

Welcome

Thanks for coming out this morning.

I am speaking with you today not only as a Girl Scout and Board member, but specifically as chair of the Long-Range Property and Program Planning Committee. As I am sure you are all aware, for the last year our committee has been very active and I look forward to updating you on our findings to date.

But first I want to notify you of a change that we have had to make to the schedule for the Board's property decision. Our original intent was to present to you today not only our findings, but also our recommendation and the Board decision regarding property. Unfortunately, we are running behind schedule by about 6 weeks. KALEIDOSCOPE and Glen Chin with GSUSA submitted their preliminary findings in late November and final report in December. Considering the holidays and the amount of information that needed to be processed, we were unable to complete this in time for our original timeline. We wanted to make sure that we as a committee as well as the Board was prepared for the difficult decision that we needed to make. We also wanted to present some of our initial findings to you today and solicit your feedback to be included with our presentation. Our intention is to present the committee recommendation to the Board at our March 18th Board meeting, and shortly thereafter call a special delegate meeting to present the findings to you, the membership.

I also want to clarify some misunderstandings that are out there regarding the procedure for voting on this plan. The membership does not vote on this proposal, the Board does. I recognize that this is different from the way 2 of our legacy councils handled property decisions. However, the Mountains to Midlands Council By-Laws specifically designate this authority to the Board as part of managing council assets, including property. The By-Laws were generated from non-profit best practices with substantial input by nationally recognized experts in this field. Please understand that just because you are not voting on this, it doesn't mean that you have not had an impact on the decision. We have actively solicited your feedback on what you want for programming, camping, and other property related needs. We have held focus groups, online surveys, and town hall meetings. As you will see in a minute, the feedback obtained is in our plan.

The focus of Girl Scouting is to serve girls. We serve girls through programming, and we use property to support programming. Council properties make it possible for girls to participate in creative and educational experiences and have fun together. Sometimes these places are camps, with the opportunity to experience and appreciate nature personally. In other cases, these places are sites chosen for their special relevance to girls' particular needs, such as urban drop-in centers, gymnasiums or athletic fields, swimming pools, or meeting and office spaces.

The value of Girl Scout property is in its benefit to our members. The purpose of long-range strategic property

planning by the council is to gather data, seek input, and recommend a plan of property management to support programming for up to 10 years or longer. Our course of action must move Mountains to Midlands forward as the premier organization to build girl leaders for our communities, our state and beyond.

The committee began its work in April 2008 comprised of 14 members providing a broad geographical representation across the council. Each legacy council was represented, providing substantial background knowledge on properties. Members of the committee include representatives from the Board of Directors; experts in the areas of property, taxes, and law; current Girl Scout volunteers; and volunteers with in-depth knowledge about the sites and their history. Those who served on the committee were committed to the process of long-range strategic planning and its great importance in the sustainability and forward momentum of this council.

The Board of Directors' charge to our committee is to research and recommend a strategic, long-range property plan to meet the council's future programming goals and interests of girls. We were also directed to balance environmental issues with the council's ability to finance and maintain property assets.

Committee work revolves around four major areas:

1. **Gather information for analysis** – site visits; assessing usage; examining best practices from GSUSA and alternate

camp resources; considering financial income and expenditures in relation to program goals; and analyzing the council's current and potential financial resources.

2. Base the process on accurate and objective community and constituency input – the program consulting firm of KALEIDOSCOPE, inc., was contracted to conduct an objective, third-party program assessment, which we will see in more detail a little later. We have also been fortunate in receiving expertise and national data through Glen Chin, GSUSA Property Consultant, who has worked with the committee since its inception.

3. Ensure that strategies align with organizational plans and goals – we must meet GSUSA's safety and security guidelines, program and camping standards, as well as documenting the objectivity and reliability of data that aligns with the strategy map approved by the Board last year.

4. Ensure that the committee's recommendation to the Board of Directors includes strategic alternative and prioritized recommendations – these recommendations are based on programmatic input and should address each council site, whether owned, leased, or used primarily for programming or office space.

The committee's vision, providing overarching guidance for our work, is:

“To provide safe and inviting indoor and outdoor properties offering a diverse range of unique, hands-on educational and engaging recreational activities supporting Girl Scout goals.”

Beginning last summer, Mountains to Midlands staff gathered data on all council properties. This included types and frequencies of property usage by troops, service units, and camp programs; maintenance and development plans; deferred maintenance and master plan status; usage capacity; unique environmental features; program competition; potential partnerships and resources; all costs associated with ownership and/or use; demographic information and projections; pros and cons of sites and programming to date; and trend data from other councils of similar size and capacity. Committee members visited each site individually or in small groups.

During the fall, a third-party consulting firm was selected for conducting the objective, extensive program assessment. A donor funded the entire program assessment process to ensure objectivity and to contract a firm who also had experience outside Girl Scouting.

KALEIDOSCOPE was chosen for this assessment. They are one of the preeminent camp consultants in the country based in Little Rock. Input was gathered in many ways: an online survey for both girls and adults; surveys mailed to girl and adult members and non-members; 8 separate focus groups and town hall meetings across all council regions; and small group and individual interviews with Board members, donors, staff, community partners and

community leaders. Over 17,000 notices were mailed to members and non-members announcing the online survey; and a second notice was mailed reminding them to complete the survey. The information gathered during this objective program assessment identifies our council's future program direction; and is critical to any recommendation the committee makes to the Board of Directors.

Delegates were presented with preliminary program assessment findings at the November Annual Meeting. KALEIDOSCOPE finalized the data and made their presentation to the committee and to the Board in November and December, including findings, options, and potential recommendations.

Criteria for formulating KALEIDOSCOPE's recommendations were:

1. Properties will meet program demands, which includes program delivery to current and future girls; providing good resources for adult volunteers; and delivering program in a variety of ways to meet diverse populations.
2. Properties will connect people to Girl Scouts of South Carolina – Mountains to Midlands by connecting girls to program activities by site; connecting leaders to staff and resources; connecting program and brand visibility to the community; and expanding, sharing and partnering with other community groups.

3. Properties will be a part of a sustainable plan for growth, including partnership as a viable alternative to ownership; and having the funds to develop and maintain quality facilities.

Using data from the program assessment survey, girls ranked the six major categories of program interest or focus:

Younger girls and older girls alike ranked The Arts and Outdoor/Environmental Education as the top two. Then younger girls ranked (in order): Healthy Living, STEM, Leadership, and Business Enterprise.

Older girls ranked (in order): Leadership, Healthy Living, Business Enterprise, and STEM.

Younger girls' (Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors) top-ranked activities within the program focus areas were:

- Arts Activities
- Personal and Leadership Activities
- Water-based Activities
- Camping Activities
- Outdoor Adventure Activities

Older girls' (Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors) top-ranked activities within the program focus areas were:

- Water-based Activities
- Camping Activities
- Outdoor Adventure Activities
- Arts Activities

- Personal and Leadership Activities

Camp preferences were identified by girls:

- A large majority want cabins/lodges with heat, AC, lights, flush toilets and showers; but a few want tents and rustic sites
- At least half want to cook outside on a fire/grill with their troop
- Not a significant difference between those preferring lodges (large groups) vs. cabins (small groups)

Program amenities desired by 70% or more of girls were:

- Swimming pool with slides
- Arts & crafts center
- Horseback riding
- Campfire circles
- Lounge just for girls to talk
- Lake for canoeing, kayaking, etc.
- Go-kart track
- Climbing wall
- Hiking trails

Specific to camps, girls said:

- All toilet and shower facilities received a significant number of “Yuck!” answers
- Facilities rated as “in good repair” included Mary Elizabeth, Ponderosa, WaBak and Wistagoman, but individual facilities in each camp were scored low

- They would likely attend more programs at an “ideal” camp

In girl focus groups about program, responses were similar to the survey, with these additional items:

- Program is needed for all girls to address very different ages, interests and preferences
- Girls want active, participatory programs that are fun and engaging
- Older girls want more programs for them, not always with younger girls; and they want to help choose and plan the activities
- Girls love to go places and stay overnight
- Girls are highly motivated by incentives, especially related to earning credits toward purchases, programs and scholarships

In town hall meetings, major themes relating directly to programming included:

- Girls join/stay in Girl Scouts because of programs
- To grow, the council must have more committed trained adult leaders, with staff assistance and resources
- The troop experience is the grounding point for most girls
- Programs need to focus on girls’ contemporary interests as well as introduce them to new interests

- Popular programs should be repeated in areas around the council
- Girls like the outdoors but have different levels of interest in how to encounter it

Hopes for the future were identified:

- Mountains to Midlands can be a premier council with the participation and support of all its stakeholders
- Deliver the values and benefits of Girl Scouting through program experiences that girls can't get in school or church
- Maintain variety with two specialty areas – outdoor adventure and the arts – offered in a variety of time formats
- Provide safe, functional, accessible spaces for program delivery

Factors considered by GSUSA Consultant Glen Chin in formulating his recommendations included:

- Invest in property with the most programmatic and membership potential
- Provide a wide variety of unique experiences for girls which also meet the mission and vision of the organization
- Day camp and troop/service unit camping is a strategy to provide progression for older girl program. Volunteer systems are core to program future.

- Consider divesting assets with the most return for the organization in order to provide greater programmatic value
- Know your financial position
- Know how much investment you need to take you from “good to great” facilities
- Project the impact of alternative strategies

The Board of Directors received the final reports and recommendations of Glen Chin and KALEIDOSCOPE in January. They compiled the following additional criteria for the committee to use in formulating their strategic plan during January and February:

- Decisions for property should be based on objective program information, the council strategy map, and the GSUSA Leadership Experience model for girls
- Program quality must increase
- Properties must fit the need and criteria for forward progress
- There is a need to reduce cost and raise money
- Additional property could be secured through partnerships, contributions, or sale of current property
- Reduce administrative space and operating costs for property and staffing
- Maintain a presence in communities
- Address constituency feedback, including:

- Property is accessible and conveniently located to population
- Property provides a safe, secure environment offering space and natural features
- Build facilities needed for activities and maintain them in good quality condition
- Specific to office locations:
 - They should link staff to members, and link the organization to the community, funders, media, and businesses
 - They should provide a presence and brand support
 - They could include services such as shop, program center, volunteer training, meeting location
- Examine the timing and execution of the recommendation in light of the overall council picture and fund development plan
- Be very clear in the recommendation's format, content, rationale and priority level for each action

The committee would like to provide you with further detailed trend information that has been included in the wealth of objective information to be used in formulating their recommendation. These are comparatives among Girl Scout councils serving 14,000-17,000 girls; and based on our council's girl membership of 12,070 as of September 2008.

Membership share (percentage of girls served out of number of girls available):

Girl Scout trend = 10% vs. Mountains to Midlands, 6%

Cost per girl:

Girl Scout trend = \$386 vs. Mountains to Midlands, \$456

Average budget based on cost:

Girl Scout trend = 4.66 million vs. Mountains to Midlands, 5.5 million

Months of operating reserves:

Girl Scout goal is 6 to 12 months vs. Mountains to Midlands, 4 months

Percent of revenue from product sales:

Girl Scout trend = 64% vs. Mountains to Midlands, 72%;

The rechartering criterion is less than 50%

Percent of budget spent on property maintenance (repair, occupancy, etc.):

Girl Scout trend = 7% vs. Mountains to Midlands, 15%

Percent of budget spent on all camps, offices, houses, huts, centers:

Girl Scout trend = 10 to 15% vs. Mountains to Midlands, 29%

Number of camps:

Girl Scout trend = 3 vs. Mountains to Midlands, 8

Number of offices:

Girl Scout trend = 1 to 2 vs. Mountains to Midlands, 4

Percent of membership that attends resident camp:

Girl Scout trend = 10% vs. Mountains to Midlands, 7.5%

Percent of membership that visits a property on the weekends:

Girl Scout trend = 15% vs. Mountains to Midlands, 12%

Percent of membership that attends troop camping:

Girl Scout trend = 25% vs. Mountains to Midlands, unknown

Percent of membership that attends a site for weekend use over the year:

Girl Scout trend = 50% vs. Mountains to Midlands, it ranges by site from 0 – 52%

We are the first council nationwide to look at our total property picture and formulate a strategy encompassing not only camps but office space, meeting space, and owned and leased sites.

And to compare overall girl program preferences identified through objective research:

See the columns indicating GSUSA all girls combined compared to Mountains to Midlands all girls combined; then broken out in Mountains to Midlands by younger girls and older girls. Notice the similarities of activities chosen, with a few differences in their rankings from group to group.

The committee would also like to share council financial data with you:

The first slide shows overall council income and compares it to GSUSA:

Product sales is 72% of Mountains to Midlands income; GSUSA, 50%

Contributions in Mountains to Midlands is 18% of our income; GSUSA, 33%

Program & miscellaneous income is 10% in our council; GSUSA, 17%

The next slide shows overall council expenses during the membership year October 2007 to September 2008. Broad categories include salaries, benefits & taxes (71%); Equipment, supplies and communications (11%); Occupancy and insurance (11%); other (7%).

This slide shows income from program and property including summer program, troop camping, year-round events, adult program fees, rental of our sites, and trading post and Girlz Gear income.

This slide shows program and property expenses: the blue represents our 3 offices; the red is the 3 largest camps; the green and purple are program & property staff, including seasonal employees; and the small lighter blue is expenses for all other sites.

The next slide tracks program & property income (the blue line) and expenses (the red line) from 2004 to September 2008, clearly showing the gap between income and outflow for property and program.

So, let's review the timeline, summarize where we have been, and look at next steps forward:

March 2008: Identify committee members, confirm their commitment to the process, formulate scope of work with Board and GSUSA consultant, and begin compiling site statistics

April 2008: First committee meeting to confirm purpose and charge from the Board, educate committee members on

all sites, and formulate strategy for carrying out the work of the committee

May 2008: Second committee meeting to confirm timeline for committee's work, plan site visits, and map strategies for gathering all relevant data and conducting program assessment by objective, third-party vendor

June-August 2008: Committee members visit all property sites including offices, continue data compilation, contract program assessment vendor, and plan input methods

September 2008: Third committee meeting to finalize program assessment methodology and study all site information, utilization details, and relevant data with comparables

September-October 2008: Objective third-party vendor, KALEIDOSCOPE, inc., conducts program assessment

November 2008: Fourth committee meeting to receive initial program assessment findings, receive research and findings from GSUSA consultant, study usage prioritization, and consider financial data

December 2008: Board of Directors receives program assessment results and requests committee recommendation for their March 2009 meeting

January-February 2009: Committee meets to review all research, trends, and data; review criteria by which recommendation is to be determined; and formulate property recommendation to the Board.

The committee is dedicated to formulating a recommendation that

- aligns property with the programming desired by girls; and
- eliminates deferred maintenance inhibiting the council from serving girls through quality programming.

March 18, 2009: Board meets to receive and act on committee recommendation

A special called meeting is being planned for March (date to be determined) to share with the delegation the Board decision and next steps: an exciting plan moving the council forward with a focus on the engaging program opportunities ahead, on ensured sustainability, and on growing service to girls!

In closing, I want to offer a few views that I think you can count on for our recommendation:

- We will be selling properties and moving offices; some may be a surprise, some may not;
- We will honor past commitments and recognize legacy as part of the process;
- We are committed to the resident camp experience;
- Properties need to be multi-use: offices, meeting space, programming
- We are committed to local presence in our communities and ease of access
- Sites will be of quality

- A portion of the proceeds from any sale will be allocated to future programming
- We are committed to partnerships, whether statewide with coastal council or otherwise.

Thank you for your input throughout this process, and your continuing commitment to working together to make sure Mountains to Midlands provides the highest quality program opportunities to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

I am happy to answer any questions.