

Dear Board, Staff, Officers, and Fair Family,

Please support the proposal to phase in an increase of the qualifying age for the elders program from 55 to 60. This increase would happen over 10 years.

In December 2021, the board voted unanimously to gradually raise the qualifying age for elders from 55 to 60 and assigned the Budget Committee to consult with the Elders' committee on specifics.

Representatives from the Budget committee have done that, and have gotten a wide range of responses, which eventually settled on the proposal for a 10 year phase in, with a one year increase every other year.

For years, we have heard from folks who first proposed the outlines of the elders' program, that when they chose 55 as the qualifying age—that seemed so old. Further, they did not have demographic information about our population or growth patterns.

As of yet, the folks who qualify far out number the folks who have died. And as OCF experienced large increases in crews during the 1990s—the demographics appear to be leading toward continued increases in elders.

The elder's program's design increases population---the positions that elders' vacated were left in tact, to be filled. The flip side of this is that graduating elders left a position that could be filled by someone who didn't have a position.

For years OCF has accommodated growth in support of many programs and operational goals. We talked vaguely about controlling growth and crowding, but acted to accommodate as much as we could.

In the past few years we have been having the hard conversations that come from recognizing that our ability to create a fun and safe fair have been strained. Again, our systems, for water, waste, entertainment, parking/traffic, decon, and others, have been strained. The capacity conversations have focused on managing growth, and making priorities, rather than letting unintended growth spiral into more growth.

The 2023 budget/plan has held the line on growth of our internal population—by eliminating the SO feeding frenzy and by reducing and reallocating passes where we could. We are pursuing many routes to get a handle on growth.

In years to come, to manage our populations, we are likely to explore whether some crews and teams can evolve to solve current needs, if their former role no longer requires the staffing it once did. These are hard conversations. The budget committee and board liaisons have been in many hard conversations in the past year as we try to propose ways to be inclusive, fair, and realistic about balancing many priorities.

Conversations with elders.

The elders' program is one of OCF's unique and valuable programs. It provides a path for folks who have contributed to continue participating in the event and the organization. It was set up with the criteria that folks who meet the participation criteria for 20 years, having reached the age of 55, can then opt in to get a pass for themselves, and later, the option was added for "companion passes" that operate like SO passes—that is, 75% of the number of elder passes are available as companion passes.

The numbers of people in the program was not restricted and the position that new elders had were retained. So for every 4 new elders, we add 7 new camping passes to our totals.

There has been some expectation that the program will come into statis as, bluntly, as some folks drop out due to age or death. That has not happened. Indeed, it does not appear that it is on the horizon. While some of the older folks in the program are in their late 70s and early 80s, Elders' reports of folks leaving the program for age, death or disability have been relatively small numbers. OCF has a demographic bubble from the 1990s that is arriving to qualifying status.

OCF grew in the 1990s—the left bank, chela mela, the farside, new crews, new support staff, large crowds requiring services. Those folks, who arrived as hardworking 25 year olds (or older) in 1993, qualify as elders now, as well as 35 year olds who started in 2003.

The budget committee has continually increased the numbers projected for the elders program, and preliminary reports from elder registration is that this year exceeds the BC's estimate. We could break 1000 this year, which would also bring 750 companions, and the 34 crew and SOs who staff the program. For a total of about 1785. Currently the elders opting in for a pass are at 976.

In order to preserve essential elements of the program—the companion passes, the opt-in feature and the lack of upper limit—raising the qualifying age for elder status is a great way to evolve the program to respond to realities of OCF's capacity.

The proposal is to phase in, over 10 years, an increase of the qualifying elder age from 55 to 60. This is gradual, and spreads the impacts out over years. While most folks don't sign up for elders passes when they first qualify, this change is a way to reinforce that we are making many little changes in order to preserve things we value---especially participation and an open ended elder's program.

Here are the stats on the growth of the program from 2015 to 2023. For 2023, we have had success in slowing overall growth. The elders' program has gone up 82% in those years, the remaining internal population, 9%. If the annualized rate of over 10% continues for elders, the program will double in 7 years, to include almost 3,500 people.

Please help us evolve the program, manage our growth, and make a strong elder's program focused on serving qualifying elders over 60 years old.

Please see numbers on next page.

Hilary Anthony, CoTreasurer

May 1, 2023

Comparing Elders and nonElders internal population growth					
	2015 to 2023				
		elders	internal population net of elders	overall camping and day passes	elders as % of total
2015		957	15,806	16,763	6%
			-		
2018		1232	19,854	21,086	6%
			-		
			-		
2023		1741	17,259	19,000	9%
			-		
		elders	others	totals	
increase from 2015 to 2023		784	1,453	2,237	
percentage increase		82%	9%	13%	
average annual rate		10%	1%	2%	
above growth rates applied					
to 2033		3,482	19,095	22,577	15%