

Some Thoughts on Confidentiality

Adder, 3 October 2025

This is a response to the Earthly Wilds greenlight announcement, specifically the portion of the paper that discusses disallowing confidential input. I want to avoid the Twin Oaks habit of turning every O&I proposal into a meta discussion, so I figure this is better as its own paper, leaving the original paper to the object-level discussion.

In short, I think it is a bad idea to specifically eschew confidential input on this (or any other?) project.

Input to decision-makers is one of the primary ways members of Twin Oaks participate in our governance. **Confidential input is valuable for the same reason we vote in a private voting booth (or private mail ballots): it is a way to people to express their genuine opinions without pressure.**

"Safety" is one one reason why someone might want to put in confidential input, but there could be many others. The ~~point~~ point of the system is that it has to be no-questions-asked. Even if you don't agree with someone's reason for confidentiality, don't you want that input anyway? When we start deciding that some people's reasons for confidentiality are valid and others' aren't, we make it harder for some members to give input, thus reducing their ability to participate in our community governance.

Over the years, I've had my public comments responded to with name calling, defacing my notes and other papers, glares and faces on the path, people coming to my house to yell at me, and persistent rumor campaigns. I still try to voice my opinion publicly when I can, but all of that combined ~~reduces~~ reduces my desire to do so, and thus reduces the ability for decision-makers to get a true understanding of community sentiment.

"Harlock"
"Pain"
This is also an odd demand when contrasted with RET's practice of signing papers, emails, and 3x5s simply as "RET". 3x5s and emails are written by a single person; it's why we use the construction "Fulano 4 Team". I further think the best practice for O&I papers is to name the primary contributor along with the team, e.g. "Fulana 4 Team (Fulana, Fulane, Fulani)". I know that's not universally practiced, but some clarity of who is involved in decisions or proposals is valuable. RET's current practices are reversed from what I expect: the teams representing the community and making decisions should be the most transparent and accountable, while individuals should be able to give input with as little friction as possible. } "Pain"

I would like to live in a Twin Oaks where no one feels the need to give confidential input. But look at the discourse on the O&I! Listen to the rants people go in in meetings! Gentle (or not-so-gentle) criticism of ideas is so often responded to with defensiveness, ridicule, and vitriol. Yes, let's work on that. But we need still a way to collect input from those who are disincentivized from engaging with our public disussion in its current state.

I already voiced my personal opinion about this at the cnty mtg about input but will repeat it here:

I believe the best step in moving us forward on the path away from confidential input is to make people write the reason they want confidentiality. "Kelpie" "SHAL" "Holly"

This is NOT so that whoever reviews the input can decide if the reasons are valid enough to grant confidentiality. My thinking is that regardless of the reason, confidentiality will be honored. But conf. input will not be counted if no reason is given.

The goal/impact of this would be:

- those reviewing the input can better understand why confidentiality is sought
- those receiving the input may better understand why confidentiality is sought (assuming the reason can be shared without breaking confidentiality)
- those giving the input are forced to think about why they feel a need for confidentiality and express those reasons to others. "Kelpie" "Sage"
- It sends a message that confidentiality is not "normal" but can be requested if explained why it is sought. "Holly" "ALL OF THIS - SHAL"

"Kelpie"
I plan to try to have a hard to give reasons if I ask for confidentiality in future.

Hawina as self
Thanks H & Kelpie

Yah I recall Diversity Team and REAL started off signing things as "BLM." It was mostly just Jaime doing that is what I was told, but RET has done that sometimes. Planners & CMT do that sometimes, too.

Is Earthly Wilds really gonna do away with confidential input? Is it going to do something that TO culture could not accomplish? It will be interesting to see what that looks like!
- Harlock

Earthly Wilds has no ~~attention~~ intention of normalizing anonymous, petty sniping. -Seya

The real question to ask is, how can we build healthy relationships, with ourselves, with others, with the committees we're in & work with. @Kelpie
Confidentiality makes sense sometimes, but not always, & we don't seem to be able to honor & respect each other in ways we could. Can we help each other be more mature? @Kelpie

Confidentiality
Anonymity
Technically not in practice
#02/21/2020

It has been a good while since I felt compelled to address harm I did to you, which you outlined in The paper. And I still do regret the way I acted. I think after you turned against Totu (I don't know how else to say it) I allowed myself to ^{appreciate} all the good you have done and continue to do.

Part of my recovery from being a rambunctiously angry person has been the company of RET.

We are a support group that recognizes the dire consequences of inaction in racial justice.

Understanding we have a responsibility to action can be crushing to any of us, but together we are lifting this heavy burden.

This conversation is really about Land Reparation for the great legacy of harm

On The land we live on. In repairing
This relationship, we are giving back to The ancestors
civilizations That were destroyed and enslaved
on This here land. It is our responsibility
as a forward Thinking organization to acknowledge
Black and Indigenous call for reparations.
Setting aside significant land acreage for This
purpose is an essential act That The community
must take at This time. To Those who understand,
let me restate... we are running out at time.

Adler, I wish you would learn some
words to help you acknowledge The purpose
of RET as a vital function of The
community. Even, and especially in dialogue,
acknowledging our white privilege is
important. Otherwise it makes you
sound like you don't care about racial

justice at all.

I wanted to point out that nothing of my wrongful behavior, including coming to your SLG and yelling at you, was the result of ballot box input. I don't think it is good behavior to accost people. Perhaps a "do not approach" option be made available.

I will let ~~my~~ ~~words~~ speak for the ~~harm~~ ~~blatant~~ ~~Windsworden~~ ~~have~~ ~~on~~ Black people and other POC. White privilege is never worrying what kind of racial harm you might be inflicting on BIPOC around.

Really, folks again, this is about landing

in BIPOC community, non-confidential input is a necessity for this process.

Any good non-confidential input should include some acknowledgement of reparation.

That way we can focus on genuine issues, and not the validity of Racial Equity at Twin Oaks.

-Trout

I don't think we should ever have confidential input unless someone is actually in danger (not just feeling awkward/uncomfortable). Knowing the focus person(s) will actually read the input helps to word things in a kinder manner I think. At the same time, I hope that folks receiving input do so assuming good intention + try not to respond w/ defensiveness. I do wonder if folks participate less in input/discussions/pzpers because of fear that something they say will come back on them in some way, but there must also be lots of other reasons since only 20-30% of the comty engages on any particular topic anyway. So I don't necessarily think that allowing conf. input would give us a comprehensive view of comty sentiment. ~~Trout~~
Arlo
Farter

Thanks Adar, valuable paper on confidentiality. Let's all try to give unconfidential input, and name ourselves when we write a paper for a team. It helps later to know who was on a particular team when a paper was written, in case of questions, or thoughts about updates. It's accountability. Pam

Confidentiality shuts down debate. You can't argue through a proxy.

In cases of assault, that's good. That's the only time it should be used. -Arlo "Carter" "Sey" "Hart"