Soft Consensus Decision Making Model

Benefits of using a soft consensus model of decision making:

- Sharing power and collective control of decision making
- Community building and finding balance between different perspectives
- Making better decisions that are win-win
- Gets things done – if people buy into a decision, they are more likely to help implement it
- Protecting minority needs and opinions

Options for agreement or disagreement in soft consensus:

Agreement	"I support the decision and am willing to implement it."
Reservations	"I still have some problems with the decision, but I'll go along with it." You are willing to let the decision pass but want to register your concerns. You may even put energy into implementing the idea once your dissent has been acknowledged. If there are significant reservations the group may amend or reword the proposal.
Standing aside	"I can't support this proposal because... but I don't want to stop the group, so I'll let the decision happen without me and I won't be part of implementing it." You might stand aside because you disagree with the decision: "I'm unhappy enough with this decision not to put any effort into making it a reality." Or you might stand aside for pragmatic reasons, e.g. you like the decision but are unable to support it because of time restraints or personal energy levels. "I'm OK with the decision, but I'm not going to be around next week to make it happen." The group may be happy to accept the stand aside and go ahead. Or the group might decide to work on a new option, especially where there are several stand asides.
Disagreement	"I have a fundamental disagreement with the core of the decision that has not been resolved. We need to look for a new option." A block stops a decision from being agreed. It expresses a fundamental objection. It means that you cannot live with the decision. This isn't an "I don't really like it" or "I liked the other idea better." It means "I fundamentally object to this decision!" Some groups say that a block should only be used if your objection is so strong that you'd leave if the decision went ahead. The group can either look for amendments to overcome the objection or return to the discussion stage to look for a new option.

Guidelines for participating in consensus meetings

- Be willing to work towards the solution that's best for everyone, not just what's best for you.
- Help to create a respectful and trusting atmosphere.
- Listen actively to what people are trying to say.
- Explain your own position as clearly as you can.
- Don't be afraid of disagreement and conflict.

Source: https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus