LAP CONSTITUTION

Liberian Association of Pennsylvania Constitution

PREAMBLE

We, the citizens of Liberia residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, United States of American, expressing our gratitude to God for our existence; realizing the structural changes to our community association since its formation in 1978 which necessitated the 1984 constitution of the Liberian Association of the Delaware Valley, Inc; cognizant of the need to clearly define the geographic limit of our community; determined to further our collective growth and development; to foster harmony, unity and togetherness in our community; to secure services for the benefit of all; to create greater awareness of the Liberian culture; to promote friendship among our host, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution for the Liberian Association of Pennsylvania, Inc.

ARTICLE I

Name and Headquarters

Section 1.

The name of the organization shall be the Liberian Association of Pennsylvania, Inc and shall herein after be referred to as association.

Section 2.

The Headquarters of the association shall be in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Article II.

General Principles

Section 1.

The following shall constitute the general principles of the association:

i. To promote harmony, unity, friendship and togetherness among Liberians, Liberian families, their descendants and all others;

ii. To seek and secure social, economic and other opportunities for its members;

iii. To create greater awareness about the Liberian culture;

iv. To promote friendship among Liberians and all others;

v. The association shall be a non-political and non-profit organization

Article III.

Membership

Section 1.

Membership to the association shall be open to all Liberians and their

descendants residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A Liberian shall be a person who satisfies the citizenship criteria as laid down in the 1986 Liberian Constitution. A Liberian descendant shall be a person who holds citizenship of another country but at least one of whose parents is a Liberian or a native of Liberia.

Section 2.

Membership shall also be open to all others residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who subscribe to the general principles of the association as laid down in this constitution.

Section 3.

Honorary membership shall be granted to non-Liberians or group of non-Liberians who contribute meaningfully towards the development of the association.

Section 4.

All power of the association shall be vested in the membership who shall cause their leaders to leave offices and fill vacancies in keeping with the provisions of this constitution. The membership shall also cause the association to convene and to consult upon a common good pursuant to this constitution.

Article IV

Structure of the Association

Section 1.

There shall be two separate branches of the Association. They are the Board of Directors and the Generals Administration. The General Administration shall comprise of the elected officers, Council of Community Leaders, standing committees and autonomous commissions.

Article V

The Board of Directors

Section 1.

The legislative power of the association shall be vested in the Board of Directors herein after referred to as board. The board shall consist of nine members.

Section 2.

Only persons residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least one year shall be eligible to be elected to the board.

Section 3.

Members of the board shall be elected by the general membership for a two-year term. However, to ensure continuity, the first four members of the board elected in the first 3

general election under this constitution with the highest votes cast shall serve a three-year term.

Section 4.

The board shall elect its officers including a Chairman to serve a one-year term. Officers of the board may be re-elected by the board. Only Liberians or their descendants at least twenty-five years old and who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least two years shall be eligible to become Chairman of the Board. In the case of removal of both the President and Vice President from offices, or their death, or resignation, or inability to discharge the powers and duties of said offices, the Chairman of the Board shall immediately act as President and shall complete the term of office of the President. He/she shall within a week's period while act-

ing as President, nominate a member of the association to the board to be confirmed as acting Vice President.

Section 5.

The board shall meet at least quarterly in a twelve-month period to review activities of the association. The board shall have the power to cite elected officer(s) and any member(s) for cause. The Chairman of the Board shall cite members to attend regular or emergency meetings of the board. The Chairman shall within a three week period convene a meeting of the board to act on all documents submitted by the President. A nomination, contract, budget or recommendation submitted by the President shall be deemed approved by the board after the three week period unless it is rejected by the board.

Section 6.

The Board shall determine the rules of its proceedings, establish its leadership, punish its members for cause, and with the concurrence of two thirds, expel a member.

Section 7.

The Board shall have the power to increase or decrease the number of standing committees based upon recommendation by the Executive Committee.

Section 8.

The Board shall approve all projects to be undertaken by the association.

Article VI

General Administration

Section 1.

Elected officers of the association shall be President, Vice President, Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General, Financial Secretary, Treasurer and General Coordinator.

Section 2.

The executive power of the association shall be vested in the President. He/she shall hold office for a two-year term. Only Liberian citizens or their descendants at least twenty-five years old and residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least two years shall be eligible to become President. The President shall be Chairman of the Executive Committee and shall preside over all general meetings convened by his/her designee. The President shall appoint chairmen and members of all standing committees. The President shall have the power to constitute ad hoc committees. With the advice and consent of the board, the President shall create non-elected offices. The President shall make appointments to such offices. All persons appointed by the President shall serve at his/her pleasure except members of autonomous Commissions. The President shall enter into all contracts and agreements and with the approval of the board conclude contracts and agreements for the association. The President or his/her designee shall represent the association at all functions, ceremonies and occasions.

Section 3.

The Vice President shall be the principal deputy to the President. He/she shall be elected on the same ticket and in the same manner and for the same term as the President. He/she shall have the same qualifications as the President. Only Liberian citizens or their descendants at least twenty-five years old and who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least two years shall be eligible to become Vice President. The Vice President shall assist the President and shall carryout all other duties assigned him/her by the President. In the

absence of the President, the Vice-President shall act as President. He/she shall serve as Chairman Ex-Officio of all standing committees. In the case of removal of the President from office, or his death, or resignation or his inability to discharge the powers and duties of the said office, the same shall devolve on the Vice President. Whenever the office of the Vice President is made vacant by removal, death, resignation or inability to the Vice President to discharge the powers and duties of said office, the President shall within a one 30-day period nominate to the board a member of the association to serve as Vice President.

Section 4.

The Secretary General shall be the chief custodian of all documents belonging to the association and shall be responsible for all correspondences. He/she shall prepare minutes of all meetings of the association. The Secretary General upon instruction from the President shall cite members to meetings and conventions of the association. Only persons who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least one year shall be eligible to become Secretary General.

Section 5.

The Assistant Secretary General shall be the principal deputy to the Secretary General. He/she shall have similar qualifications as the Secretary General. The Assistant 5

Secretary General shall assist the Secretary General and shall act as Secretary General in his/her absence. In the case of removal of the Secretary General from office, or his death or resignation or inability to discharge the powers and duties of the said office, the same shall devolve on the Assistant Secretary. Only persons who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least one year shall be eligible to become Assistant Secretary General.

Section 6.

The Financial Secretary shall keep all financial records for the association. He/she shall submit to the President and to the board quarterly financial reports of the association. The Financial Secretary shall advise the Executive Committee on all financial matters. Only persons who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least one year shall be eligible to become Secretary General.

Section 7.

The Treasurer shall receive all monies for the association and deposit same in the association's account(s). He/she shall from time to time recommend to the Executive Committee banking institutions to keep the association's money. The Treasurer shall prepare annual and ad hoc budgets to be reviewed by the Executive Committee for submission to the board. He/she shall make all disbursements for the association. Only persons who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least one year shall be eligible to contest Treasurer.

Section 8.

The General Coordinator shall coordinate the activities of all standing and ad hoc committees of the association. He/she shall be the chief liaison between the association and Liberian organizations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The General Coordinator shall coordinate the distribution of assistance to the Liberian community in Pennsylvania. Only persons who have resided in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for at least one year shall be eligible to contest to be General Coordinator.

Section 9.

There shall be a Council of Community Leaders which shall comprise of heads of Liberian organizations (regional and social) in Pennsylvania. The council shall serve as ad advisory to the President.

The President shall have the power to appoint other prominent Liberians to serve on the council for a two-year term. However, no more than one fourth of the council's membership shall be appointed by the President.

Section 10.

The Association shall have four standing committees which shall assist the elected officers. They are the Ways, Means and Finance, Membership, Immigration and Legal 6

Affairs and Socio Cultural Affairs Committees. Each standing committee shall have a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and two members.

Section 11.

The seven elected officers of the association shall comprise of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee shall be the policy making body of the association. It shall be responsible for the day to day operations of the association.

The Executive Committee shall with the consent of the board determine registration fees and membership dues from time to time. The committee shall also with the consent of the board levy, abolish, increase or reduce fees but membership dues shall not be elimated.

The Executive Committee through the President shall recommend to the board individuals or institutions to be honored by the association.

Section 12.

The Ways, Means and Finance Committee shall undertake all fund raising programs for the association.

The Committee shall identify sources of generating funds for the association, and shall with the approval of the President solicit financial and material assistance for the association. The committee shall also organize sporting activities to raise funds and or create recreation for members and all others.

Section 13.

The Membership Committee shall be responsible to scrutinize applications and register members of the association. The committee shall establish membership criteria which must be approved by the board. All membership criteria must be consistent with this constitution.

The Committee shall undertake membership drives to register members and shall keep record of all members of the association. It shall maintain contact with members to keep them active in the association.

Section 14.

The Immigration and Legal Affairs Committee shall be responsible to undertake programs aimed at providing assistance to Liberians and others arriving or residing in the United States on immigration and other matters.

Section 15.

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The Socio Cultural Affairs Committee shall be responsible to plan and undertake all social and cultural programs of the association. The Committee shall publish and disseminate reports, circulars and other information materials for the association.

Section 16.

There shall be two Autonomous Commissions of the association. They are the Elections Commission and the Audit Commission. The Chairmen and members of these commissions shall serve a two-year term.

Section 17.

The Elections Commission shall conduct all elections in the association. It shall consist of five memevers including a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary. No two members of the commission shall hail from the same county in Liberia.

Section 18.

Thee shall be a three-member Audit Commission. The Commission shall be directed by the President or the board to conduct audit involving any officer or standing committee. The Board shall authorize all audits involving the President. The Committee shall serve as internal auditor for the association. It shall be headed by a Chairman.

Copies of all audit reports shall be submitted to the President and the board.

The President shall with the advice and consent of the board appoint the Chairman and members of the commission. No member of the commission shall be removed except by impeachment. At least two members of the commission shall have accounting background.

Article VII

Miscellaneous

Section 1.

Election of officers for the association and members of the board shall be held on the second Saturday of August every two years. All officers shall be elected by simple majority. The President and Vice President shall be elected on the same ticket. However, all other officers and members of the board shall be elected on separate tickets.

Section 2.

Election to the board shall be determined by the votes won by each candidate. Only those candidates with the highest votes cast in a general election shall be elected to the board.

Section 3.

Only registered members, who are at least eighteen years old and residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall be eligible to vote and or contest elections in the association. Members who are delinquent in their membership dues shall not be eligible to contest and or vote in an election.

Section 4.

No elected officer shall be eligible to hold office for more than two consecutive terms except members of the board. However, a former incumbent may seek re-election after the lapse of at least one term.

Section 5.

The President shall within two weeks notify the Elections Commission to conduct by-elections to fill vacancies on the board and on the Executive Committee. All by-elections shall be held within sixty days after the Elections Commission is notified. A person elected to fill vacancy shall complete only the unfinished term of his/her predecessor.

Section 6.

The President shall fill all vacancies on standing committees and autonomous commissions within a two-month period.

Section 7

When it becomes difficult for the President and the board to resolve any issues such as the budget, contracts, membership dues or registration fees, the board may direct the President to convene a mini convention of the association to resolve such issue(s). The President may also convene the mini convention on his/her own initiative. All members of the board shall be duly invited to the mini convention and the quorum shall be fifty.

Section 8.

The Elections Commission shall submit elections guidelines to the board for approval. The Board shall within a thirty day period approve or reject all elections guidelines and notify the President as well as the Elections Commission about its decision. Elections guidelines not rejected by the board within the three-week period shall be deemed approved by the board. Similarly, elections guidelines shall be deemed rejected by the board if the Elections Commission is not in agreement with changes made to the guideline by the board.

Section 9.

The President shall immediately convene an emergency membership meeting to review and approve all elections guidelines rejected by the board. Elections guidelines must be consistent with this constitution.

Section 10.

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All elections complaints shall be decided by the Elections Commission except complaint(s) made against the entire commission. The board shall hear complaints against the Elections Commission. Nullification of election result(s) by the board shall require a resolution signed by at least six board members and shall be due to gross violation(s) of the elections guidelines.

Section 11.

The inauguration of elected officers and members of the board shall be held on the second Saturday of October. The Chairman of the Council of Community Leaders shall induct the elected officers. The President shall swear in members of the boards. However, when it becomes difficult for the Council Chairman to perform the induction ceremony, the President-elect shall request a member of the council or an outgoing member of the board to perform the ceremony.

Section 12.

All officers of the association and members of the board shall reside in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during their tenure.

Section 13.

There shall be four quarterly meetings of the association in a twelve month period. The President or person in charge shall convene such meetings. The President may also call emergency meetings of the association. Twenty-five persons shall constitute a quorum at all general meeting (regular or emergency).

Section 14.

The President shall convene an annual convention to report on the state of the association and for members to discuss the common good. Quorum for the convention shall be fifty.

Section 15.

Decisions at general meetings and conventions shall be reached by simple majority. However, decisions relating to impeachment and removal from office shall be consistent with impeachment provisions laid down under this constitution.

Section 16.

Members of the association shall have the right to petition the President or person in charge to call emergency meetings of the association. But it shall require a written petition signed by at least fifty registered members to cause the President to convene an emergency meeting.

Section 17.

All monies of the association shall be deposited into the association's account(s) which shall be opened by the Executive Committee. The President shall be the principle signatory to all accounts. The Secretary General and Treasurer shall also be signatories to the association's accounts. The President or his designee along with any one of the other signatories shall make withdrawal.

Section 18.

The Executive Committee through the President shall submit annual and or ad hoc budgets to the board for approval.

Section 19.

All deposits and withdrawal slips shall be submitted to the Financial Secretary within a week's period after deposits or withdrawals are made. The Treasurer shall obtain the monthly bank statement(s) and shall within a week's period submit the original statement to the Financial Secretary. The Treasurer shall retain copies of all banks statements, withdrawal and deposit slips.

Section 20

No money shall be withdrawn from the association's accounts except in consequence of an appropriation made in the annual or ad hoc budget. However, in case of an emergency, the Executive Committee shall authorize spending of not more than two thousand dollars. The President or person in charge shall within a week's period inform the board through its Chairman about such spending and shall provide reasons in writing.

Section 21.

Membership in the association shall be obtained through the completions of a registration process which shall include payment of registration fees. The fees shall be proposed by the Membership Committee to the Executive Committee through the President. Only individuals residing in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall be eligible to become members of the association.

Section 22.

Membership shall be renewed annually by the payment of membership dues which shall be proposed from time to time by the Membership Committee to the Executive Committee through the President.

Article VIII

Impeachment

Section. 1.

Impeachment offenses shall be:

a. Violation of this constitution

b. Misapplication of funds and resources belonging to the association

c. Misuse of power

d. Misfeasance and malfeasance

Section 2.

All cases of impeachment and removal from office shall originate with the signing of a bill of impeachment by a two-third majority of members of the board. The signed bill shall immediately be submitted to the Chairman of the board who shall within a week's period notify the President or person in charge to convene a meeting of the association. The President shall within a two-week period convene an emergency meeting of the association for the sole purpose of electing a committee of five members to conduct the impeachment trial. The committee of five shall elect its chairman. However, the Chairman of the board may call the emergency meeting and preside over it upon failure of the President to do so. The emergency meeting called by the Chairman of the board shall be for the sole purpose of electing the committee of five.

Section 3.

No officer shall be convicted and removed from office without a vote by a two-third majority of the committee of five. Decisions of the Committee of five shall be announced at an emergency meeting of the association called by the President. However, such meetings shall be convened by the Chairman of the board upon the failure of the President to do so.

A person convicted may be liable and subject to lawsuit in cases of misappropriation, embezzlement and or misuse of the association's funds and or properties.

Section 4.

The General Membership shall have the right to petition the board to commence impeachment proceedings against any elected officer(s) or member(s) of the board for violating this constitution. However, at least twenty-five percent of the general membership must sign such petition to the board. Upon receipt of the signed petition, the board through its chairman shall within a week's period direct the President to convene an emergency meeting of the association to constitute a committee of five. The board chairman shall convene the meeting upon the failure of the President to do so.

Article IX

Abrogation of Previous LAWS

Section 1.

This constitution shall immediately come into force after its adoption by the general membership at a general meeting.

Section 2.

Immediately after its adoption, this constitution shall be the supreme laws of the association and its provisions shall be binding on all members.

Section 3.

The 1984 Constitution of the Liberian Association of the Delaware Valley, Inc. is hereby amended and any of its provision(s) that is/are inconsistent with this constitution is/are null and void. Any law or bodies of laws of the association that are not in conformity with this constitution are also null and void.

Article X

Amendment

Section 1.

This constitution shall be amended by a two-third majority of members of the association in a referendum.

Article XI

Transition

Section 1.

All officers of the association elected or appointed prior to the coming into force of this constitution shall continue to serve as if they were elected or appointed under the provisions of this constitution.

Section 2.

Immediately after the adoption of this constitution, the President shall appoint a three-member Interim Elections Committee to conduct special elections to augment the present board in order to conform to the provisions of this constitution. The Interim Elections Committee shall draft special elections guidelines to be approved by the association at a general meeting. The Committee shall be dissolved upon the completion of its mandate.

Section 3.

The candidates with the highest votes cast in the special election shall be elected to the board and shall serve during the tenure of the present board.

Section 4.

The first general election of officers of the association and members of the board shall be held on the second Saturday of August, 2001 and the officers so elected shall be inaugurated on the second Saturday of October 2001.

Section 5.

The present Board of Directors shall be dissolved on the second Saturday of October 2001 immediately after the induction of the new board.

Section 6.

This constitution shall be filed with the Department of State of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Adopted this 20th day of January 2001 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America.

Constitution Committee

Abraham G. Massaley…….Chariman

Doyen Kofa……Co-Chairman

Wilmot K. Kunney……Member

David M. Jallah……..Member

B. Chapeh Togba……Member

Adolphus Jacobs……Member

Calvin T. Dwuye……..Secretary