

Green Ticket Fund and the Seventh Generation Intention Analysis

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Background

This document contains the methods and data used to perform a content analysis of OCF Board meeting minutes with the intention of illuminating two case studies that are relevant to the Carbon Neutral Initiative: the Green Ticket Fund (GTF) and the Seventh Generation Intention (SGI). Contained in this document are narrative retellings of these two board initiatives in chronological order from their foundation up to March 2020. SGI was identified as a contemporary “policy” with a potential impact on the Fair’s becoming Carbon Neutral. Illuminating the content and intentions of this policy will help demonstrate how policies are implemented and come to impact future decision-making processes. Tracing the Green Ticket Fund’s history highlights how pro-environmental attitudes within the Fair interact with the allocation of financial resources. Both case studies illuminate essential characteristics of a successful carbon-neutral project at OCF by providing a glimpse of how top-down change can happen.

Methods

Data for the case studies was collected from the Oregon Country Fair .net website’s repository of Fair Family News publications, which included PDF copies of all newspapers dating between January 2007 and March 2020. In total, 186 newsletters were collected for evaluation. Newsletters were consolidated, and the program Recoll was used to perform keyword searches across all available PDFs simultaneously. Using an identical process for both policies, we used a keyword search with either “seventh generation” or “green ticket” accompanied with additional search criteria for the year of publication. This process enabled an accurate collection of all discussion about these policies in chronological order. Passages concerned with either policy were included in respective documents prior to analysis.

Seventh Generation Intention

The Seventh Generation Intention was first proposed to the Board of Directors in December 2012 by Indigo. In January 2013 the motion to adopt a “Seventh Generation Intention” was passed with 10 votes in approval and 0 votes in dissent. Officially, the intention reads: “The Oregon Country Fair, as an organization as well as a community of individuals, will conduct its business in consideration of seven generations (approx. 200 years) through our buying practices, land management, and human relations to the best of our given ability at all times.”

The SGI is a way of institutionalizing a forward thinking perspective into the decision making processes across all levels of fair activity. SGI asks that all behaviors or decisions, from purchasing behavior to community relationships, take into consideration the immediate effects,

short-term effects, and long-term effects. Members of the Board immediately recognized the challenge attempting to institute SGI as an official “policy,” and thus the board decided instead to label it an “intention”. The Seventh Generation Intention is a flexible “spiritual concept” (Charlie) rather than a hard and fast rule. Chewie stated, “we must walk our talk and implement policies; this is a foundation, it’s well worded, and I am blown away.” Here the board comes to a negotiated understanding of SGI as “fluid and metaphorical,” an important guiding principle that requires continued action to successfully implement (Jack).

The sustainability aspects of SGI are brought up again in the discussion immediately following the board’s adoption of the intention: “we need to act in green ways and set our intention each day” (Kathy), “we should be alarmed about global warming” (Peach Gallery), “we need to step up our recycling game and get the family to do better (Bear, Dec, 2013)”. The intended outcome of SGI is rooted in beliefs about what it means to be green or sustainable.

Discussion about SGI following its adoption appears sporadically in the coming years, and a major limitation of this method of analysis is that we are unable to identify or trace the implications of SGI in the general behavior of the Fair’s staff and volunteers.

The SGI, between its official adoption in January 2013 up till June 2015, was discussed only in relation to the possible creation of a Seventh Generation Task Force. The proposed task force would “dig in” to how the fair “treats our land, our family, [and] the public” (Indigo, Oct, 2014), and would have sought to bridge together different departments to help organize the fair’s move towards sustainability.

Board members opposed the creation of this task force on the grounds that SGI was not intended to be a rigid policy, and because, “we don’t need more committees, task forces or groups, we need ideas. People can bring ideas to the board; it’s boring but *we have existing structures. We have all the structure we’ll ever need.* We need to have people bring their policy proposals and we will debate them and hopefully pass the good ones” (emphasis added; Bear, Oct 2014). Thus, the life of SGI until June 2015 is marked by continued negotiation over what level of legitimacy and authority should be granted to the intention. There was no consensus, and the motion failed: 4-5. Board members did not see the creation of more formal structures as beneficial and noted that it was a lack of informal participation which was undermining the operations of existing formal structures.

A major hurdle for the proposed task force proved to be the underlying ambiguity of its goals. For example, Chewie said “sustainability is a beautiful idea, and when one can define it for me, I’ll be in favor of it” (Oct 2014), and Jon said, “I am unsure what this task force is doing. I agree with Paxton that individual crews can look at sustainability in their own areas” (Oct 2014). As these quotes show, the board was unable to come to a negotiated understanding of sustainability in order to legitimate a plan. Sponsors of an SGI taskforce, who were supportive of more formalized means by which to exert pressure on the regular operations of the fair, did not pass muster and SGI was granted no teeth. Without a task force, or some other form of enforcement, the SGI would quickly transform into a rhetorical tool rather than a guiding paradigm.

SGI begins to play the role of a moral ideal, or concept, that the Fair should aspire to. There is only one mention of SGI in 2015: “I want to remind coordinators of our Seventh Generation and

locally-sourced product purchasing policies. We can make big changes locally and globally by spending mindfully” (Indigo). And in 2016 there is again only one instance of discussion about SGI. During the Dakota Access Pipeline Protest the board moved to donate \$1000 to the #noDAPL Water Protectors’ cause. Chewie said, “This donation supports one of our founding principles of reverence for the land and supports our outreach of cultural diversity and our Seventh Generation modeling.” SGI was not mentioned in any meetings for the years of 2017 or 2018. In May 2019 we see SGI emerge once briefly, “The Fair ought to be a leader, with seventh generation in mind” (Andrea as part of the discussion of this carbon neutral initiative). And again in August 2019, where SGI is employed as justification for the implementation of a new recycling policy: “It’s everything we stand for, seventh generation and sustainability” (Amy). Over the years, SGI transitioned from its initial goal of reshaping the Fair’s ongoing process, and instead SGI became a moral ideal and a rhetorical tool which is employed as justification for behaviors.

We asked interview participants about SGI to try and flush out a more comprehensive picture. From what we can tell, SGI has or has not been adopted to a variety of degrees, by different individuals and crews within the OCF community. For example, the Recycling Crew deals with SGI during capital projects and budget requests. But the Land Use Management Committee sees even 200 years as a short timeframe to be working within. Alternatively, individuals reported adopting SGI as a rhetorical and moral tool they can use to hold themselves and others accountable. This last position is mirrored in the Board’s interactions, where SGI serves as rationale or justification for decisions.

Green Ticket Fund

Initially implemented in 2007, the Green Ticket Fund (GTF) was described as “an educational effort by the Fair to let the public know how they can support the Fair’s sustainability projects” (Leslie, General Manager, Apr 2008). In this symbolic discussion of the GTF, board members describe it in terms of what the fund represents or means for the Fair: “[Leslie] talked about the Green ticket option as ‘one way we can educate and inform people’ about how the Fair is working to become more climate neutral” (Leslie, Apr 2008).

At the outset, the GTF was an optional \$1 donation that appeared in the ticket buying process. Contributors could select between a selection of options for where they would like their money to be allocated. Preliminary ticket sales generally garnered a 50% donation rate, but in later parts of each ticket season this rate would drop to roughly 10%-15%. On average, the first three years, 2007-2009, saw a total annual donation rate of roughly 20%, or approximately \$9k. In 2010, alongside an increase in ticket prices, the “board decided to direct \$1 from each sale to the Green ticket [fund]” (Charlie, General Manager, Aug 2010). No longer an opt-in donation, the \$1 per ticket guarantee to the GTF increased the yearly financial capacity of the fund to roughly \$45k-\$50k, a 500% increase. Prior to this transition, ticket buyers had to redirect themselves to the OCF website in order to give the contribution. In this setup OCF was able to provide contributors a choice among different funds (i.e. “Peach Power, philanthropy, transportation, and durables;” Charlie, Aug 2010). Following the transition to a “1 ticket \$1”

layout, the Board effectively lost input from the contributors. Neither the online nor offline ticket purchasing platforms had the functionality to provide this service.

In August 2010, now lacking input from ticket buyers, the board began to open up an internal discussion about how the funds should be allocated. An initial plan began to take shape that would continue to allocate the GT funds according to the distribution patterns of the opt-in years. Roughly half of the funds would be allocated to the Peach Power Committee for use, under this plan, but this distribution proved a point of contention as the board was already in the process of establishing a Peach Power Fund. Proponents of this plan pointed out the potential efficacy of having an already functioning committee take over the allocation procedures according to their internal guidelines: “Rather than create another fund, this fund is already established” (Anna, Aug 2010). Echoing that sentiment, Marcus, Executive Director said, “the process is already in place, it has good leadership and good vision” (Aug 2010). But a few issues remained, other beneficiaries of the Green Ticket money had previously been allocated the funds directly to their operating budgets (e.g. philanthropy). Joseph remarked, “This may not be keeping faith with the people who are paying into the fund. This fee should have its own special impact and those impacts could be new and cutting edge” (Aug, 2010). Joseph’s statement is the seed for discussion that gave the Green Ticket Fund a life of its own. Due to inklings like Joseph’s, the board would come to see the GTF as having internal objectives different to that of other funds. The money must go towards “something that is green” (Jon S, Aug 2010). If the Peach Power Committee proposed something that aligns with the interest of GTF then provide them the funds, but the GTF would remain a unique entity.

The 2010 and 2011 Green Ticket Funds, along with its prior balance, worth over \$100k was allocated to the Community Center Fund for the “green features of the upland kitchen part of the project” (Paxton, Nov 2011). Prior to this transference, the board posed two points of dissent. Joseph (Nov 2011) objected, “This money should be going to things that would not be happening otherwise,” but Joseph would vote to pass the allocation. Jon S (Nov 2011), who would remain in opposition, said “I think we should use the fund to allocate to green items as they arise.” There was no objection that the upland community center project met the criteria for a green project.

There has been a continuous desire among some board members that the GTF should be allocated towards a large variety of projects brought forward by community members. We saw this desire from Jon and Joseph in Nov of 2011, and we see it again from Mouseman (Sept 2014), “the Green ticket is for green things; it is not for other-than-Green things. If all of a sudden there is money in the Peach Power fund then we can find things to use it for. I think [we should] spread the word a little bit and we’ll find a lot of ways to spend the money.” This desire pops up again in small allocations in 2015 & 2016 targeting renewable energy. Once the GTF had been established as its own entity, board members immediately saw it as something which should function to support the Fair community, and not simply serve as an addition to capital funds.

Year after year, the GTF was primarily distributed in one bulk allocation towards other pre-envisioned projects. The 2012 GTF funds were allocated en masse to Community Center green features “Chewie asked if this allocation is for features that are yet to be defined? (yes) The

motion passed” (Jan 2013). The 2013, 2014, and 2015 Green Ticket funds would see their first use in a post-hoc allocation of \$20k to the DeSpain Lane culvert project, and through a concerted effort in 2016 when four allocations used about \$30k. Despite the desire of some board members to use the GTF for a variety of small projects which preemptively requested access to the funds, the actual allocation pattern continues to be one of large projects and post-hoc funding.

It is worth pausing a moment and exploring the Despain Lain culvert project allocation. The board’s discussion, laid out below, is a back and forth contest over the meaning of major concepts like “Green” and “Sustainability”. This discussion follows an introduction of the Green Ticket Fund to new members of the board. This introduction defined the intention of the fund as “Green - sustainable, environmental projects that were selected by the board” (Hillary, Nov 2015). Initial criteria set forth by the board in 2007 & 08 (i.e. the GTF should function to educate the public about sustainability efforts) did not appear in the re-negotiation process, but new vernacular were developed with the inclusion of the “Seventh Generation Intention”.

Hillary: “... As Shane describes this project, it is an environmental upgrade. Tom, Shane and I thought this certainly qualified for Green ticket designation.”

Paxton: “This is money well spent. Shane gathered a very skilled group of volunteers that did a superb job.”

Jon: “While we need to fund what was done, I am not in favor of this being a Green ticket project. It doesn’t meet what I would envision as a Green ticket project. If we were talking about restoring native vegetation I would be in favor...”

Chewie: “Environmental sustainability is not really Green ticket item, I understand that Jon. I think this is a really good use of these funds that have sat dormant. I can’t think of a better use for our green, sustainable, Seventh-generation purpose than to enhance Indian Creek. I hope we put more Green ticket money into this to do bank stabilization on Indian Creek as well.”

Bear: “Jon, if you read Shane’s letter this is an environmental project. I can’t think of a better use of Green ticket funds.”

Justin: “I agree with the purpose of this project as stream restoration. As someone that observed the project, it was amazing. I think we should do more infrastructure projects like this one that exceed the standards.”

Diane: “I support it as a Green ticket item, because fish passage culverts are a big part of watershed restoration.”

Kirk: “We got 25 years out of the original culvert and this one will last a lot longer. There is a lot of ‘green’ to this project.”

Sue: “I saw the progress when they were at the point of ‘dances with rocks.’ Hats are off to those that did this project. Shane, you continue to impress me with your attention to detail and the needs of the Fair site!”

LT: “This is definitely a Green ticket project. I also viewed the project and level of leadership, vision and action at the site management level right now is something that we all ought to feel extremely good about.”

Jon: “If this was a sustainable, Green ticket project, then I question why the initial funding for the project went through the Capital project and was not coming out of the Green ticket funds. I

think this is a cost overrun and you are looking for where to draw the funds for that cost overrun. If this is a Green ticket funded project, I'd like it to not be a retroactive Green ticket funded project."

Chewie: "Jon, respectfully, disagreement with you is one of my favorite things now that Paxton is not here. I appreciate what you are saying; it probably should have been a Green ticket from the beginning. We are doing the right thing with the Green ticket money on this project and to Jon's point, let's set out a criteria for the Green ticket money in the future."

Jack: "As we continue to talk about a good thing, it seems like we are a little dissatisfied. The good fortune is that we have the resources to do this. This is a small piece in the bigger picture for Indian Creek. In our consent calendar tonight we are talking about saving fish. This project is good work. Thank you Shane and thank you all for allowing us to be a successful event and our public that is willing to give a dollar for us to do these small things that are important to the bigger picture." (emphasis added; Nov 2015)

This discussion shows that green is sustainable, it uses less, is more durable, and relates to water as well as vegetation. While the board would achieve relative consensus on the validity of the Despain Lane culvert program's green claims, the GTF remained a somewhat mysterious entity. Board members negotiated the intention of the GTF, but the process and "criteria" were still unclear. Major questions face the GTF to this day: is it acceptable to allocate funds after the fact, or should allocations from GTF be required before the project is started? Or, should the fund be capped, and at what level, before it demands allocation?

Final funding allocations for the 2013-2017 GTF is unverifiable via the available data, but logically it was most likely allocated towards the community center fund. The 2018-2019 funds were allocated towards the revival of the Peach Power Fund, where they are to be used for "proposed projects that meet the original intent of the Green Ticket designation," and a good chunk of change remains in these coffers (Sept 2019).

The following year, 2020, \$100k was allocated from current and future green ticket funds towards a composting project. This allocation put the GTF in the negative for the first time since its inception and was relying on 2020's ticket sales to balance out the budget. The 2020 in-person event has since been cancelled due to the global Coronavirus pandemic and depending on the state of the composting project it may take a year and a half's worth of future Green Ticket sales before new funds are available.