



Our Tribal Structure:

The Seneca-Cayuga Nation & its Tribal Government



A PowerPoint by the Nation's Constitution Advisory Committee

General Council vs Annual Meeting

What's the difference?

General Council is created in Constitution Article IV

- "the supreme governing body of the Nation [...] all members of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation eighteen (18) years of age and older."

Our Annual Meeting is set by our By-Laws in Article III Section 1

- "regular meetings of the Council shall be held on the first Saturday of June each year at the Bassett Grove Ceremonial Grounds [...]"
- Commonly referred to as General Council, this meeting should actually be called the Annual Meeting of the General Council or General Council's Annual Meeting

- **Constitution** - a set of guidelines or principles (often written) that **create and/or empower a government or organization as outlined** within
- **By-Laws** –a set of **rules that govern how an organization or community regulates itself**, often they are added to a constitution
- **Corporate Charter** – this, in the Nation's case, is a **tribal governing document that empowers the Business Committee to do business via the creation of corporations** and all the powers outlined therein
- **Ordinance** - a document that specifically outlines relevant **policies and procedures of a given subject or political entity**

Tribal Governing Documents Definitions

Committees: Then and Now

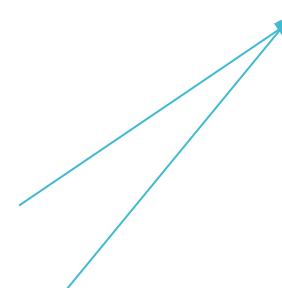
Created by Constitution Articles VI & VII & Resolutions

When Created In 1937-

- Business Committee
 - Chief, 2nd Chief, Secretary-Treasurer
 - Interpreter + 3 "Councilmen"
 - "...powers of the Tribe shall be set forth in detail in the corporate charter to be requested..."
- Grievance Committee
- Credit Committee
- Welfare Committee
- Education Committee

As We Operate In 2023 -

- Business Committee
 - Chief, 2nd Chief, Secretary-Treasurer
 - 4 Councilpeople
- Grievance Committee
- Claims Committee
- Election Committee (GCR)
- Enrollment Committee (GCR)



- **Interpreter position**

- The interpreter position is original to our Constitution, however it did not have specifically outlined duties
- Our understanding of this position is that it comes from a key role in traditional Native governments
 - To conduct government-to-government relationships you need someone who can speak and be understood by all parties
- This role for our community was created for our traditional language speakers, it provided cultural insight at times due to its place on the BC
- In the early 70s this position became another Councilperson
 - Due in part to tribal member concerns with the intersection of culture and politics but was also likely related to the steadily decreasing number of community language speakers who would have been able to serve as interpreter

Business Committee (BC) History

Standing Committee Histories

The Welfare and Education Committees were combined into Claims Committee since Dec 1985.

- 3 members appointed by BC.

Credit Committee - This Committee was originally for, should the tribe ever have enough money, tribal members to borrow tribal monies to establish a business

- No known implementations of this Committee

Election Committee – This Committee was formed by General Council Resolution (GCR) in the 80s, originally to handle all elections in-house.

- There are currently 2 members normally 4, all appointed by the BC.
- This Committee is separate from an "Election Board" which is created from tribal leadership for BIA purposes

Enrollment Committee – This Committee was created in the 80s, after the Election Committee was overwhelmed with new enrollees, their purpose is to verify and account for new enrollees in our community

- Current membership is appointed by the BC, from either the pool of past Secretary-Treasurers or other knowledgeable tribal elders; currently 9 members
- Chaired by the present Secretary-Treasurer

- The Business Committee is currently responsible for most, if not all Ordinances that are passed, including Standing Committee and Election Ordinances
 - Ordinance: a document that specifically outlines the policies & procedures of a given subject or political entity
 - Ordinances provide an instruction manual for citizens and Committee members alike
 - Most Ordinances are ratified, or officially agreed upon, by General Council at our Annual Meetings, except for Confidential ones such as the Benefits Ordinance which was ratified once
- The budgets for all Committees are at the discretion of the Business Committee
- Most if not all tribal businesses are created through the corporate charter of the Nation, which appoints the Business Committee to run or delegate the day-to-day business operations
- Administrative help is provided by the Nation as the need arises – this is why Claims Committee has 3 members, there are tribal admin staff who take care of much of the organization of paperwork

How Committees Work Right Now

Looking at the Future

All Committees

- Have 5 members EXCEPT – Claims (3), Enrollment (9), Business Committee (8 to 9)
- Elected Committees would be Business, Grievance, Election, and Claims
- Each write their own Ordinances to be approved by General Council
- Clearer separation of powers between Committees and an outline of what each is responsible for in Constitution
- All vacancies are filled immediately, and the Oath of Office put in Constitution/By-Laws, Committee officers can be sworn in by Chief, 2nd Chief, or a seated Faithkeeper
- The Officers on any given Committee cannot be immediate family members to one another (nepotism law)

Business Committee

- Split Secretary-Treasurer into Secretary and Treasurer (+1 person on BC = 8 ppl)
- At-Large Representation through means not yet determined

Grievance Committee

- All Committees and members can be subject to Grievances, lodged by one General Council individual against another individual Committee officer
- Code of Ethics included in Constitution, with thorough provisions
- Separation of Powers – Grievance Committee does own budget to allow for the retention of an attorney that would not have a conflict of interest while doing business with the Business Committee, the Grievance Committee will be able to call a Special Meeting of the General Council regarding filed Grievances, they will conduct the meeting
- Grievances cannot be fought by Committee members using tribal monies or property

Election Committee

- Inclusion in the Constitution
- Beginning separation of power – ability to choose the 3rd Party Electoral Administrator

General Council Powers

- Open records policy added to the Bill of Rights (Constitution Article XII) for tribal citizens, with the right to privacy for all tribal members and employees also acknowledged
- Better General Council Representation through means not yet determined

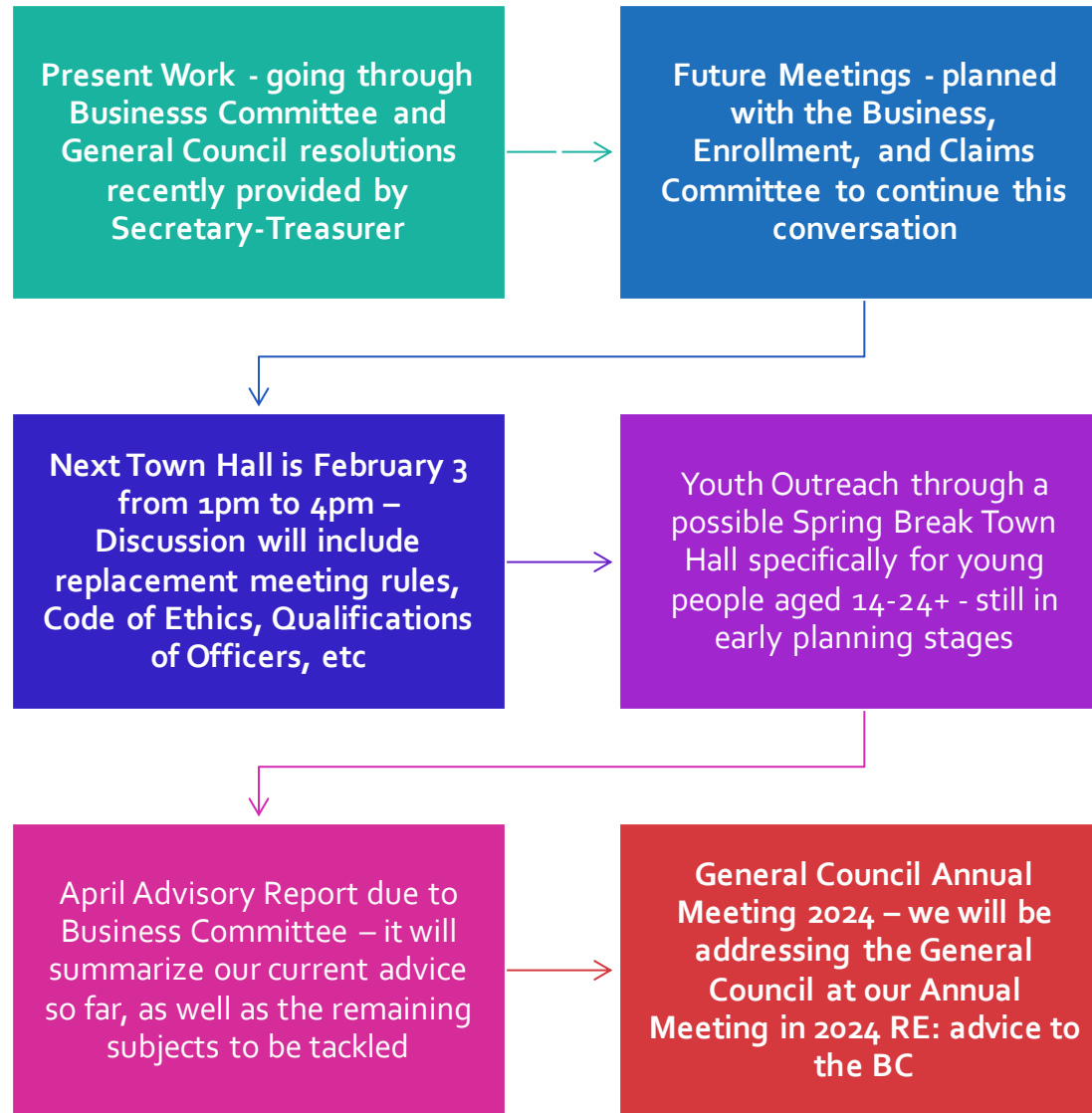


Hypothetical
Committees
& Procedures
We Have
Discussed

- Code of Laws made up of previous General Council Resolutions
- General Council meetings being streamed via Constitution language such as "meetings made available to the General Council using technology available" or similar wording
- Qualifications of Officers (By-laws Article II) – including no felonies, being able to pass a drug test or background check, no financial crimes
- Potential Electoral Candidates and/or Elected Officers having to file a financial disclosure (that includes campaign funding) and/or Conflict of Interest disclosures
- At Large Representation through a Business Committee Councilperson that is specifically designated as the At-Large Representative, either make 1 Councilperson or add another Councilperson to BC for 9 people total

More Possibilities Discussed RE: Govt Structure

Future Committee Work



To inform General Council on info gathered, our work done, and create awareness of future work

To find out what it is that our General Council wants to see from our Committees and the structure of government

To answer the questions of "Will these changes work for our community? What do you think?"

Goals for this
Town Hall
Conversation