like a drowning person. It is very hard to save someone who is thrashing about.

I've been trying to find board consultations for under 10K. So far, I have not had success. I know that some of you will say we can't afford it right now. My argument is that we can't afford NOT to do it. We are in serious trouble. I'm just wrapping up this document after a consultation with a man who has been on many boards. The first thing he commented on was the size of the LNC. It is much too large. We're stuck with that for now, but he confirmed a lot of things that I've been saying (to myself or out loud) for some time now. We need to radically change things if we are going to survive the next year. I say this with love, serious concern, and as the person who was elected to lead you and enact a very specific vision.

### **LNC Hierarchy And Wisdom**

Some of you are defensive when I call out bad votes or overstepping boundaries. "You can't say that! We will hold Ms. Huston accountable for everything instead!"

Let's think.

Why would Lainie send a letter directly to the board?

I did not think Josh Smith would make a good vice chair. You ignored my advice.

I did not support the migration. You ignored my advice.

I did not think that setting a 100K goal was the right decision. You ignored my advice.

What other choice does she have but to address you directly? You have effectively usurped my position as her supervisor.

Who here has served on another board of directors for a large organization with longevity?

It is unheard of for a board of directors to vote on what software staff uses and to interact this much with staff. I've consulted with three older gentlemen who have served on multiple boards and they all balk at my situation and say that it's insane. Don't believe me? Please go ahead and get a second opinion. Go ask any person over 50 who has served on several boards if they think the board should regularly interact with staff or vote on software. I got the same reaction when I explained how the latest goal was set. The goal should be budget, or the stretch goals that we've already set. There should have been a strategy proposed to reach the goals.

We are not operating like a professional board of directors. I need us to act like a professional board of directors.

I get to own all of our failures, publicly, and behind the scenes apparently, while we descend into democratic mob rule.

Oh, but we're different! We're a political party. That is no excuse for poor governance. If anything, we should hold ourselves to a higher standard, not a lower standard disguised as a different standard.

### **Staff Issues**

A staffer came forward with serious concerns about her subordinate employee, his triangulation and undermining interactions with a board member, and the fact that he is sending donor data out to an unverified email address and planning unannounced trips to our office. **Our response is to completely disregard her concerns and turn our missiles at her.** It freaks me out that no one is upset about what she uncovered with Robert. Oliver Hall was really concerned by what he saw. So am I. Instead, people have chosen to rally around "the accused" and go after Lainie. Would anyone like to schedule a meeting to discuss the contents of the letter from Ms. Huston - including the email attachments - or are we just going to discuss roasting Ms. Huston alive? Fire up the BBQ!

What exactly are we doing in this exec session meeting? There's been no intention set. Are we looking for excuses to fire Ms. Huston because we don't like her? Are we upset with her work performance so we're going to use this situation to fire her? Are we mad at her for feeling led astray and delegitimized by the EPCC?

Who knows anything about her day to day work schedule, performance, ethics and strategy? Whose job is it to review her performance? It is my job. I know about those things. So what criteria are we using to make decisions about staff? My word? No, that's being completely disregarded and usurped.

Generally, Lainie's concerns are my concerns. I was on the call with Lainie and Oliver Hall. **I was the one that asked Oliver about fiduciary duty.** I told him I wanted to understand it - NOT from a disciplinary perspective - but from the perspective of someone who needed to understand what was and wasn't ok so that I could communicate boundaries and rules to the rest of you regarding the withholding of information from staff and the LNC. Ms. Huston sent her letter out before I heard back from Oliver (I still haven't heard back from him).

I was on a call with Lainie when she got into Robert's email and uncovered everything. I informed the officers and said I would discuss it with Steven. I wanted to talk to Oliver first and the soonest he was available was Tuesday, so I waited. I think that was the right thing to do. The conversation mostly centered around how to get our assets back from Robert. The

discussion of fiduciary duty was less than 5 minutes, but I would be derelict in my duties if I did not cover this base. Please review the emails she attached in her letter.

On the topic of Robert, he is openly disrespecting Lainie, and now me. He is still actively ignoring our directives and trying to engage Todd. I believe we should have fired Robert sooner. Lainie wanted him to comply first and hand over any documentation before issuing him a contract or letting him go. He resisted. I should have stepped in sooner, although judging by the way he's behaving towards me now, he has no respect for me, either. He is only willing to answer to Todd and Steven. Maybe it's sexism. I'm not sure.

Lainie is controversial the same way we are controversial. She came in to take over and people are mad about that. She also came in to professionalize things and some of our own people are mad about that. What does that mean? Show up to meetings prepared. Show up to work during business hours. Show your work. Collaborate with coworkers so that they can move forward in their tasks instead of wondering when so-and-so will update the CRM or send out the email they worked on. We were grossly unprofessional in recent history. Tyler let his employees do whatever they wanted to do. He did the bulk of the fundraising calls for Gabby. Robert ran the reports for her (she didn't know how). Robert was allowed to do whatever he wanted because Tyler told me he had built his job to be indestructible and inscrutable. Same with Andy Burns. Reed Cooley unfortunately turned out to be a diva. He was my hire so that's on me. I'm currently fighting with a vendor over a contract he signed us up for without authorization.

We don't worship staff. We've actually fired a lot of them. I've discussed firing Luke, who is a friend of mine. I've said that Lainie has to turn things around. I gave constructive criticism in her review. She is not perfect, but it is not your job to take her apart behind the scenes. You aren't equipped to do that. No one else would have uncovered the CRM failure so quickly. No one else would have stayed up overnight to do forensic auditing to find the trail of missing recurring donations. No one else would keep such a good attitude while having such an awful experience. Lainie is eventually replaceable, like anyone else, but she is NOT replaceable right now. She is the lynchpin that is holding everything together.

Here's what will happen if Lainie is fired: The momentum we've gained on the fundraising front will drop. The progress on the CRM and data repair will halt. We will lose money, and we will lose staff. Andy will quit. Drew will probably look for a new job. Matt Hudson will check out completely and might stop working here, too. David Aitken will follow soon after. We will have to restaff entirely and start over. Ironically, at least we will be left with Lainie's extensive documentation.

We cannot afford to take the hit.

Additionally, Lainie has worked 80 to 100 hours on a regular basis. She has worked overnight multiple times. She has been in my home, complaining of heart issues related to stress from the EPCC meetings. She has also complained of sexism (I notified her that I would have to raise

that to the board since she failed to include it in her letter) from two separate people. She has corroboration on the sexism from myself and one other board member.

If she lawyers up, we are screwed.

**Think carefully about our staffing situation.** We should not fire or discipline Lainie. We should repair the damaged relationship and back off. It is the professional, responsible thing to do and I am asking you to do it.

### **What are we doing about fundraising?**

We are spinning our wheels on EPCC issues, filing lawsuits, and making our staff show their work three times over when they tell us our main fundraising tool and data are a disaster. We are also peppering staff with frantic requests for things. That is the LNC fundraising plan. Not a good plan!

Why does it take so long for Lainie to get out the fundraising lists? Well, she's explained how time consuming and difficult it is to print a simple call list from Civi CRM. What else? Because she is constantly hounded with LNC requests, constantly trying to gain ground on Robert's game of hide the ball, trying to decipher what EPCC members want and if they are trying to get her secretly fired over her criticism of the CRM and how to address it, trying to figure out metrics to measure staff output, coming up with marketing plans, in meetings with staff, in meetings with me, in meetings with large donors, triaging CRM failures and requests, running necessary reports that crash Civi, attending subcommittee meetings to meet your needs, and the list goes on.

Many of you admitted to not reading her latest report on financials. Is she going to take the time to craft a good list for you, have staff write out scripts, and let that fall be forgotten, too? 😊

Let's try to put less on her plate so she can fundraise more, and let's read the financials she gives us.

### **THE STATE OF THE TAKEOVER**

The takeover is turning into a disaster. It started with the migration - which was NOT part of the MC vision. The MC has always wanted to get rid of Civi and has seen it for the hindrance it was. I was aware of the political implications so I thought we should proceed carefully and see if it could be saved first. It cannot be saved and the responsible thing to do is to get rid of it AFTER we clean up our data. Public fighting over the exec director is embarrassing. The lack of productive work coming out of Affiliate Support over the past year (besides the Youth Caucus work by Linnea) has been the source of multiple complaints. Non LNC members have complained to me multiple times about the lack of LNC engagement on the Candidate Support Committee (not Dustin Blankenship), Ballot Access meetings are disorganized and lack clear direction, EPCC is a disaster, and the list goes on.

Our social media is consistently impressive. Thank you, team.

Members have asked me what we are doing. We spend lots of time in executive session, dealing with lawsuits and personnel issues. I haven't had the time to put together another rally or anything else to move the party forward politically because I've been consumed with personnel, administrative and legal tasks. The rally was a high point. We have fallen very low since then.

More bad news: Surprise! Dave Smith isn't running for President. He backed out and people are going to be really upset. No one is coming to save us. It leaves us vulnerable to attack at the 2024 convention which we entirely deserve. (And don't worry: most of the attacks will be directed at me.) We might as well endorse Steve Dasbach!

The caucus is demoralized. The members are demoralized. As Miguel would put it, we have put on the face of "Hide The Pain Harold." If we don't want the party to be a train wreck, we are going to have to change the way we function as a board.

## **WHERE WE REALLY WENT WRONG**

IMO things began to deteriorate shortly before New Mexico. Prior to that I saw that we weren't hitting the numbers I wanted us to hit on Project Cicero. I was painfully aware that it was because of the migration for the latter part of 2022. Staff was very focused on it.

In the first quarter, Lainie and Andy both believed our financial failure was due to Civi but needed confirmation. Good for them for waiting and doing their due diligence. She was right on Civi. In New Mexico, Dustin Nanna told her (and Andy Buchkovich) that she had to be careful about how she talked about Civi publicly. I wasn't there for the conversation. Lainie took it to mean that an EPCC member was telling her that she can't report on certain, critical parts of the party's health and performance publicly. Dustin and I have since cleared the air on this and he believes it was a misunderstanding.

The other strain has been the pile of legal challenges. We are stressed over this and it's been a financial burden. It has perhaps caused us to react poorly in other areas. Regardless, now is the time to correct things.

## **EPCC**

When I asked my board member mentors if LNC members should help craft policies, they said that might be ok. When I asked whether or not they should interact with staff, they balked and said absolutely not. The EPCC, whether intentional or not, is muddying up the waters and draining morale in staff. I have personally witnessed it multiple times and been guilty of it myself. A policy change is essential if we're going to have a functional staff. EPCC being board members, friends with employees and taking employee complaints does not work. We need a totally separate HR dept to handle employee complaints.

## THE GOOD NEWS

As Roger McCaffrey told me today, “Angela, it sounds utterly hopeless. The only way to go is up.”

I’ve got another political action event I’m about to launch as a follow up to RAWM, called the “Decentralized Rally”. I’ve put together a state driven membership drive with the California chair so there’s no additional pressure from staff to work on it. We have a spot at Porcfest that needs to be staffed with volunteers. You can all help with these things. They will launch either tomorrow or Monday and they will be a much needed distraction from fighting and a huge boost to the membership. Porcfest is late June.

I’m issuing the following directives because I think they’re much needed. I’m getting an additional consult tomorrow from someone who is the President of a Board of Directors in a liberty organization. I bet I already know what they will say - same as Roger McCaffrey and Anthony Padgett. Both of those men have decades of experience with boards of directors, both public and private. We would do well to take their advice.

## CHAIR’S DIRECTIVES

**Chair's Directive No. One:** The executive director is instructed to hire an outsourced HR dept as soon as she gets back from vacation and to send me a copy of the contract. (This will be posted publicly.)

### **Chair’s Directive No. Two:**

Informal mediation is to be set up for the EPCC, Lainie, me, Oliver and any other attorney, HR person or advocate Lainie would like present. This is completely non binding and informal. I cannot force Lainie to attend but I am going to provide it. (This is to remain confidential until I consult with the secretary on an appropriate way to make it public without further embarrassing any parties.)

### **Chairs Directive No. 3:**

An ad hoc Fundraising Committee shall be created, constituted by up to 5 members who shall report directly to the Fundraising Director. The three members I have appointed so far are Shawn Hickman, Rich Bowen, and Martin Cowen. I am breaking my rule on staff to LNC interaction with this committee in the hopes that it functions like the Social Media Committee. (This will be posted publicly.)

### **Chair’s Directive No. 4:**

Everyone with social media should be coming up with a creative way to ask for donations on social media at least once every three weeks. If you need help, talk to me. Discord counts as social media. (This will be posted publicly.)

**Chair's Directive No. 5:**

(To myself): Chair is to work with the social media team and staff to give a 5 minute video update to members every week, either live or pre recorded. (This will be posted publicly.)

**Chair's Directive No. 6:**

Marc Tuniewicz, Dustin Blankenship, Will Hyman and Todd Hagopian are to search for a proposal for board governance or board training, and try to find the most affordable training you can find. I would appreciate if Marc and Will can take this on since Dustin and Todd are already burdened, but I would like their input before bringing a proposal to me. (This will be posted publicly.)