How to Process Technical Issues.

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Introduction:

Since the last 802.11 meeting, I have been thinking about how the committee can proceed effectively toward producing a draft standard.

One of the more important procedural difficulties of the last meeting, was the lack of a way to record, and then process technical issues.

The absence of a recognized way to address issues, caused conversations to get side tracked as new issues arose. This happened because people were afraid that if they did not address their concern immediately, that there might never be another time.

If we are to have effective use of our meeting time, we need to avoid this trap.

I have drawn upon my experience in ANSI standards committees, to create a simple procedure for recording, processing and resolving technical issues. The procedure is also intended to provide a history trail of our decisions and the related argumentation.

In ANSI the issues document becomes one of your main references and is very useful to people who join the committee later after the initial meetings.

Please consider the following set of rules:

General rules for an Issue:

1) All issues must be phrased as a question.

2) Issues and their status are logged by the secretary.

3) IBIS notation (with appropriate references to papers submitted to the committee) is used to track issue history.

To open an issue:

4) Anyone can open an new issue. Simply identify the issue to the secretary and provide the phrasing for the question.

To add arguments to an open issue:

5) Argumentation can be added to an issue by:
   a) Submitting a paper supporting a position, or

b) Submitting arguments in the form of an IBIS list.

To close an issue:

6) An issue is closed when the committee adopts an answer to the question posed within the issue.

7) It requires a 2/3 vote of the committee to adopt a position and close an issue.

(This is the a key part of the ANSI process. IEEE is technically an association of member individuals, while ANSI is composed of member companies. ANSI considers that a group of technical experts should reach a 2/3 majority to close an issue. It is felt that a simple majority represents too weak a position to justify closing a technical issue. If 49 out of 100 experts disagree with adopting a position, there is enough significant controversy for an issue to remain open. I think that this approach would serve us well.)

8) A closed issue represents a position which the committee has taken. It therefore guides subsequent work by the committee.

To reopen an issue:

There are times that it is necessary to reopen an issue. This should not be done trivially or we will never make progress.

There are two ways to reopen an issue:

9) An closed issue can be changed to open status if new argumentation is presented which has not been previously considered and recorded.

(This allows the correction of decisions which may turn out to have been faulty due to lack of information.)

10) A closed issue can be changed to open status if 2/3 of the committee votes to reopen the issue.

(This allows the committee to reexamine closed issues which may be interrelated to other, open issues, even though there may be no new arguments presented for the closed issue. The 2/3 vote requirement is intended to prevent the committee from thrashing. It is intentionally symmetrical to the 2/3 vote which was required to close the issue.)

These rules are summarized in the figure 1.

I respectfully recommend that 802.11 adopt this procedure for recording, processing and resolving technical issues.

802.11 Issue Processing

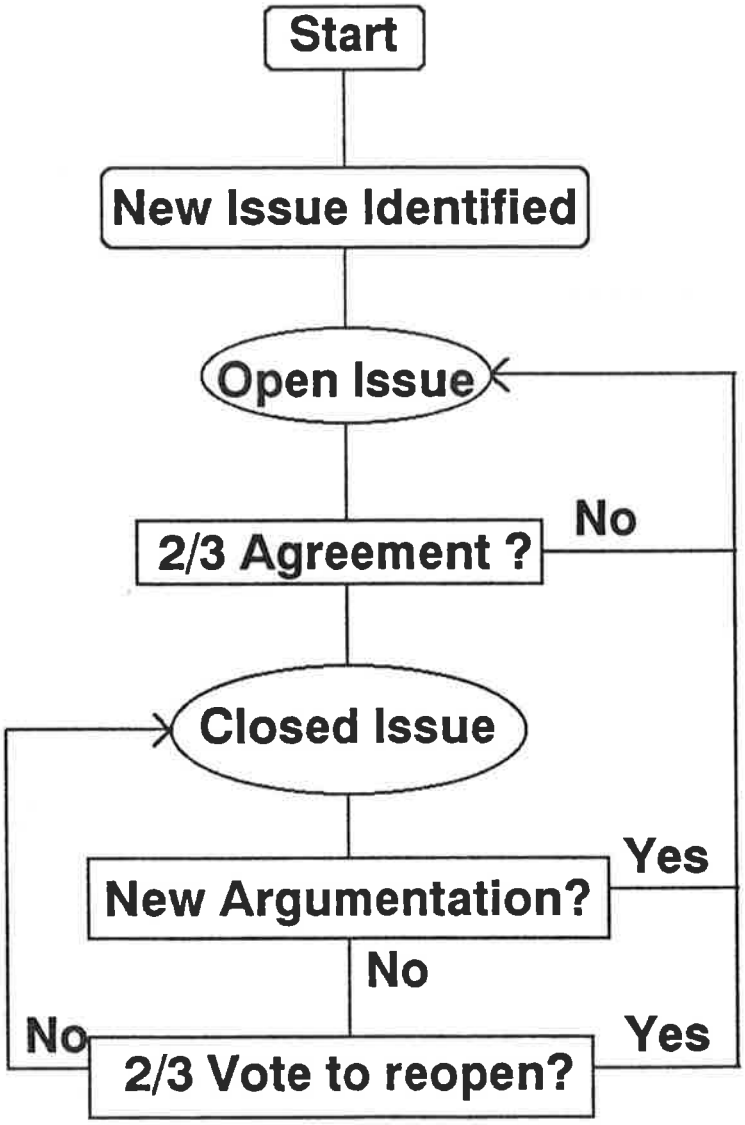

Figure 1