

## **RESIDENTS' ASSEMBLY DECISION-MAKING (RAD)**

### **PROVISIONAL AMENDED POLICY**

October 2021

The below decision-making methodology will be in place only until a new process, which would more closely reflect Auroville's core principles and aspirations, is elaborated and collectively approved.

### **INTRO**

Decision-making in the Residents' Assembly (RA) of Auroville is based on the understanding that each eligible person has the right and privilege to participate in decision-making, but that there is no compulsion to exercise this right.

Whether or not a person participates in decision-making is a private matter. People should be respected for their participation as well as for their decision not to participate.

There may be many reasons why a person does not want to participate: for example, the topic does not interest him or her; one has pressing business elsewhere; or one is simply satisfied to leave the decision to others.

#### **Who can participate in decision-making?**

Only confirmed Aurovilians can participate in decision-making.

Those who have been announced as confirmed Aurovilians by the Entry Board are eligible to participate in all community decision-making processes along with those who have been entered into the Register of Residents maintained by the Secretary's Office. It does not include under 18-year-olds, newcomers and any other Auroville statuses.

Other Auroville statuses (AV youth, Newcomers, Volunteers) can be accepted in the room as silent observers but may not participate in the actual decision-making process.

#### **Decision-making by consensus versus decision-making through voting**

In Auroville it is preferred to make decisions through consensus instead of through voting. This is based on our spiritual aspiration, and on our endeavour to find a solution that can satisfy all. Although this attempt has also sometimes blocked situations from getting resolved, it is still our intention to continue to explore how to make decisions through consensus building.

If consensus cannot be found, other solutions, which may include voting, will have to be utilized.

### **METHOD OF DECISION-MAKING BY THE RESIDENTS' ASSEMBLY**

1. Residents' Assembly Decision-making (RAD) is arranged by the Residents' Assembly Service (RAS)

- a) either at the request of the Working Committee, Auroville Council, Auroville Town Development Council, Entry Board, Funds & Assets Management Committee; or
- b) at the request of at least 60 residents.

*No simultaneous Residents' Assembly Decision-making (RAD) on the same subject/proposal will be entertained by the RAS. In other words, no overlapping Residents' Assembly Decision-making (RAD) should be requested by any of the above entities on the same topic. If there are alternative proposals for one topic/issue, the RAS must be informed before or during the first Residents' Assembly Meeting (RAM)\* and the different options/possibilities will be given equal space to present, either in that meeting or in subsequent meetings; choices will be integrated in the final call for a decision.*

2. Residents' Assembly Service (RAS) organizes the first meeting to introduce the topic followed by at least one, and possibly more, Residents' Assembly Meeting(s) (RAM) to present and discuss a proposal to be put out for a decision, which would include different perspectives and choices/options.
  - a) The RAS will work closely with one of the above entities (or their representatives), who requested to initiate a decision-making process on their proposal(s), to design the structure of a decision-making campaign, including the text for announcements, engaging facilitators and relevant experts as needed;
  - b) RAMs will, as much as possible, be held using a hybrid of in person and virtual participation.
  - c) The RAS will circulate an invitation (along with the proposal, agenda with a possible outcome and all relevant materials) to the community to participate in an upcoming RAM via the RAS mailing system at least 1 week prior to the date of the meeting. The same announcement will be published in News and Notes and Auronet;
  - d) At the end of every first RAM (in a series) the RAS will take a pulse from the RAM attendees (participants) to get a sense of what RAM attendees (participants) feel/think about the proposal(s) and about next steps to take before the follow-up RAM. This can be done with the help of facilitators and/or resource persons.
  - e) The RAS will then publish a report of the RAM along with the proposal(s) voiced and invite the larger community to share feedback on the proposals. The RAS will collect and compile the feedback received and hand it over to those who initiated the RAD and made proposal(s). It is the responsibility of those who initiated the RAD to integrate feedback and present the revised proposal at the follow-up RAM including an explanation of what feedback was integrated, what not and why;
  - f) At the end of every follow-up RAM(s) the RAS/Facilitator will check with the participants of the meeting, including the virtual participants, either by a show of hands or other mechanisms if there is a common agreement to accept suggested voting options and to bring a refined proposal out to the community for a final decision;
  - g) The RAS will organize/facilitate as many RAMs as necessary until an RAD proposal is refined and a decision to be arrived at in the RAD is conclusive. All attempts will be made to ensure that an RAD process in its entirety is limited to a reasonable time frame, ideally not more than 6 months.

*Please note that the RAS overall assistance is required to call and organize Residents' Assembly Meetings (RAMs), which are an integral part of any decision-making process. At the same time, any working group or group of residents can call for and organize regular General Meetings (GMs) to offer Aurovilians an opportunity to share information, express their views and give these views a full, respectful and fair hearing. Depending on the availability of RAS, the team can be asked to provide its expertise, technical and logistical support for GMs, although these GMs are not part of an RAD process.*

3) The RAS will disseminate an RAD announcement (along with the proposal, voting options and all relevant materials), containing a personalised voting link, through the RAS mailing system 2 weeks prior to the voting deadline. The same announcement will be published in News and Notes and Auronet.

**Only in emergencies, as assessed by the Working Committee, will the Residents' Assembly Service call for an Emergency Residents' Assembly Decision-making within a shorter period without the matter having been discussed in one or more earlier meetings.**

4) During the 2-week RAD process residents can opt for either:

- An online voting, using a personalised voting link sent by the RAS; or

- A voting in person: paper ballots will be available in Town Hall (to be handed over to RAS members).

Residents can also register their decisions on paper on the last day of the RAD at one of the public venues announced by the RAS;

*Note that anonymous votes will be invalid.*

5) Once the voting is over, the RAS will collect, process and compile all data received (online and in-person), validate the votes (verify the eligibility of all those who participated in the RAD event, etc);

6) The RAS will announce the RAD outcome to the RA (via RAS mass email, N&N and Auronet) regardless of whether a proposal was accepted or not within 48 hours from the time of RAD voting completion.

A proposal will be considered as accepted by the Residents' Assembly if:

- The total number of the valid votes cast – online and in-person - is at least 10% of the number of confirmed Aurovilians as registered in the Residents Service database (master-list) at the time of the RAD; and

- A minimum of 50% of the valid votes cast is in favor of the proposal; or

- The most votes cast in favor of one of the voting options in instances where there are more than two voting options.

*Note: Ideally the voting options should be limited to two, plus a none-of-the-above option, in order to result in a clear majority.*

7) After announcing the outcome of the RAD to the RA as a whole, the Residents' Assembly Service is also responsible for conveying decisions of the Residents' Assembly to the Working Committee for the

record.

- 8) Responsibility for implementing decisions made through this RAD process lies with the concerned working group/s or resident/s.
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- \* - Residents' Assembly Meetings (RAM) are meetings that are part of and lead to an RAD process.
- General Meetings (GM) are meetings that can be called at any time by any resident to share information and views on any topic, without necessarily leading to an RAD process