



## Starting a Men's Shed- the view from Westhill

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This document can be distributed as a whole to other interested parties;  
we would appreciate acknowledgement of the Westhill Men's Shed if quoting excerpts.

## Introduction

We are getting asked a lot for advice on how to start a “Men’s Shed” and we want to help as much as we can. So this package answers some frequently asked questions as best we can.

Westhill is the first Shed in Scotland and this advice is based on how we did that. There will be many variations to suit local circumstances and you will have to decide if you agree with the decisions we made. In fact we don’t like the template approach to making a Men’s Shed; partly because of these variations and partly because of the danger of a copied document being used to get a grant, say, then put in a drawer and forgotten when it should guide the development of the shed.

Throughout this document you will find some of the answers to questions that we are often asked to justify a Men’s Shed. But there are some fundamentals that may help inform the design and we will follow up with examples from our Shed that may you save time or get you thinking.

To keep this document short we have used a technique of summarising other documents and just including a contents list. However if you are starting a shed and want to discuss more detail or get hold of the whole document then get in touch. This also allows us to give you the latest information.

We could not finish an introduction without mentioning the Australians who had the original concept. Following their initial success they built 900 Sheds in the next 12 years and went out to the world to tell us about it. Many of our procedures are adaptations are based on their experience of starting Sheds. The Australian Men’s Shed Association ([www.mensshed.org](http://www.mensshed.org)) is the place to start if you want to use these resources directly.

## What is/is not the Westhill Men’s Shed?

At its core it is a positive health measure. As people live longer and hope to remain fit and able they need something to keep them active, physically and mentally. A big part of this is social interaction. Get them involved and it results in keeping them healthier.

This is a key part of our image. The Shed is where men come to take part in physical and mental activity to benefit themselves and the community, interact socially and have a laugh. It is positive health measure.

“Men don’t talk face to face; they work shoulder to shoulder”.

It is difficult to get men involved in groups; women form the backbone of most community activities and initiatives. Many men enjoy using their own shed where they repair or tinker with machinery or build things on their own. However there are groups where men are the majority (wood turners for example), they get ideas from each other and inspire each other. Swing this around and you have a communal shed that can be a centre for many activities that appeal to men.

The Shed’s essential features:

- **There is something practical to do.** This normally is a woodworking workshop. The key is that a man can come along to the shed, have a look around and a discussion about what he is interested in, find something that matches and want to come back. The focus doesn’t have to be woodworking. It could be another common skill: boats, engine restoration or gardening for example.

- **A good atmosphere.** Men usually arrive a bit hesitantly; a second key is that the atmosphere is friendly and the welcome should be good.
- **Has a relaxation/hobby and coffee area.** Here the world can be put to rights and conversations had on topics of general interest to men. Surprisingly (to us anyway) the discussion often includes health issues without any prompting. Guys want to be in a group and accepted. Coffee break banter, swapping stories and advice are the best part of a visit.

It is necessary to have a range of activities going on so that a man coming to the shed can find something that suits him, join in, leave having achieved something (this is important) and, in the process, made new friends. He could have bought his own project along, joined in with a Shed project (our examples: a 'friendship bench' for a primary school, steps so a disabled lad can use his trampoline safely, restoring an old stationary engine and water pump, restoring tools to go to Africa, cooking for one).

This is the next key strength of the Westhill model- **almost anything can be made a Shed project.** When a man came in and said he was not interested in anything practical we were a bit stumped until he said he liked to play bridge. So we helped him start a bridge group- they meet every Friday.

We run the Shed with a volunteer "safety supervisor" every day the Shed is open (we usually have two present). The main role of the supervisor is to keep an eye on the operations and to ensure that health and safety procedures are followed. His job is also to meet newcomers, make them feel welcome and introduce them to the Shed.

### **What Our Shed is NOT**

- Commercial. We do not want deadlines and targets or pressure. The majority of us are retired and have had plenty of that to last a lifetime. The men who are still working come along for relaxation. We do projects for charitable groups and the community, but we do them at our own pace.
- A service provider. The majority of men should be able mentally and physically. Men with support needs are welcome but need to come to the Shed with their carer. We try to pair them up with a buddy so that they can participate in activities.
- Set up to work with vulnerable groups. To use the Shed you must be over 18 and we do not have policies and procedures or disclosures to work with vulnerable groups. This is not ruled out but would require a big increase in administration and someone willing to run it.
- A project of a larger charity or other body. We are an independent charity, not managed by any other group. The men elect a Board of peers and we try to encourage everyone to have a say.

## **Now to 'How we got started'**

### **A presentation on how we got started**

Appendix 3 is a brief run down.

## Westhill Men's Shed business plan

A business plan involves a lot of work but forces you to think clearly about what you want to do, how you plan to do it and the issues and problems that may arise. It will pay dividends as you will be able to use it to make sure you all understand where you are going and show your project is viable to supporters and funders. You can start with the basics (and a good first document) by using these four topics:

- Have a written statement of what you are proposing to do, why you want to do it and what benefit it will be to the men in the community and the community itself. This on its own will mean everyone talking about the shed will have the same agreed goals.
- Gather support for the idea. Get background on the local population and how many men are likely candidates to join a Men's Shed .
- Get support from the local council, NHS and other health professionals.
- For our shed the start up costs were about £18,000 and annual costs about £7000. Converting the shed to our use and purchase of machinery are the majority of the start-up costs, the electric heating is the biggest annual expense, insurance next. This becomes clearer some time later as the plan becomes firmer. Appendix 2 "Our budget line items" is the range of expenses we considered. We are very lucky to have such a grand shed and these costs reflect that.

Our business plan is quite complex but as the first in Scotland we wanted to cover all the bases to satisfy ourselves that it was worth putting effort into. Appendix 1 is the contents list for the Westhill Men's Shed business plan". The full business plan is confidential but we can send one to you on the basis that you do not pass it on without our permission. The contents should show the areas we have covered.

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pub\\_business\\_plan\\_guide.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/pub_business_plan_guide.pdf)

We used the "Scotland- your project business plan" written by the Big Lottery Fund. This is a guide to writing a business plan for charities (and it probably helped with our application to the Big Lottery Fund!) and we used it as our starting point. They must have similar documents for other countries; there will be changes to suit the different legislation but overall similar. Hopefully you will get it from the link but if you get in touch we can help you get it as it is a nightmare to find it on the site.

### Write a Constitution.

We had help from the Council for Voluntary Services staff (in Scotland- may be different elsewhere) to craft our constitution document and get it approved. Your Constitution is an important legal document and you must get advice so that it conforms to legal requirements. Our document is not included here as it references the local situation but if you are writing yours we can send you a copy on application.

### Register as a charity.

This makes life a lot easier. Giving your registration number means other groups know you have satisfied the authorities that your aims are charitable and the regulator agrees that your funds are being used for the right purpose. Many other benefits follow- limitation of liability, one body will check your financial return, no taxes or rates to pay, discounts etc. We had help from the Council for Voluntary Services staff (in Scotland- may be different elsewhere) to apply to OSCR (the Scottish

charity regulator) as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and get it approved. The documents are not included here (although part of the public record) as we believe you need to craft it yourself. The starting point is the “OSCR charity trustee guidance booklet” available from the OSCR website.

## Shed procedures.

For a first time visit the man is hosted and shown around the shed. We ask each man to **sign in each time** attending and note what he intends to do– this helps with knowing how many are using the shed and for what purpose, eventually the statistics are used for reports back to funders, publicity etc . but also allows an interaction with the supervisor.

The second time in the shed a man is asked to complete a **Welcome Form**. This records his name and address, emergency contact details and any medical conditions he thinks we should know about. Part of this process is pointing out the fire exits, safety arrangements generally.

Finally if he intends to use the workshop then a **Workshop Induction** is carried out- emergency electric cut-off points, personal protective equipment location and use, the safety notices displayed by each machine and importantly that he must be checked in by a supervisor for EACH machine he intends to work on. Having been shown how to use a machine safely the supervisor observes them using it and then signs the training record on his Workshop Induction form for that machine. This way any supervisor can easily check if the person is approved to use a machine without all supervisors needing to be expert at everything.

## Workshop manual

This is a summary of the manual.

If you want the whole document then get in touch, that way we can give you the latest copy as it changes over time.

There is a check in the manual that a **Welcome form** is on record and if he intends to use the workshop then a **Workshop Induction** is carried out and the record is kept with the Welcome form.

The Workshop Induction starts with emergency procedures, where personal protective equipment (PPE) is and what to use it for, how to dispose of waste and keeping the shed clean and tidy. The safety culture is impressed on them and the signs pointed out. For each activity (usually a machine) they wish to use they are either given a briefing on how to use it and then observed using the machine or, if they say they are competent, they are asked to describe what the risks are, methods of reducing the risks and what operating procedures should be used- followed again by observation while they use it and a discussion where Shed procedures differ. This competence is recorded on the form so it may be checked by a supervisor who does not themselves have the knowledge to teach use of the machine.

Men are asked to check the machine for themselves each time they use it and report any defects.

A risk assessment process is documented and used to generate the ‘safe use’ signs. There is a monthly safety check of the workshop and each machine and a Project record so we know who is the project leader and the sponsor of a project. The safe use signs are in a standard format nearby and consists of three boxes; Hazards (of the machine), Safety (methods of using safely, reducing risks and PPE) and a Procedure (simple operating process). An example of this is on the next page.

## Drill Press

**CHECK IN WITH SUPERVISOR BEFORE USING THIS MACHINE**

### Hazards:

Shavings in Eyes.  
Clothes/hair caught in machine.  
Chuck key left in - can throw out  
when machine starts  
Drill jams and rotates work piece

### Safety:

NO LOOSE CLOTHING  
LONG HAIR UNDER CONTROL  
Wear EYE PROTECTION  
Keep HANDS away from drill bit.  
Clamp down work piece

### Procedure:

Lock drill bit in chuck using chuck key.  
Good practice: when you pick up the chuck key it does not leave your hand until back in its storage position.

Locate drill bit over target mark. If possible clamp down the work.  
Turn on machine - wait for full speed.  
Using manual lowering arm, move drill through material, backing off to clear swarf if necessary.  
Do not move material during the drilling operation.  
Lift drill to its rest position, turn off & wait until rotation of the bit stops.  
Remove work piece & clean up

## **Funding your shed**

Early on we decided not to charge members or users any fees for accessing the Shed. We wanted to make the Shed as inclusive and welcoming as possible. Because of this we needed to put a lot of effort into fundraising and to seek out as many sources as possible. A specific fundraising committee of the Board was formed to pursue this objective.

Here are some possible sources we considered.

- **Self-Funding**

Some sheds have group projects making bird feeders, rocking horses, etc., which they sell at local markets to raise funds.

We take on community projects for other groups (schools, parks) and usually charge them for materials plus a donation. We also get asked to do small repairs for friends which we do in return for small donations. We are careful not to interfere with commercial operations.

We don't charge for tea or coffee but some members like to put in a small donation. So we put a can for change next to the coffee pot and it gets used.

We find we get a LOT of tool donations but there are many that are surplus to our needs. These are offered to members in exchange for a donation. (We advise donors that we have a four stage process for donated items: use it, pass it to another charity, sell it to raise money for the Shed, recycle it.)

- **Self-Generated Fundraising**

We try to raise some of our operating expenses through organising local fundraisers. We had a pre-Christmas bag packing day at Tesco, a games stall at the local Gala, and we have run a few raffles.

- **Local Organisations**

One of our very early funders was the local Lions Club which gave us money to help us get off the ground when we were little more than a few guys and an idea. They indicated they would follow this up with a donation once we had achieved charitable status. We have made presentations to the local Rotary and Round Table and they responded generously.

- **Local Small Businesses**

We are considering approaching local businesses for support, either money or in-kind donations. These are difficult times and we are trying to come up with ideas where the business could benefit from helping us with either publicity or some sort of tie-in. We are particularly interested in linking

in with a hardware or DIY business. Already “Somebody Cares” a local housing charity has offered to give us used furniture and equipment for our relaxing area.

- **Large Local Businesses**

We think there is scope here for regular financial support for a Shed. Some of these businesses have a well-developed program for assisting charities and it is important to shape your request to fit in with their plan. The key is to have a contact or supporter inside the organisation who can make the links to get you a hearing. These sources may take time to develop.

- **National Charities**

There are a number of Scottish charities that are interested in supporting new, innovative efforts like the Men’s Shed. Men’s health, social inclusion, healthy retirement and adult education are all national priorities in Scotland and a number of charities are concerned about one or more of these issues. A Google search of “Scottish charity funding” will turn a number of leads. When you go through the list be sure to carefully study the criteria for each organisation so you target your efforts. Some only support children or families. Others will pay for capital items but not transport or running expenses.

[AgeScotland](#) is a strong supporter of the Men’s Shed movement and should be contacted early on.

The [Funding Scotland](#) website has lists of charities that support various groups.

The [Lottery Fund](#) has a program to support community initiatives.

- **Governmental Sources**

Your local Community Council should be brought on board early. Their support can open other doors. They sometimes have funds to support the Shed.

The Area Committee of our Council has top up funds for supporting local groups and should respond well to an organisation which is addressing important local goals- you might find this is not available in your area. In the jargon of government a Men’s Shed “builds capacity” which means it helps individuals to enhance existing knowledge and skills and lead more satisfying lives. We welcome the support and encouragement of our local Council while making clear to the public that we are an independent charity. We think most men welcome the idea of a Shed controlled by themselves.

The Change Fund is a Scottish Government initiative aimed at improving services for older people by shifting care towards anticipatory care and prevention. The government recognises that older people are an asset to Scotland and preparing for an increasingly ageing population is one of our biggest national challenges. They appreciate that a Men’s Shed is an important part of the solution.

## Frequently asked questions

This is a potted list of the questions people starting Sheds have asked us:

### - **How much does it cost?**

This can vary dramatically and depend on your thoughts about what you want to do. Some research into who might use the shed and how many you want to cater for at one time is useful for setting the scene.

We found that a committee of at least three but preferably 8 men was necessary to get the project running- varied skills from paperwork through to practical skills are needed in varying degrees as the project develops. They were able to think through the costs and build up a budget.

The shed is usually the first thing to look for. Assuming you want the standard model of a workshop and a relaxing area then an 8 foot by 6 foot garden shed would be cramped. We recommend that you have access to toilet facilities and have, or can get, mains electric power and some heating. The first part of the budget is the annual running costs of the Shed.

Next you will need to adapt it. In Westhill we put in a wall to separate the noise and dust of the workshop from the relaxation area, put a chipboard floor over the workshop floor so we can spill stuff and it will take the weight of machinery. Together with new wiring for the workshop this cost £8000 (remember we have a very big 'Shed').

Equipping the workshop can be very cheap if you get the basics and ask for tool donations and very expensive if you buy all new. We made the workbenches and have the majority of the tools new (others were donated) - it cost us £12,000. Appendix 4 shows the Westhill Men's Shed layout.

Our total running costs are about £7000 per year. The biggest cost can often be the shed itself- whether leased or purchased, we were lucky to get our shed using a "Community Asset Transfer" of a council owned building where the cost to us factored in the community benefit. Next our biggest item is electric heating – although done off-peak with storage heaters it will be about £2000 p.a.

You will need insurance and we found that specialist insurance for clubs and charities had all the bases covered that we needed. Use the web. Our insurance covers everything from public liability and injury compensation to legal cover and costs £600 per year.

We have budgeted for publicity- leaflet printing etc. to advertise the shed, office costs, shed lease, repairs, annual allowance for tools and materials, internet, phone, evaluation of the benefit of the Shed, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) etc. Appendix 2 gives the heading of our budget items.

### - **What income does Westhill have?**

One of our principles is that use of the shed is free- there are no membership or session charges. We do have a donations pot and this easily covers the tea and coffee costs.

Otherwise we hope to get continued support from Aberdeenshire Council, the NHS and local fund raisers like the Round Table as they recognise the benefits to the community of our work. We raise funds ourselves- bag packing, raffles, mark-ups on material costs where we have made something for another group or individual (the labour is free). With other applications for funding we hope to be able to maintain the free use of the shed. We have a policy of not doing commercial work as we don't want men to have deadlines or feel

pressured- however we do projects for causes we approve of (a bench in memory of one of the saviours of Carney Woods is being built, a windsock for a sailing charity) and charge a mark-up on the material costs and suggest a donation.

- **Should we just use hand tools?**

This always comes up but hand tools can cause injury too- it is an option. However anyone who does this sort of work really appreciates that having the right power tools is much more productive. Having a well-equipped workshop is something that will attract men to use the Shed. You need men who know how to use the tools safely and train/ introduce those that don't. This is the same for power tools. Our Workshop Manual shows how we manage the safety aspects of using the workshop.

- **What about HSE?**

The legislation comes in at 5 employees so as we are all volunteers it is very simple. We are very keen to run a safe Shed though and apply best practice – this is helped by having shed supervisors who have worked in industry, joiners and engineering managers, who can advise us. We are committed to running a safe Shed- and you should be too.

- **How do you make the shed buzz?**

Good question. A shed needs something practical to do, might be gardening or boatbuilding if that suits the local area. If there is nothing practical then what you have made is not a 'Shed'. You then need a set of communal projects so that anyone new can come along see the projects in progress and find something they can join in with- men like to accomplish something, use their skills and are happy to help others. Very few have no interest in practical work but they also want to do something- hence the bridge club was started. One model of organisation has a full time supervisor for the shed- this gives continuity and someone to think about a programme of projects, keeping the shed stocked etc. – however it does increase the cost dramatically. The Westhill shed works on a rotation of volunteer supervisors working one day per fortnight and between them they keep it rolling.

## Appendix 1 Westhill Men's Shed Business Plan Contents list

This shows the bases we covered- this is quite a comprehensive plan based on the Big Lottery guide.

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## Appendix 2 Our budget line items

These are the headline items- there is a lot more detail to go behind these items and notes about how they have been estimated. The numbers have been redacted (see what I did there) as you need to build your own.

Large power tools for example was made up of a list of equipment and all the cost was in the first year, hand tools has an amount over the three years to allow for additional tools for special purposes or replacements as tools wear out.

There are no employees so the Expenses are to allow for travel to men's shed conferences etc. and Training for first aid courses among others.

<b>Expenses</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year
<b>Personnel Costs</b>			
Expenses			
Training			
<b>Facility Costs</b>			
Lease/Rent			
Insurance			
Repairs			
Rates			
<b>Utility costs</b>			
Electricity			
<b>Equipment &amp; Materials</b>			
Hand tools			
Power tools			
Materials			
<b>Office costs</b>			
Computer			
Phone			
Supplies			
Photocopying			
Postage			
Publicity			
Totals			
<b>Capital expenses</b>			
Workbenches			
Hand and portable power tools			
Large power tools			

## Appendix 3 How we started the Westhill Men's Shed presentation

### How we started the



Nick Pilbeam April 2013

### Contents

- A few men to make it happen
- Find a Shed!
- Business Plan
- Make a Charity and Fund raise
- Publicity
- How is the Westhill shed doing?

### A few men to make it happen

- Some tenacity
- Variety of skills
- Average 2 years to start a Shed
- Between 3 and 10 men to start- bring in more as get to build Shed

### Find a Shed!



Above is a variety of sheds- from a bench in a factory, to a container, a real wooden shed, to the Westhill building.

### Business Plan

- Why are we doing it and what are the benefits?
- How much will it cost to startup?
- How much will it cost each year to run?
- Is there enough demand to make this worthwhile? The design is related to this.
- Can we get the support we need?

### Publicity

- Local media.
- Email lists
- Website
- Leaflets / Events / Posters / Mail drop
- Network with other organisations

## Do it!

### Make a charity and Fund raise

- A charity has aims that are much easier to fund raise for, protects the liability of the organisers and does not pay tax, rates etc.
- Put the time to get started to good use by fundraising....
- Start up attracts funding- minimise on-going costs

- Create the shed
- Equip it
- Operations committee (Shed works, Projects, Supervisors, Safety Standards and Implementation etc.)

### How is Westhill doing?

- After 3 months:
- Open 3 days per week
  - About 20 men per week
  - Over 5000 visitors in total

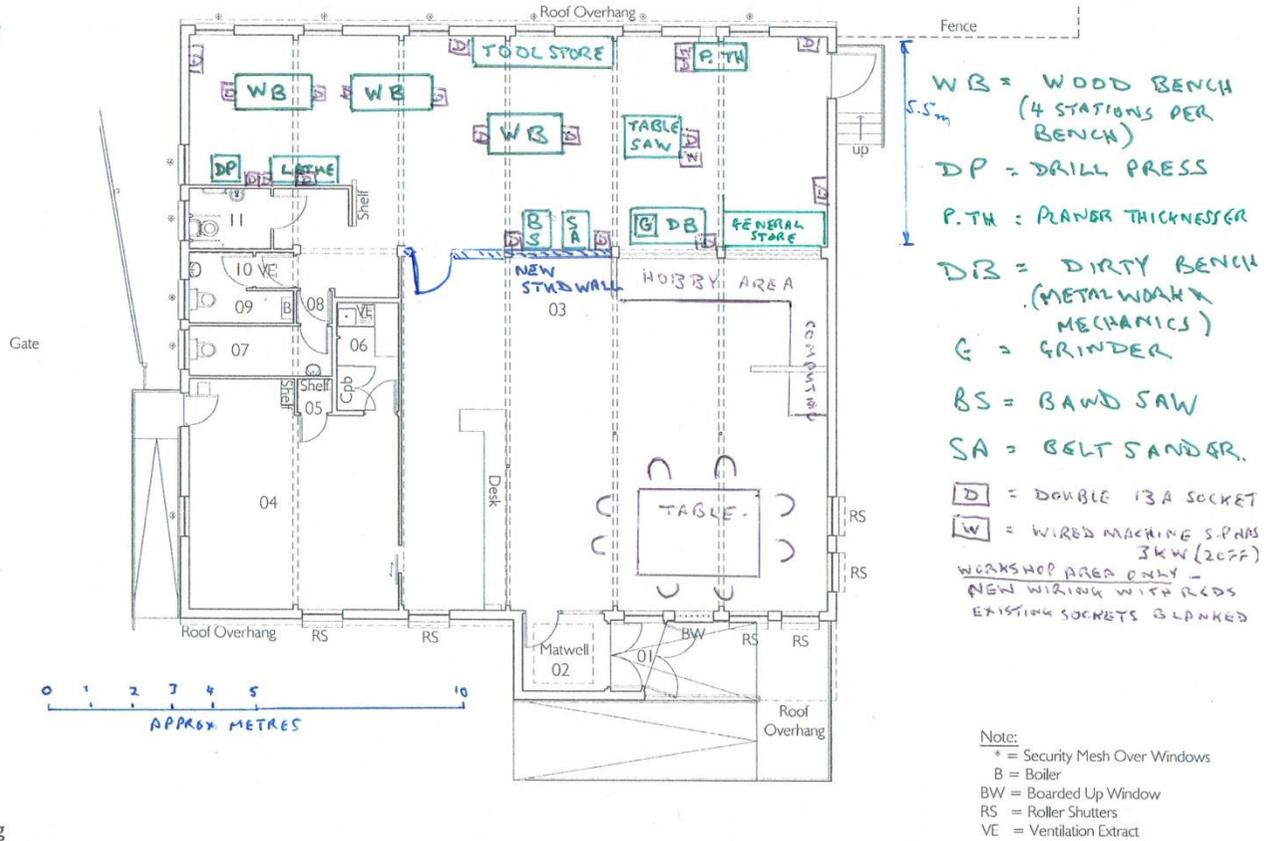


- Upholstery
- Windsack for sailing charity.
- Tools for Self Reliance
- Cooking for one
- Stationary Engine and Water Pump restoration
- "Friendship Bench" for local primary school
- Bridge club
- Model Railway
- Coffee/Tea

# Appendix 4: Westhill Men's Shed floor plan

THIS DRAWING IS FOR GENERAL REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY. FOR PRECISE DETAILS REFER TO THE APPROPRIATE TITLE DOCUMENTS - CONSTRUCTION / SERVICE DRAWINGS.

**SHED LAYOUT**  
V2 N3P AUG 12



Floor Plan : Main Building

Scale N.T.S. OS Ref NJ83070719 Date Drawn Jun 07 By RJ  
ASSET REGISTER DRAWING 1 of 2  
Westhill Library Dept E&R  
PMS0014822rf Hays Way, Westhill, AB32 6XZ

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COUNCIL  **Property**  
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