

Minutes of the Zen Desert Sangha Board of Directors meeting

Saturday May 17, 2008

3226 N. Martin Avenue

(from notes by Martin Munro)

Joe Montani chaired the meeting and acted as timekeeper; Dan Dorsey, Kim Howell, Martin Munro, and Sue Weimer attended from the board, Shelly Dorsey attended from the general membership (with Bob Wallin present at the start, and Mary Adde at the start and finish of the meeting).

1. THANKS TO BOB WALLIN FOR THE MEMBERSHIP DINNER

There was unanimous support for Joe's proposal that the Board thank Bob Wallin for his efforts at the Membership Dinner the previous weekend: he had organized all aspects of the catering, from purchasing the food through serving it to scores of people, all of whom had been very appreciative. The party had been in part a celebration of the ten years ZDS had owned its present building, but another anniversary had been overlooked: July 31 was the tenth anniversary of the start of Pat Hawk's stay at Picture Rocks.

2. TREASURER'S REPORT

Kim circulated a printed comparison of the finances to date in the current year (January 1 through May 15, 2008) with the corresponding period in the previous year. She cautioned that she had not yet compared the account balance shown by the QuickBooks software with an actual bank statement (there was still a possible discrepancy between these, which would need the help of an accountant, Irene, to resolve). However there was one clear loss relative to 2007: the value of the stocks had declined by \$1,571.46 (over 30%). The stocks were the residue of a direct donation to ZDS, most of which had been sold already. They were in the companies AETNA (20 shares) and United Health Group (80 shares), and were administered through Wachovia.

Dan thought the Investment Committee should decide what to do with the stocks and present a proposal to the board, but this committee had not yet met. Kim did not particularly want to chair this committee, but Joe considered her the de facto chair (as Treasurer) until some other arrangement could be hashed out.

Kim had not yet set up the money market account or CD discussed in the April meeting, but planned to do this (and transfer \$10,000 into it) before the next board meeting. Joe asked if this account was to be through Chase, and Kim confirmed that it was (for the convenience of the Treasurer). There was some discussion about whether Brad Stroup needed to be involved in any sales of stocks through Wachovia: his name was still associated with them, but Bob had dealt directly with someone called Bill at Wachovia, and Hoshin Gupta had originally set up that account. Dan made a motion "that the Investment Committee meet between now and the next board meeting and either take action or come up with a

proposal for some of this stuff that needs to be dealt with" Joe seconded, and there was no dissent.

3. REPORT ON TUESDAY MID-DAY SITS

Joe noted that the three month trial period for the Tuesday mid-day sits was now up, and asked if Sue could give a report to the board on whether or not they should continue. She reported that they were going well: Harry Iwatsuki, Ben Couch and Sue had been taking responsibility for opening and being jiki, and there was strong accord between Ben and Harry that the sits should continue through the summer. The number of people showing up could vary from three to ten: the incentive for attending was lunch afterwards, which had been at various restaurants along Campbell Avenue. Sue recommended that the sits continue unless there were strong objections from the board, and quite the contrary, there was unanimous support. Joe asked if staffing had been a problem, and Sue said it had not so far, and that Harry and Ben had committed to covering for Sue her if she was away for part of the summer. Sue suggested that Mary could also help, but she was too busy to commit to this, although might be able to do some tasks such as putting a sign on the door if a sit was cancelled. There was some inconclusive discussion about the necessity for standardized training for new jikis. Joe asked if the any criteria of success or failure had been established when the trial period began, but no one could remember anything that formal [the initial Board discussion had been through email, not one of the monthly meetings]. The motion that the Tuesday sits continue, introduced by Kim and seconded by Martin, passed unanimously.

4. SANGHA COMMUNICATIONS

Sue had some comments on publicity for sangha events. Martin was supposed to produce a comprehensive review of ZDS communications, but this was delayed and some things needed immediate attention: events were not being announced on the email list associated with the Yahoo group, which many people relied on as their main source of ZDS information. The event calendar on the Yahoo Groups web site could be set to send email reminders to the list automatically, but there had been a problem with too many messages appearing for some events, then others (including the peer-delivered talk series) not being posted at all. Dan thought there should be a concerted effort to make sure that ZDS events were announced at least twice on the list. There were questions about who had responsibility for posting messages: Martin explained that he did have the access rights to post messages, and could do more if this was necessary, although Jim D'Elia had also been posting some information. Kim thought this should be the primary responsibility of the active

secretary, and others suggested that Martin act as the primary conduit for redistributing announcements. Martin agreed to take on this role, but Jim would still be the main contact for announcements about Picture Rocks. Joe formalized the arrangement by exercising his presidential powers.

5. ADVERTISEMENT IN TUCSON GREEN MAGAZINE

Joe had proposed in an earlier email discussion that ZDS advertise in *Tucson Green Magazine*; he was well aware that ZDS had suspended several of its advertisements because they had not been effective, but felt that this publication would be different: it reaches a large audience, is current for 30 days (less ephemeral than a or weekly daily paper, more likely to be retained for reference). The cost would be \$90 an issue minus a 10% discount for three months: around \$240. Kim commented that if the board decided to do this, it should wait until the fall, rather than paying to run advertisements through the summer. Dan said he would abstain from discussing the issue, since he was on the board of advisers for the magazine and knew the publishers personally: but he did have some general comments on advertising. His father ran a paper called the *Galveston County Advertiser*, and had advised that six months was the minimum period over which to run an advertising campaign. Joe asked if the paper Dan's father ran was also a tabloid issued every 30 days: Dan replied that it was a tabloid, but issued weekly. Shelly was in favor in general, not only because the Tucson Green Magazine was likely to reach people who would be interested in ZDS, but because it was a local publication, and it was better to support businesses that were involved in the local community than more anonymous national publications such as *Shambhala Sun*. Kim also suggested that some time be spent on the wording of the advertisement, possibly forming an advertising committee. Dan recommended also reviewing the options for free or low cost advertising before taking the decision to spend money. Joe wondered if the topic could be passed to an existing committee for a recommendation: the membership committee? Commenting on the idea of checking additional advertising options, Kim said she had originally found ZDS through an advertisement in the *Tucson Weekly*. Kim made a motion to form an advertising committee to report back to the Board, with any action to be delayed until the fall; Sue seconded, and everyone approved this. Joe agreed to act as the contact for finding people interested in serving on the committee.

6. ZDS BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP MEMBERSHIP

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship had sent a letter to Kim asking for a contribution: there was some discussion about whether this was for continued membership (ZDS had a long-standing subscription to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship magazine *Turning Wheel*). Martin realized that the letter was identical to one he had received: a request for a donation in addition to membership. He explained that the national group was distinct from the now-defunct Tucson chapter, and was a tax-exempt organization to which ZDS could donate without compromising its own tax-exempt status. Dan made a motion that ZDS maintain its present level of support for the Buddhist

Peace Fellowship with a subscription to *Turning Wheel*, but not send any additional contribution. Either Joe or Sue seconded this, and there was no dissent.

7. WATER HARVESTING MASTER PLAN

Dan would like to do an water harvesting landscape master plan for the entire property. This would tie in to getting gutters: having a master plan in advance would avoid putting a downspout somewhere that would later need moved to feed a cistern or a swale. The plan would be similar to one he would draw up as a professional landscape architect for his paying clients, but he would be donating his services. Kim recommended that he nevertheless record the charges he would normally be making on an invoice, so that he could at least claim a tax credit on his donation. Joe asked if Dan would need any additional resources in drawing up the plan: Dan said that he would not, apart from a volunteer or two to help use a water level. He would work at his own pace, and probably would not have something ready in time for the next meeting.

Joe asked what kind of design he would be presenting. Dan explained that he worked from the general to the more specific: he would first present a drawing and maybe a rough cost estimate. Some of the suggestions could be quite drastic, such as tearing up some of the asphalt in the parking lot, so he would like people to approve these before proceeding to further details. Kim hoped that there would be some breakdown into discrete phases; Dan said that he hoped an approved master plan could guide future developments even if they took ten years to complete, with all the parts fitting together like pieces in a puzzle. Joe said he hoped the plan would not only be of utility to ZDS, but also serve as a publicly visible demonstration of sustainable design principles. Shelly commented that people in the class on Buddhism and the environment the previous fall had been interested in applying environmental principles to this site before trying to do anything in the broader community.

Dan observed that this also tied in to a nationwide movement of churches taking on environmental design principles: right here in Tucson they just had their first audit, with 20 churches (no Buddhists or other non-Christians unfortunately). Teams from the churches were trained at all-day workshops, then returned to do a green audit of their sites.

Joe asked if the plan included the use of grey water. Dan explained that in commercial places (as opposed to households) the Department of Environmental Quality tended to frown on grey water use. Kim wondered if ZDS currently generated much usable grey water in any case.

Sue made a motion that the Board authorize Dan to proceed with a water harvesting master plan, drawing on any assistance needed to complete the work, Kim seconded this, and there was no opposition. Kim commented that this began to address serious drainage problems and flooding in the backyard first noticed by Mike Bolton some time before (at times the water had come close to coming through the back door).

8. OLD BUSINESS

Martin asked about the Yoga/Dance class Beth Rigby had been offering at the last board meeting. Dan explained that she would probably prefer to wait until the fall: they had exchanged emails and although she was still interested in doing the class and Dan had offered continued support from ZDS, it was now getting close to the time when she would take off for the summer, so nothing would happen before October. Mike Bolton announced he would be unavailable to help with anything from mid-June to mid-July, when he would be in Scotland.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Kim wanted authorization from the board to get estimates for professional tree-trimming and pruning. The oleanders in the back yard were now beyond her reach, so someone with the proper equipment was needed to cut them back to the fence line, and also take some of the larger limbs off the mesquite trees that she had been unable to deal with. Dan asked if there was a need to trim the oleanders beyond head height: did they not provide valuable shade? Kim said that they provided so much shade that nothing else would grow there. Joe asked if the oleanders belonged to ZDS: Kim said they did not, but were overhanging the property: although ZDS could not cut them down, they could be trimmed back to the property line without needing permission from the owners on the other side. Shelly had a concern about the kind of extreme pruning favored by some landscapers: we might not want anything that drastic. On the other hand Kim thought that some of the trees needed much more drastic pruning than anything that had been done recently: for example trimming on the tree in the front had only been to allow cars to drive under it, but a large amount of dead wood was still there.

Kim also wanted to buy an electric chain saw to help with maintenance pruning. Mike wondered if it would be best to delay pruning until after the summer, when the shade would still be welcome. Kim thought the best time to trim the oleanders was when they were actively growing, so fresh new growth would cover the cut surface. Joe speculated that professional landscapers might know the best time to prune particular plants. Dan felt discussion was descending into details, and made a motion that the landscape committee come back with estimates for the electric chainsaw and pruning (Kim said that she would contact the people who had done the trees out in front); Sue seconded this, and there was no dissent. Kim asked if anyone was interested in joining the landscape committee: Dan said he was, because of the connections with the water harvesting master plan.

Sue announced that she had applied for a counseling position with the Department of Defense, and would be hearing from them soon. If she was working, she would be gone for part of the summer, which would leave the member-at-large board position vacant for a few months. There was some discussion about whether Patty Kelly, currently an alternate, was available to fill the position. Sue wondered if Mike would be available for any of the time, but he explained that he was now completely expunged from the board, not even an

alternate. Sue said that her first assignment (from the start of June) would be for a month, but that subsequent assignments could be two to three months, and could be to any US military base in the world. However she did not intend to take every available assignment, even if she felt able to continue with them. Dan said he currently planned to be around for the summer, and Joe thought the board could function with four people (with the president abstaining to avoid tied votes). Shelly thought a second alternate might be needed, and was immediately pounced upon by the everyone as the obvious choice for this position. The by-laws provided for alternates to be appointed, but the decision (without a formal vote) was to announce the position on the email list, and appoint Shelly immediately if no one else was interested. Someone was also to contact Patty, to find out if she wanted to maintain her position as an alternate. There was some discussion about alternates and voting: according to the by-laws, alternates could not vote, unless they stepped in to take on the role of a full board member. There were mechanisms for adding or removing members from the board (the process of an alternate becoming a full board member during a temporary absence and subsequently reverting to their alternate status had not yet been tried, however). Any announcement of the alternate position should be clear that they would not be voting.

After a protracted discussion on the date of the next board meeting, June 21 was favored over the alternatives (despite a conflict with a CIR at Picture Rocks). Dan formally proposed this date, Joe seconded, and there was no dissent. Kim warned that he son was facing major surgery for which no date had yet been set, so she could not give an absolute commitment to attend any meeting.

The meeting adjourned after around one hour and ten minutes.