

*Mission and Values unanimously approved by MTPC Voting Membership on September 8, 2008.
By-Laws (other than Mission & Values) unanimously approved, MTPC Voting Membership, May 11, 2009.
Last Amended: August 2015*

Chair's note, 6/2012: Steering Committee members should be familiar with the Bylaws. This should all make sense. If not, we need to fix it. If there's any part of this document that could be improved, SC members are obliged to point it out to the Chair as soon as they encounter it, preferably via email. This is our living constitution and if it doesn't work, the organization doesn't work.

BY-LAWS

MASSACHUSETTS TRANS POLITICAL COALITION

MISSION AND VALUES

Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) is dedicated to ending oppression and discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression.

Rooted in social justice, we educate the public, advocate with state, local, and federal government, engage in activism, and encourage empowerment of community members through collective action.

Vision

We envision a world where persons of all genders are treated with respect and fully participate in all areas of society, free from fear, harassment, or violence based on their gender identity and/or expression.

Values

We understand oppression to be an imbalance of power intrinsically linked to the privileges bestowed on some at the expense of others, based on but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender expression and identity, class, disability, sexuality, religion, citizenship status, age, language capacity, and history of incarceration and court involvement.

We work to:

- Build broad-based participation and community power;
- Support the development of leaders and coalitions;
- Draw strength from diverse experiences and identities;
- Learn from our history and evolve consciously;
- Value the experiences and voices of elders and youth;
- Include those who are not fully visible;
- Be accountable to the communities in which we work.

Amendments to Mission Statement

Changes to MTPC's mission statement require:

1. The Steering Committee must first reach consensus and fully support the proposed changes. For more information about consensus, see "Steering Committee Decision-Making."
2. At least 2 weeks before the meeting where the changes to the mission will be presented for approval, the Clerk must email MTPC's Steering Committee the following information: the proposed amendment to the mission statement; an explanation of the fact that it must be approved by consensus; the date and time of the MTPC meeting where it will be voted upon.
3. The SC Chair must poll all members who will not be present at the meeting to verify their consensus.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Responsibilities

The MTPC Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring that the MTPC is upholding the organization's mission, vision, and values, and for seeking feedback from constituents and from the broader transgender and gender non-conforming communities of Massachusetts. The Steering Committee is also responsible for:

- 1) establishing annual priorities (and, as necessary, longer-term strategic plans)
- 2) hiring, firing, supervising, and supporting MTPC executive director
- 3) approving MTPC's annual budget and fundraising plan (in coordination with BAGLY, MTPC's fiscal sponsor)
- 4) securing funds to support MTPC's budget
- 5) establishing MTPC's policies
- 6) ensuring the organization adheres to its by-laws, and updating the by-laws as needed
- 7) evaluating MTPC's effectiveness
- 8) managing MTPC's interactions with and response to media
- 9) organizing MTPC's annual Town Hall Meeting and Community Feedback Sessions

- 10) approving the creation or (re)activation of committees, and ensuring the health of standing committees (as needed)
- 11) recruiting and appointing new Steering Committee members
- 12) approving the creation of MTPC chapters

Meetings

The Steering Committee must meet at least eight times a year, and are encouraged to meet more frequently. At least four of these meetings must be in-person meetings. Steering Committee meetings are open to constituents, but only Steering Committee members are able to vote on matters at Steering Committee meetings.

The Steering Committee may go into “executive session” (closing the meeting to anyone not on the Steering Committee) as needed for confidential discussions about sensitive matters, including appointments to the SC.

Decision-Making

There is no quorum for Steering Committee meetings, but at least 2/3 of the Steering Committee must be present for decision-making. If less than 2/3 of the committee members are present the decision may be made over the Steering Committee email listserv. The Steering Committee usually makes decisions by consensus, shaping decisions as needed to reach consensus. This means that the entire Steering Committee must approve of a decision. To reach consensus after conversation about an issue, Steering Committee members should only oppose a position/course of action if they are doing so based on principle rather than preference, and because they think the decision is wrong and will harm MTPC’s ability to carry out its mission and values. When consensus is not possible (either due to absences or disagreement) but a decision is required by external circumstance, decisions must be approved by at least 2/3 of the entire Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee must approve any MTPC response to issues that may be controversial or not explicitly connected to the mission. Ultimate approval may be required from MTPC’s fiscal sponsor around certain issues.

STEERING COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT

Membership

- Executive Committee (4 members)
- At-Large Members (between 6 and 11)

There must be at least 10 and no more than 15 people serving on the Steering Committee. The number of Steering Committee members may change at the discretion of the Steering Committee.

Appointment Process

Steering Committee members are appointed by consensus of the existing Steering Committee.

Potential SC members must be nominated by a current SC member. Nominees must do the following:

- 1) Attend at least one SC meeting prior to consideration for appointment;
- 2) Read the Bylaws and know the Steering Committee duties;
- 3) Commit a number of hours per month or week towards MTPC work;
- 4) Submit a written statement providing qualifications, reason for applying, and area(s) of interest to the Chair prior to the meeting where their appointment will be considered [this requirement may be waived at the discretion of the SC];
- 5) Be interviewed by the existing SC (or a sub-committee thereof).

When the interview process is complete, the SC will then deliberate in executive session. The Chair will notify the applicant, in a timely fashion, of the SC's decision.

Member re-commitments

Existing members may re-commit, at the expiration of their current term, to a new term of two more years.

Diversity/Demographics Requirements

The Steering Committee is responsible for supporting diversity in terms of gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, age, class, ability, religion, marital status, veteran status, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and other identities. The Steering Committee is also responsible for cultivating a diverse range of Steering Committee Members so that MTPC's leadership reflects the diversity of Massachusetts' transgender and gender non-conforming communities. As such, the Steering Committee should actively recruit members who are people of color, poor/working class people, differently-abled/people with disabilities, youth, and/or elders.

Because MTPC is committed to developing and supporting leadership skills within transgender and gender non-conforming communities, the Steering Committee should uphold the following minimum representation requirements:

- at least 2 persons self-identified along the MTF/transfeminine spectrum,
- at least 2 persons self-identified along the FTM/transmasculine spectrum, and
- at least 3 people self-identified as trans people of color, seats to remain open until filled

- at least 4 people self-identified as genderqueer, intersex, non-binary, cross-dresser, drag performer, or otherwise gender non-conforming
- these categories may overlap, but the majority must be trans.*

* - MTPC uses the term *trans** to describe those people who transgress (binary) (western) gender norms. *Trans* people* includes those people who have a gender identity which is different to the gender assigned at birth and/or those people who feel they have to, prefer to or choose to – whether by clothing, accessories, cosmetics or body modification – present themselves differently to the expectations of the gender role assigned to them at birth. This includes, among many others, transsexual and transgender people, travesti, cross dressers, gender fluid, no gender, androgynous, and genderqueer people.

The term *trans** should be seen as a placeholder for many identities, most of which are specific to local cultures and times in history, describing people who broaden and expand a binary understanding of gender.

SC Member Terms

New SC Members commit to a term of service of two years. The newly appointed Steering Committee Member will begin their term at the meeting following their appointment.

The clerk shall be responsible for maintaining open records of all SC membership, including term expirations.

Executive Committee

The Steering Committee will hold elections for the executive committee every two years. If there is more than one candidate for any position, the SC will invite statements from each candidate, then deliberate in private (from candidates) and vote by private ballot. Otherwise the vote may be by consensus.

Executive Committee includes:

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Treasurer
- Clerk

Resignations and Vacancies

If a Steering Committee (SC) member resigns (or is removed) mid-term, the SC may appoint a replacement to the vacant position at the next regularly scheduled SC meeting, at their discretion, and as seems necessary. Executive Committee vacancies should be filled as soon as possible, preferably by the next SC meeting.

The SC must reach consensus (100% approval) among all active SC members for the appointee.

Removal Procedure

Steering Committee members may be removed from membership if they act in a manner:

- that is detrimental to MTPC's mission or reputation,
- that counteracts or undermines MTPC's values,
- that otherwise limits the effectiveness or functionality of MTPC and of the MTPC Steering Committee.

STAFF

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the MTPC Executive Director (ED) are outlined in the job description, as written by the Steering Committee. The Director serves as an *ex officio* member of the Steering Committee, expected to attend meetings without voting privileges. The ED hires and fires paid staff, and supervises paid staff, interns and volunteers. The ED makes decisions about MTPC's support of and response to non-controversial issues that are explicitly relevant to MTPC's mission, and is responsible for communicating those decisions and actions to the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will work with the MTPC ED to adjust the division of labor and responsibilities as needed.

COMMITTEES

All committees must commit to carrying out the Mission and Values of MTPC and to regularly communicating with the MTPC Steering Committee. Each committee should have co-chairs who are responsible for communicating with MTPC's Steering Committee and the Executive Director about meeting times, agendas, and work plans. Committees must meet at least four times per year to be considered active.

CHAPTERS

Regional chapters of MTPC must adopt the mission statement and values of MTPC, and must be approved by the MTPC (Boston-based) Steering Committee if they are to identify as an MTPC chapter. Each chapter must at minimum have a Chapter Coordinator whom must have contact with the MTPC Director and/or Steering Committee Chair at least every other month. The Chapter Coordinator must be selected by the chapter members on an annual basis and may also serve as Chapter Treasurer. If there is not regular contact between the chapter and MTPC Director and/or Steering Committee Chair, the MTPC Steering Committee will determine a course of action and whether or not the chapter may continue calling itself a chapter of MTPC.

Chapters may choose their own names, in addition to identifying themselves as chapters of MTPC.

EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY

A public town hall meeting for the transgender community will be held once a year and will be publicized online, through fliers and using local newspapers and other media. An anonymous feedback box will be available at the annual town meeting. There will be at least 15 minutes of unstructured “open forum” at the Town Hall Meeting. The rest of the agenda will be set by the Steering Committee.

In addition, the MTPC Steering Committee will determine appropriate times and locations for community feedback sessions at least twice yearly in order to reach the broadest diversity of the transgender community possible.