

Minutes of the Zen Desert Sangha Board of Directors meeting

Saturday March 8, 2008

3226 N. Martin Avenue

(from notes by Martin Munro)

Joe Montani chaired the meeting, and also acted as timekeeper. Dan Dorsey, Kim Howell, Martin Munro, and Sue Weimer attended from the board, as well as Evan Casler, Jim D'Elia, Shelley Dorsey, Esther Fuchs, Malvina Kupinski, and Bob Wallin from the general membership; a special welcome was extended to Len Scheff, who attended to give legal advice on the teacher sabbatical fund.

1. TREASURER'S REPORT

Since Kim had presented a full two-page summary of the accounts at the previous meeting just two weeks before, her report this time was much shorter: the current checking account balance was \$17317.77. The Wachovia account balance is only reported each quarter, so that was not included. The Finance Committee still has not met to discuss investing part of the money. Bob asked if there had been much response to the pledge letters; Kim had seen a trickle of responses coming in over the previous days, but this day had picked up a large number of checks at the P.O. box. Some of the pledge letters (not the checks!) had bounced with an undeliverable address. By the next board meeting we should have a sense of the response. The Treasurer's report took only three minutes, so the rest of the time was allocated to the next item on the agenda.

2. TRANSFER OF THE SABBATICAL FUND TO TUCSON (UPDATE)

Len Scheff said that Kim had already conveyed his conclusions about the transfer of the sabbatical fund from Seven Thunders Sangha in Oregon to Tucson, so he was here mainly to answer questions, but by request summarized the most important points. The tax-exempt status of the fund depends on it not being designated for any specific individual, including Pat Hawk. The distinction does not matter so long as there is only one teacher, and this is Pat. However if in future there were two teachers, or if Pat decided he could no longer use the fund, but there was another teacher, the use of the money would be split or transferred. Len was even unsure how non-profits could even give someone an honorarium, but John Standiford who works in the same office and is a masters of tax researched the topic and came up with the case where the IRS had disallowed the tax-exempt status of donations from a Mormon family to their church because they were designated to support the missionary work of one individual, their son. It was very important that we not call this the "Pat Hawk Fund". When people contribute to it, and say "I only want this used for Pat Hawk, and if he doesn't need it I want it returned" we might have a problem. There was nothing wrong in calling it the Teacher Sabbatical Fund, and saying that Pat was the only one currently using it, but we would have to be clear that once

someone has contributed (and received a tax deduction) there was no way to refund the contribution, and that the contribution might ultimately go to another teacher; if someone was unwilling to contribute under those circumstances we probably should not accept their money.

Joe commented that we should be up front about the restrictions, if only for fairness. There was a brief discussion of the title for the fund: Teacher Education Fund had been suggested, but Joe preferred "sabbatical", to be understood as it would be in an academic setting, and Sue thought that in Oregon it was already called the Sabbatical Fund. Sue suggested an alternative mechanism if direct donations to Pat were felt necessary: the money could be designated for Redemptorists RCA, and directed to a specific account number. The Redemptorists are a designated non-profit; Pat does not have a personal bank account; however he does have exclusive use of one of the Redemptorist's accounts. Len commented that the Redemptorists could not designate an account for a specific individual either, but that the IRS does not like to mess around with religious organizations. He was surprised to see that there was around \$17000 in the present sabbatical fund, so new fund-raising would not be a priority.

Kim wondered if the people who had already contributed to the fund should be contacted before any change. Len commented that there would be no change, apart from the keeper of the fund being in Tucson rather than Oregon. Dan asked if he was understanding correctly that there would be no problems provided it was designated a general Sabbatical Fund & Pat Hawk's name was not attached to it, and Len agreed [a comment about using it to send Joe on a study trip to Eloy has been stuck from the minutes]. In any case, an IRS investigation of the fund would only be prompted by complaints, or be an audit for some other reason. So it was mainly a matter of truth in advertising for potential donors, and it was possible to be explicit about how the money had been spent in the past few years, as long as it was clear that circumstances could change this pattern.

Shelly commented that it then seemed a simple matter of transferring accounts, which prompted Joe to ask if there were any complications due to how the money was invested. Len thought that none of the issues just discussed affected the transfer. Joe asked about logistics, and Len responded that it was logical to have the fund in the same place that Pat was based, and that the responsibility would not be too serious, for example simply putting it in a CD. Joe asked how it was currently invested: Len thought it was in some kind of money-market account: Kim has all the paperwork. Dan thought it was in a money-market account to keep it liquid, and that the interest rates were around 2 to 3.5% and dropping. Joe asked about the best way to affect the transfer, and Len responded

that perhaps it wasn't even a transfer, just changing the signatures on the account. If the nominal physical location of the money mattered, the account could be transferred between Oregon and Arizona branches of the same bank.

Joe asked if it should be taken on as part of the overall ZDS accounting system, or hold it as something separate. Len pointed out that it could not be completely separate, because the ZDS 501(c)3 status had to apply to it. It could be on the ZDS books, provided it was a restricted fund (but such restricted funds already existed for other purposes). Joe asked Kim if it looked like much extra work for the Treasurer, and she replied that after the initial setup there would not be much work required to maintain it. Joe wondered about the work of sending out additional funding letters for this account; Dan commented that Seven Thunders had only sent out one fund-raising letter annually. Shelly thought that with Pat's modest needs and the healthy balance in the fund there would not be much work involved in maintaining it.

Dan made a motion to transfer the funds down to Tucson and enter them into ZDS' QuickBooks system. Kim added that she wanted to be sure that Seven Thunders was OK with our managing it this way, and wanted to designate what would happen to the \$17000 if Pat should pass away: would this be a windfall for Pat's successor? Dan withdrew the motion, and some more discussion resolved that the finance committee (not a new committee) would study the paperwork, draft a letter to Seven Thunders sangha, and present a specific proposal at the next meeting. Bob asked about using the fund to bring in guest teachers: Len replied that it could not, as it currently stood, although amendment was possible; however most people agreed that consultation would be needed in that case.

At this point the discussion ran out of time; Joe asked for a vote to extend this, Len said that procedures allowed a committee to take up the topic without a motion being required. Kim asked if anyone else wanted to be on this committee, and Len declined, however saying that he would be happy to serve it as an advisor. Several people thanked him for his work so far.

3. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Martin explained that the promised report on communications was not ready, and that it would be better to distribute it by email and printed copies rather than as part of the committee reports.

3.1. HOME REPAIR / MINOR IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

Dan reported that he had spent another two hours on the roof, and had patched all the places that had been leaking internally. Kim confirmed that the 15 gallons of CoolCoat were now bought, so it only remained to set the date for a work party. Before summer Dan would also like to complete the second coat of plaster on the extension that had already received insulation and a first coat. The two tasks could be completed in one big samu day, or individually, but probably in April. Joe asked if weather was the main limitation, but Kim said that it was simply difficult to schedule the various activities. Joe asked about the mention of paint in the previous

minutes: in fact this should have been identified as elastometric roof coating. The \$719 mentioned in the previous minutes was for the stuccoing work and bike rack purchases, not simply Dan's work on the roof.

Kim had priced smoke alarms at \$20 each and a non-refillable fire extinguisher at \$40 (from Home Depot). A fire extinguisher was needed in the kitchen (especially with a gas stove), but would also serve the rest of the building (with the extensive use of candles, and people sleeping on the premises). Bob asked about the size of the extinguisher: Kim had been considering 10 to 20 pounds. The one smoke detector outside the zendo had been beeping, so the battery had been removed. Kim was unsure if it could be restored to proper working order, or should be replaced. At least a couple were required in places where people might sleep. Dan proposed, and Joe seconded, a motion to allow Kim to buy the smoke alarms and fire extinguisher; everyone agreed (this was not covered by the blanket release of Building Fund money at the last meeting, since it was a new project and needed a separate decision).

3.2. GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Thanks were offered to Jon Parker for his work in installing the first of the bike racks: he had set it in concrete, in a hole deep enough to cover the slab with a layer of soil.

3.3. LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Josie Ahumada de Savelli had continued her good work of tracking current borrowing, but no one knew her email address to contact her about possible library acquisitions. Joe said he would get her email address or phone number and pass these on to the Treasurer.

3.4 SUPPLIES COMMITTEE

Sue had already posted lists of supplies on the fridge door in the kitchen, allowing people to note when they were about to run out. She asked anyone who noticed that a particular item did not yet appear on the list to simply write it in. The lists would not depend on anything like a database, and Sue would simply print new versions whenever this seemed appropriate. She had one question: did people favor milk or half-and-half? The milk had not been used, and most people preferred a small (one pint) container of half-and-half. Soy milk had been used, but was not very popular.

3.5. PEER TALKS COMMITTEE

Dan reported that the talks would start in April, with a talk Joe would give on samu. Sue had said she could probably do the one in May, and Dan himself could take June. He would try to schedule more talks through the summer, for the next six months (possibly with Bob in July or August). Sue was worried about the May zazenkaï: would this replace the talk? Dan had originally proposed that the talk be on the first Saturday of each month, but was now thinking that it could be moved to the second Saturday if there was a conflict at ZDS or Picture Rocks. In email discussion there had been a concern that the talks would conflict with delivery of cookies to the Primavera homeless shelter on the first Saturday of each

month, but Martin explained that the cookies were not required there until the evening meal. Dan's new proposal was to have the talks on the first Saturday of each month at 10:45 in the zendo, unless there was a conflict with sesshin or zazenkai; the start would be in April, and the May talk would be on the second Saturday. Publicity should begin as soon as possible. People giving the talks would not have to produce their own fliers or posters, since the Secretary could do this where necessary. Talks would not be replacing any talk or question and answer period offered by Pat, since they would be on a specific topic. Shelly asked if the talks were given in the zendo for the seating to be in a circle, with the person giving the talk not in a place where Pat usually was, to emphasize that these were peer talks, not teachings. However the person giving the talk would still be obviously be in control (e.g., signaling that the talk was to begin with a little bell). Presentation paraphernalia such as the large pad or board could be set up if needed.

3.6 MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Bob had tried to hold a meeting of the committee by email exchanges, but no one had responded to his messages, so there was little to report yet. However he wanted to make a proposal based on the aspects of recruitment and retention he had introduced at the previous meeting: that the first order of business in the closing circle should always be to acknowledge and welcome guests and newcomers. For example some visitors from Oregon had to leave before they were greeted in any way: in part this was because announcements in the closing circle last too long, but if the greetings came first this kind of thing would be avoided. Joe asked if this should be the Ino's responsibility (since they introduce the closing circle). Kim worried that some Inos did not know everyone, so might not recognize who was new. Bob often took on the task of greeting, but Joe worried that it would be an imposition to ask him to always perform this role, and there would be times when he was absent. After a little more discussion, Bob proposed that the Ino acknowledge guests and newcomers as the first order of business in the closing circle, Shelly proposed amending it thus: it is the Ino's responsibility to ask people to give their names and identify if they are new, and the Ino will then give a hearty and inviting welcome to all, but particularly to new people, and perhaps tell them that there are materials available, or orientations. Dan then introduced this as a formal motion, Martin seconded, and everyone approved it. Kim would contact the pool or potential Inos to tell them of this change.

Shelly had a question about making member email addresses and phone numbers more generally available: not only were there so many committees forming that needed to communicate within themselves, but it was a barrier to community formation among members for them to have to ask some third party for each email address. Kim had almost distributed such a list to selected people already. Martin mentioned privacy concerns, but said the forthcoming communications report should give a chance to discuss this issue.

3.7. OTHER COMMITTEES

The Sewing Committee was still inactive, the Samu Committee had only just formed, and the Sesshin Coordinator was absent, so there were no reports from these committees.

4. MAY 3 PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP/ZENDO BUILDING 10TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Before Bob had a chance to introduce the latest details of this event there was discussion of the date that the previous board meeting had set: May 3 was also a zazenkai. Since the dinner was in the evening and the zazenkai would be over before mid-afternoon there was no direct time conflict, and some people were happy to have both on the same day, but others felt it would be too exhausting to attend the dinner after sitting for many hours, or would need to attend to other tasks displaced by the zazenkai. Possible alternative dates were April 26 and May 10; the tenth anniversary of closing on the house fell on May 1. Dan made a motion that the dinner be moved to May 10th, Kim seconded, and everyone agreed.

Bob had a menu and pricing details. Tanya's was a good place to get bulk food; they will not only prepare it hot, but will also provide it cold from the deli (to be warmed up later), and this is not only cheaper, but there is no added tax (since cold food is considered groceries), saving 7%; moreover if you submit the order by the Monday of the week before the weekend it is required there is an additional 10% discount. The proposed menu was:

- 2 dozen green corn tamales
- 2 dozen cheese enchiladas
- 2 dozen mini chimis with calabacitas
- 2 dozen mini chimis with beans and cheese
- 1 gallon rice
- 1 gallon beans
- 2 pounds chips
 - 1 quart salsa

Getting this cold, and with the 10% discount, it comes to \$103, which is a very good deal. Drinks and a dessert could be provided from somewhere else. The main course quantities should be enough for 30 to 40 people. Dan commented about this being advertised as something to show appreciation to members for all their hard work through the year, however at recent dinners about one third of the people attending had not been regular members: should it be limited to members plus one guest per member? Bob thought the restriction unnecessary; the very first membership dinner had been following a general vote to confirm Pat Hawk as the guiding teacher of ZDS, so in that case there had been an automatic restriction to only members at the vote, but this was not the regular arrangement. Shelly suggested that we display membership forms at the dinner, inform everyone about what membership involved, and perhaps recruit new members from the non-members who came. Bob commented that this was also part of the function of the Gala in the fall. Dan made a motion to accept Bob's proposal, with the date moved to May 10; Joe seconded, and all approved.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 FLOWERS

Shelly reported that a succession of volunteers had provided flowers for the altars: in recent years there had been Linda, then Shelly, then Diana Cederquist, and now finally Shelly herself again because of Diana's health problems. She quite enjoyed buying the flowers and arranging them, but would be gone for most of the summer. She was unsure if there should be a backup flower person, or a committee. Different people had different preferences: some liked cut flowers, others preferred no flowers, or a live plant. Sue had sent out a suggestion for a plant or silk flowers, having heard that cut flowers were not traditional within Zen, but was uncertain how a plant would cope with the restricted light in the zendo. Kim suggested not watering a plant on the altar, but said that rather than taking cut flowers out of the fridge, the Jiki could move a plant from a sunny windowsill into the zendo & back again as required. Cut flowers could last multiple weeks depending on the type of flower (carnations almost indefinitely!), and whether the water was changed and the stems re-cut. Dan knew of several plants that would survive without a special environment or much attention, but none of these would provide much color. Some people simply ignored flowers, others had a strong preference for them, particularly on sesshin. On some past sesshins the karmadana had allocated care for the flowers as one of the standard tasks. One suggestion was to get cut flowers for retreats, maintain them for the next week or two, then revert to a live plant (a jade plant?) until the next retreat. Shelly proposed that she would handle the flowers until she had to leave for the summer, and would then find a successor, who would then handle them according to their own preference: cut flowers, plant, or whatever.

5.2. ABSENT BOARD MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES

Sue had a question connected with Mike Bolton's difficulties in getting to board meetings. His board position was Director at Large (a full voting member of the board), and he had been at the sit the previous Saturday, but he was caring for his elderly father in Sierra Vista and found it difficult to travel to Tucson frequently. Dan had been talking to him about the recent board business, he did have a copy of the minutes of the previous meeting, and might be getting an email account to follow the discussions more closely.

Sue proposed that someone, probably one of the alternates, should switch roles with Mike, so that they became the full voting member of the board, and his status would change to that of alternate. Shelly thought having regularity in the people attending the board meetings was important, but that it was difficult to schedule meetings so that he could attend. At this point Joe noted that the hour allocated for the meeting was up: should there be a vote to continue? Everyone agreed to continue (since it was an important topic), but only for another five minutes.

Dan made a motion that one of the board call Mike and ask him gently if he would be willing to trade places with one of the two alternates (Patty or Sue); that the whole board considered it important that we try to have every member here who could vote. There was some discussion about whether the exchange of roles was initially restricted to the

alternates (the prevailing opinion was that it was restricted in this way), and whether Patty and Sue could be considered one person for the alternation (whether the full board member role could be exchanged between them depending on who attended the meeting). Kim thought the role of the alternate was something that needed refinement at a more general level: should alternates step in to vote whenever a board member is not available? Dan withdrew the motion because the board was not ready to vote on the issue, but would work it up as a proposal for the next meeting. Sue arranged to contact Patty: there was an unresolved question about whether there was a first alternate and a second alternate, so someone would have to consult the old minutes and by-laws. Dan arranged to talk to Mike about the issue informally in advance of any formal decision from the board. Responding to a question from Sue, Kim confirmed that Mike did play an important role as head of the building committee, and that when he did attend he was heavily involved in several projects. There would be no problems with Dan himself attending board meetings after March 23 because his permaculture class was then over.

5.3 DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

There was a lengthy discussion on whether the board meetings should be on a specific day each month, and on possible conflicts with other activities, but the final decision was to only schedule the next meeting: everyone agreed to April 12, without a formal vote. The meeting adjourned after one hour and nine minutes.