

CONSTITUTION

Preamble

We, the elected Representatives of the Ghanaian community in Columbus, Ohio, in order to promote a healthy image of Ghana in the international arena and in the United States in particular; enable the welfare of Ghanaian residents in Columbus, Ohio desirous of creating a rapport amongst Ghanaians and other immediate culturally diverse neighbors in Columbus, Ohio and its environs; eager to serve as a socio-cultural and political mouthpiece (without any political affiliation either in the USA or Ghana) for all religiously, culturally and varied recognized groups of Ghanaian residents in Columbus Ohio, do hereby establish this Constitution for the smooth running of the Council.

Article 1

NAME

This association shall be Ghana Council of Columbus, Ohio (COGA)

No person or group may use

- i) the name of the institution in any manner,
- ii) the seal or any symbol of the council without prior written approval of the President, Vice-President and/or the Secretary.

MOTTO:

Unity is Strength

IDENTITY

Insignia

The council shall be represented by a combination of the Ohio and Ghana maps.

Description:

The map shall be flanked by two eagles, the Ghana Flag on top of the Ohio Flag. The name of the council and the motto shall appear at the top and the bottom of the map respectively.

Article 2

Mission/Purpose

The COUNCIL shall be identified as a non-profit, non-partisan (representation of the governing body of Ghana), religiously and culturally inspired alliance of Ghanaian associations resident in Columbus, Ohio.

The purpose(s) of this council shall be to

- I. Foster unity among the various Ghanaian associations.
- II. Advance and Maintain Ghanaian cultural heritage.
- III. Promote social and educational events.
- IV. Foster cooperation among non-Ghanaian associations.
- V. Support community development in Ghana if need be.

Article 3

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1

Membership in this council shall be open to any interested affiliated Ghanaian recognized group duly registered.

Section 2

Membership shall be for life provided they abide by the constitution and by-laws of this council.

Section 3

Incoming members should satisfy the following:

Complete and return a registration form within three (3) months of intention. –
(attached as Appendix A)

- I. Completed forms should be accompanied with a applicable fee (payable by check, cashier's check or money order).
- II. *Submit a copy of proof of registration from the state, constitution, and other required documents* of the recognized group.

III. Upon approval, associations MUST maintain good attendance and financial obligations.

- a. financially current on their membership obligation each year

A member association shall be considered in good standing with the council as long as the member fulfills the following criteria:

- a. Pay membership dues by October 31st,
- b. Attends at least 50 % of annual meetings,
- c. Perform a minimum of 25% of council activities in a year.

Section 4

Members who remain in good standing are entitled to the following privileges:

- i) Voting rights
- ii) Free to participate in council-sponsored activities
- iii) Eligibility for executive positions
- iv) Opportunity to attend regional or National Conferences or other professional; developments

Section 5

- i) Failure to meet any of the requirements listed in section 3 may result in loss of any or all privileges listed in section 4; and in extreme cases, may be grounds for removal of membership.
- ii) Loss of privileges shall be established by executives.
- iii) Members being considered for disciplinary action may appeal by providing written explanation/defense or attending a meeting to discuss.

Section 6

This council shall not discriminate on the basis of age religion, gender, disability, or political affiliation.

Article 4
Dues and Treasury

Section 1

The dues of the council are set at the attached fee schedule

Section 2

In case of council dissolution, the funds will be distributed in accordance with the state of Ohio dissolution procedure.

Article 5

Leadership

Section 1

The elected officers of this council shall include

- i. The President
- ii. The vice President
- iii. The Secretary
- iv. Assistant Secretary
- v. The Treasurer
- vi. The Financial Secretary
- vii. The Public Relations Officer
- viii. The Assistant Public Relations Officer
- ix. Organizing Secretary
- x. Porter

Section 2

Other appointed leaders of this council shall include

- i) Board of Patrons: this should include churches, nananom, business owners, etc.
- ii) Committee Chairman (for each standing committee)

Section 3

- i. Nominations of officers will be held between June and September.
- ii. Any person considering an elected officer position should become familiar with that respective position by reading the duties listed in the constitution and/or by-laws.
- iii. A nominated person MUST be in good standing with the council
- iv. Persons nominated MUST be present in the nomination meeting or send a message to accept or reject the nomination

- v. Nominations MUST be formally accepted by the nominee and noted in the minutes
- vi. Once accepted, the elections committee will verify qualifications (listed above) and bring that information to the general council prior to elections.

Section 4

- i) Election of officers shall be held during the September meeting.
- ii) Election will be conducted by paper ballot, facilitated by election committee
- iii) At least one-third (1/3) of members MUST be present in order to conduct elections
- iv) Officers will be chosen by simple majority

Section 5

- i) Term of office shall be for four years
- ii) Elected officers are eligible to hold the same position in no more than two (2) consecutive terms

Section 6

- i) Any elected officer may be removed from office by majority of vote of members for failure to fulfill the roles and responsibility outlined in article 6
- ii) Officers being considered for disciplinary action may make appeals by providing written explanation/defense or attending a meeting to discuss.

Section 7

Should an office become vacant, a new officer shall be chosen by

- i) appointment by executive, and
- ii) approved by members

Article 6

Duties of officers

This article includes all rules and responsibilities charged to each officer within the council

Section 1

The President/Chairperson shall serve as head of the council and be responsible for

- I) Calling for and presiding over all scheduled meetings
- II) Serving as the spokesperson and point of contact for the council
- III) Voting only in the case of a tie
- IV) Providing a charge and general oversight for all committees

Section 2

The Vice-President (VP) shall serve in absence of the president, and shall perform such duties as assigned by the president

- i) The VP shall coordinate with all standing committees

Section 3

Secretary

The secretary shall be responsible for maintaining all records of the council including

- i) Constitutional amendment
- ii) Meeting minutes
- iii) Membership roster
- iv) Attendance
- v) Recording minutes of all meetings and communicating with membership on behalf of executive committee

The Secretary shall perform the following duties:

- I. Notification of meetings
- II. Prepare agenda for each business meeting in consultation with the executives

- III. Record minutes of the meeting
- IV. Correspondence under the direction of the President/Vice President.
- V. Maintain and distribute records
- VI. Work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable acts to the council and/or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council

Section 4

The Assistant Secretary

The Assistant Secretary shall perform the following duties:

- I. Assist with the Council's administrative functions
- II. Assume responsibility of the Secretary in the absence of the Secretary.
- III. Work with the Vice President on all adhoc committees
- IV. Work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable act to the council or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council.

Section 5

Treasurer

The treasurer shall be responsible for managing the council's finances including

- i) Collection of dues
- ii) Coordination of fund-raising activities
- iii) General bookkeeping and financial reports
- iv) Deposit of all funds in the council's account
- v) Approval of expenditure in conjunction with executive – requirement of at least two (2) signatures
NB. As a non-profit council form 501 © (3) of the council together with tax return form 990 MUST be filled annually with the IRS, and the council's financial are subject to audit at any time by IRS.
- vi) Work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office

on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable act to the council or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council.

Section 6

The Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall perform the following duties:

- I. keep accounting records of all transactions.
- II. present a financial statement general meetings.
- III. distribute an audited financial statement quarterly and annually Submit books for auditing upon requests of Executives or general members
- IV. work together with the Treasurer for the efficient handling of all the financial transactions of the Council.
- V. Shall work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable act to the council or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council.

Section 7

The Public Relations Officer

The Public Relations Officer shall perform the following duties:

- I. promote the objectives and image of the Council.
- II. publicize issues and activities of the Council by issuing advertisements,
- III. write press releases and answer enquiries about the activities of the Council. act as chief liaison between the Council and the world community.
- IV. consult with the President and Secretary in performing these public relation duties.

- V. work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable act to the council or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council.

Section 8

The Organizing Secretary

The Organizing Secretary shall perform the following duties:

- I. Organize activities including Independence Day, Annual Picnic, etc.
- II. Work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable act to the council or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council.

Section 9

The Porter

The Porter shall perform the following duties:

- I. Coordinate all meetings
- II. Assist the organizing secretary in performing duties.
- III. Work within the confines of this constitution and may only be removed from office on sufficient evidence of misconduct and dishonorable act to the council or any legally substantiated acts that bring disrepute to the Council.

Article 7

ELECTIONS

QUALIFICATIONS

- I. Positions of office within the COUNCIL shall be opened to all COUNCIL members.
- II. All candidates for elective office shall be members of the COUNCIL
- III. General elections shall be held every four (4) years at a meeting designated for such purpose.
- IV. Council members shall be informed, at least 3 months before the conduct of elections.
- V. An Electoral Commission shall be established to oversee such elections.
- VI. Any member of the Electoral Commission shall not be candidate for an elective office during this period.
- VII. Candidates shall seek nominations for their various offices
- VIII. Voting shall be done by secret ballot.
- IX. All members representing any association/group shall be eligible to vote.
- X. Elections shall be determined by a vote of simple majority.
- XI. By election shall be held to fill a vacant office. Such an elected person shall serve the remaining term of the vacated office and shall be eligible for election for two terms.

Article 8

Committees

Section 1

There shall be three (3) standing committees, and their charge is as follows:

- i) Fund raising committee: responsible for ensuring funds are raised to cover costs associated with the council's programs and activities
- ii) Marketing Committee: responsible for publicity of materials related to open activities, recruitment, fund raising and community involvement
- iii) Picnic Committee: responsible for planning and budgeting for picnic activities
- iv) The President and/or executive may create new committees as needed.

Article 9
Council Meetings

Section 1

There shall be a minimum of one (1) meeting per month. Emergency meetings may be called as and when necessary.

Sections 2

The business of this meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the "Robert's Rule of Order".

Section 3

A quorum for conducting business will be one-third of members of the council present.

Article 10

Conflict of Interest

No officer or member shall use the council's property, funds, symbol, or logo in any way for personal gains. Contrary to this shall be liable for prosecution under the laws of the State of Ohio.

Article 11

By-laws

1. Oath of Allegiance

- (i) All incoming Executives MUST take an oath of office
- (ii) All incoming members shall take an oath of allegiance to the constitutional provision and by-laws to the council

2. Composition

The COUNCIL shall comprise of:

- I. The Executive Officers (Elected and/or Appointed by Council Members).
- II. Council Members (Members of the Council shall be five (5) representatives from each association.
- III. One of the five representatives from the association SHOULD be the President of that recognized group.
- IV. The Council and its Executive Officers shall form the legislative body.
- V. The council shall be part of the United Council of Ghanaian Associations, (UCOGA)

3. Order of Business

The order of business at all meetings of the council shall be as follows:

- i) Call the meeting to order
- ii) Reading of previous minutes
- iii) Reading of financial report
- iv) New business
- v) Any other society functions (other matters)
- vi) Adjournment

4. Sources of income

The main sources of income for the council shall come from affiliated associations, donations, fundraising activities, etc.

5. Non-payment of dues

Non-payment of dues by a member association for two (2) consecutive years shall be equivalent to withdrawal from the council. The name will be dropped from the membership role, unless extenuating circumstances are given or known.

6. Reinstatement

In the event that any member drops out or is expelled from the council for a period of one (1) year or more and wishes to rejoin, recognized group may rejoin the council at the discretion of the executive board.

7. Conflict Resolution

The council shall set a conflict resolution committee if deemed necessary to resolve association(s) internal issues.

8. Programs and Activities

The COUNCIL shall:

1. Have bi-annual education on the following topics:
 - I. democracy
 - II. governance/Civic education
 - III. Finance and Insurance
 - IV. Taxation,
 - V. Legal Issues
 - VI. Immigration etc.
2. Observe Ghana's Independence Day.
3. Host annual Ghana picnic.

Article 12
Amendment

Section 1

Any member may submit a proposal to amend this constitution. One third (1/3) of the General Council should support the proposal to move it to amendment stage.

Section 2

Amendments may be made according to the procedure below:

- i) Proposed amendments MUST be submitted at most one (1) month to the executive officers.
- ii) Executive officers and active members will be eligible to vote on any amendments.
- iii) For an amendment to pass, two-third (2/3) majority vote of members and officers present will be required.
- iv) Passed amendments will be noted in the minutes and placed in the constitution.
- v) The revised constitution will be distributed to all members.

Section 3

Amendment repeals may be made according to the following procedure:

- i) Motions repealing a constitution amendment MUST be submitted in writing. No oral repeals are acceptable.
- ii) For a repeal to pass, two-third (2/3) majority vote of members and officers present will be required.

This constitution of the Ghana Council has been ratified (or amended) by the general membership on this 10th Day of September 2017.

Signature of President

Signature of Secretary

Printed name of president

Printed name of Secretary