

# Minutes of the Zen Desert Sangha Board of Directors meeting

*Saturday June 21, 2008*

*3226 N. Martin Avenue*

*(from notes by Martin Munro)*

Joe Montani chaired the meeting and acted as timekeeper; Kim Howell, Martin Munro, and Fain Rutherford attended from the Board; Helen Amerongen, Greg Anderson, Michael Bolton, Jim D'Elia, and Paul Markl attended from the general membership. Before the formal start of the meeting Joe extended a special welcome to Fain as one of the two new alternate Board members (Shelly Dorsey was the other, but was unable to attend). Joe then summarized the current Board procedures: time-limited discussions (with the option to extend the limit as necessary), leading to formal votes on specific proposals rather than being open-ended.

## 1. EXTENDED TREASURER'S REPORT

Kim circulated a printed comparison of the finances to date in the current year (January 1 through June 19, 2008) with the corresponding period in the previous year. Unlike similar comparisons produced for previous meetings, it was gratifying to see that the two totals were nearly identical, so there was now no significant shortfall in income compared to 2007. Previous reports contained an accounting anomaly, with the printed totals not always reflecting the actual account balances; however this report corrected the problem. Kim had worked with an accountant to revise the handling of the various special funds within the QuickBooks software, and remote access software that allowed the accountant to take temporary control of Kim's computer had made this easier. After being shown new procedures for handling the funds, Kim had retroactively changed the Education Fund, the Building Fund, and the Special Fund (which covered things such as the new appliances for the kitchen). As an aside, Kim proposed handling the sabbatical fund in a similar way [see further discussion under Item 4 below]. There are three parts to each fund, which are now interacting correctly; the Funded Expenses headings at the top of the report are monies that ZDS has spent out of the funds, the Restricted headings on the balance sheet show how much money is available for spending, and the Expenses headings are used when the money is spent.

A large donation had gone into the Building Fund some time before, and this had helped finance the stucco project and the roof repairs; there was still a balance of \$564.80 remaining. The Educational Fund has not seen much use. Larry Levine has donated to it every year, and the money has helped pay for materials for the Steve Hagen classes, and a stipend for Joe for some classes; Kim has also started to use this fund for magazine subscriptions and library book acquisitions. It could also be used to bring in a visiting teacher.

The double-entry technique required for the fund accounting would be part of the list of instructions Kim was writing up describing how to handle the Treasurer's duties.

She would be leaving the Treasurer's position at the end of the year, and thought it not too early to start a search for her successor. Eventually she would like to see a pool of people with the training necessary for this position, so that it could rotate between them with no one person holding it for so long that they became burned out. She was now feeling less stressed by the responsibilities herself, but thought that the three years her predecessor had endured in the job were unreasonably long. The QuickBooks software was very complicated, and overkill for ZDS's accounting needs, but the small pieces that were used were handy and easy to use. Joe asked if Kim had any specific proposals for recruiting a successor. She thought some kind of email announcement should go out, although it might be premature to send it immediately, waiting until a month before the annual meeting (September) to solicit for new Board members would be too late. She would write up a brief description of the Treasurer's duties (which the rest of the Board could review), to be sent out in an email request for volunteers, repeated perhaps as often as every two weeks. Joe asked if the pool of potential treasurers would be formalized; Kim thought not, but that people would be trained in the software then rotate into the Treasurer position on a normal two-year Board term, perhaps returning to it after a few more years elapsed, just a continuation of the way Board members tended to rotate back into positions after having been off the Board for a while.

The notice to renew the advertisement in the Daily Wildcat had arrived, and Kim was assuming that it should not be renewed. A notice had also come from Qwest DEX about the ZDS Yellow Pages listing. Kim wondered if the recent decision to cut down on print advertising would also apply to the DEX entries, both in the printed phone book and the online version under the categories Meditation Instruction and Religious Organizations: did we want to make any change? There was an extra charge of \$22 per month for these entries. Joe asked if there was a deadline for responding; Kim checked and found that the issue date was September, but the deadline was June 20 [which had just passed]. If there was no change they would continue as before. Because we have a business phone line we get a certain amount free, but anything beyond this costs extra. Kim asked for guidance: should we continue with no change, or try to cancel the extra payments? Martin asked for confirmation that continuing without a response would mean paying \$22 per month for another year: Kim replied that the phone bills were around \$68 per month, including this payment. Joe asked if they would still be willing to cancel, and Kim thought that if she contacted DEX by the next weekday they would be willing to remove the entries. Helen wondered if anyone had started coming to ZDS because of the Yellow Pages. Joe commented that we had not yet been told about telephone book lookup, and Kim said that the entries had

included DEX Online. Helen and Kim both thought that people were more likely to have found ZDS through its own web site. Joe asked if this decision should be made an action item or passed to a committee. Kim thought the timing required an immediate decision.

Martin proposed that ZDS contact DEX to suspend payment of the extra \$22 per month, and that any money saved be used to bolster the web site. Joe seconded, and confirmed that the web site was the main way of announcing that ZDS existed; Kim asked if it was kept up to date, and Joe said that it was, give or take a week or so. In the formal vote, everyone approved the proposal.

Kim informed the Board that the City of Tucson was raising garbage fees by a large amount. She assumed that ZDS fell into the commercial category, and was unsure of the current container size, but 100 gallons or less was going to be \$18 per month. Joe wondered if we were similar to a church rather than being commercial. Kim thought it was more a matter of the container size: she had previously requested an extra container just for yard waste, and would like that to continue; the first bill at the new rates should clarify arrangements.

## 2. JIKI COVERAGE FOR MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY SITS

Helen explained that she still had responsibility for the service position calendar posted on the bulletin Board every month. Originally when she took over this task from Pamela King she had been filling it with assignments by calling people to persuade them to cover specific times, but this had been too much work, so latterly she had been posting the calendar for people to sign up themselves. Apparently this has not been working well for Wednesday nights. Mondays she has generally been attending herself, and problems have been rare; Saturdays have also had few problems. Perhaps a regular Wednesday night person could make sure there was coverage then (either coming themselves, or making sure someone else would attend). Helen would continue to post the calendar, but would still be unable to fill all the positions in advance, particularly for Wednesday when she does not know who attends regularly. She commented that it is a drag for people to come and find the place not open. Martin observed that for the past three or four Wednesdays there hadn't been adequate coverage for the start of the sit. Joe said that he had recently stopped attending on Wednesdays, or otherwise would have been available to help. Helen asked if he could nevertheless cover the few weeks in the middle of summer that seemed the most problematic. Joe was unable to commit to attending regularly, but volunteered to cover the following Wednesday, and try to recruit more volunteers from an announcement in the closing circle that evening. Martin noted that two of the Wednesday regulars who could be jiki, Mick Meader and himself, would be away that day, making it even more important to have average coverage. Helen suggested cancelling the sit if there was no jiki coverage by sending out a message to the email list. Martin worried that there were often many people interested in sitting at that time, and that many were not subscribed to the list. Although he could never

attend early enough to open himself, he volunteered to search for someone who could supervise jiki coverage; but if Joe could deal with the immediate crisis by attending next week it would be a great help. Joe said that sometimes in the past he had been both jiki and ino for Wednesday.

Kim wondered if soliciting help in the closing circles would be enough, or if some kind of email message should also appear. Joe thought a wider appeal for help would encourage participation. Helen suggested emailing the trained jikis; Fain suggested a different approach, reaching out to the people who attend consistently on Wednesday first and seeing if any would be willing to be trained as jikis, but thought that this did not exclude making a general announcement. Joe volunteered to make the recruiting announcement for new jikis at the next Wednesday sit, and thought this didn't need to be formalized further.

## 3. STATUS OF DIGITIZING TAPES

Helen mentioned that she was in the process of getting set up to digitize tapes, and had a question about the status of the earlier effort by Richard Laue to digitize the ZDS collection of teisho tapes. There were more tapes needing to be digitized at Picture Rocks, so she had emailed Richard for technical advice, but so far had not received a reply. She wanted to coordinate with whoever was responsible for digitizing at ZDS. Kim commented that Pat was the one who decided if they needed to be digitized, and that Richard had been working closely with him. Helen explained that the tapes she was considering included recordings from the Contemplative Intensive Retreats as well. Kim advised continuing attempts to contact Richard; Helen had heard a rumor that he had already brought some digitized recordings to ZDS and was distressed that they had not been made available. Kim confirmed that he had already delivered some CDs to ZDS, had been distressed that they were not immediately placed in the library for checkout, but was not yet finished with the project; he had said that the final versions of the CDs holding the recordings should be labelled with a design of Pat's choosing, and was waiting for a CD burner that could produce these. Martin commented that the technology involved, called LightScribe, was not particularly exotic.

## 4. TEACHER'S SABBATICAL FUND

Kim explained that she had already covered this topic in her Treasurer's report: that there should be another fund similar to the Building Fund or the Education Fund dedicated to this purpose. The name for the fund would need careful selection, but then it could be set up within the QuickBooks software, and Seven Thunders could then make a donation to ZDS earmarked for this fund (the precedent of people making donations to specific funds has already been set). What ZDS ultimately does with the money will need a meeting of the Finance Committee to decide, but in the short term there are several options, including putting it in a money market savings account and making transfers to a checking account when she needed to write Pat a check. Although the Finance Committee hadn't yet met, the short-term arrangement was Kim's proposal (as Treasurer) to the Board. Joe commented

that it might be necessary when receiving donations to the fund to have them pass through a ZDS account in any case, since if something like an investment house ended up holding the money they would be unable to accept third-party checks. Kim confirmed that they would need to make the donation to ZDS, for the Teacher's Sabbatical Fund, and that for speed and convenience she would not research investment options, but would simply set up a money market account through Chase. Joe said there were other easy options that the Fiance Committee could consider. Kim thought that was a separate issue from making the decision to set up the fund and transferring the money from Seven Thunders.

The issue of naming the fund came to the fore when Kim started to make a formal motion: was it to be "Teacher's Resource and Travel Fund", "Teacher Resource and Support Fund", "Teacher Travel and Support Fund", "Teacher's Travel and Sabbatical Fund"? Kim's suggested motion was "That we create in QuickBooks a Teacher Resource Fund and notify Seven Thunders that they may make a donation specifically to that fund in the amount of the Sabbatical Fund". Joe suggested that the donation should be to the general checking account and that Kim would make the transfer, but Kim said this was implicit in what she had proposed; the donation had to be to ZDS for tax purposes. The final motion was "That we create in QuickBooks a Teacher Resource Fund and notify Seven Thunders that they may make a donation to ZDS earmarked for this fund, and that further, the Treasurer will open a money market / savings account in which to receive this." Joe seconded the motion, and everyone voted for it. Kim asked if she (as Treasurer) should notify Seven Thunders, and received approval to do this. Joe asked for the balance of the account, and some confusion about who had the Seven Thunder paperwork ensued: it had been left on the table next the kitchen. Kim remembered around \$16,000, and thought Pat might use a large sum from this to travel first class to Hawaii on the death of Aitken Roshi; she did not know how many people were currently donating to it, or whether there should be an effort to solicit more donations. Joe thought there should be some kind of formal notice when it was transferred to ZDS. Kim thought anyone wanting to donate would contact Seven Thunders and be referred to ZDS. Joe thought there should be some independent announcement from ZDS; Kim wanted to first consult with Seven Thunders and with Pat.

## 5. LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE REPORT

Kim passed on a message from Richard Park: he had started working at a different job in a different part of town, so was no longer able to come by ZDS at midweek, and was looking for someone to water the planters out in front and next the shoe rack on Wednesday evenings. Could Joe perhaps add this to the announcement soliciting help on Wednesday evenings? Did anyone know when Ying Lin would be back? He had been helpful watering before, but was away on a 40-day retreat. Joe said he would mention it on Wednesday, and do the watering himself that day, but in case no one volunteered the announcement might need repetition.

In her capacity as backyard grounds-keeper, Kim said she was washing her hands of the mesquite tree in the front yard,

since it was more than she could physically handle. She could keep up with things in the back yard, but problem with the tree in front was that it kept growing down, blocking parking spaces unless it was trimmed. Each trimming stimulated new growth, so the number of branches to trim kept increasing, and at some point ZDS was either going to lose the parking spaces, or have to call in a professional to take some of the lower limbs off the tree. Martin wondered if this had been covered as part of the discussion at the previous Board meeting; Kim had mentioned pruning the tree during discussion of oleander pruning, but there had been concern about the kind of extreme pruning favored by some landscapers. She proposed that the Landscape Committee be authorized to solicit bids for professional tree pruning, but Martin thought this had already been done at the previous meeting. The previous minutes showed the Landscape Committee was approved to obtain estimates for the electric chainsaw and pruning; Kim was now able to provide the chainsaw estimate of between \$50 and \$150, and received approval to buy it. She would obtain estimates for the various different pruning tasks, including taking the oleanders back to the property line and removing limbs from the tree.

## 6. BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Kim was concerned that it was perhaps only a week before the monsoon and the roof coating was not yet finished. The containers with 50 gallons of the coating were already on the roof, so the task was just to spread it out. At that time of year the work had to be done at the crack of dawn, so there had to be a decision to hold a samu day, and then when to schedule it (preferably on a Saturday or Sunday). Kim thought the work could start at 5:30 AM (Fain suggested 5, but she considered that too early). Joe asked about scheduling it for the next day [Sunday June 22], but Kim thought this was too short notice for an announcement: Saturday and Sunday June 29 and 30 were the two options. On the Saturday Kim thought that the work could be over perhaps in time for people to start sitting at 7:30 AM, and probably in time for the sutra service at 9. Joe was concerned that everyone be off the zendo roof by 7:25, and Kim thought the zendo itself had already been coated, although it could do with a touch-up. Martin said he would not be available that weekend in any case, and there were concerns about finding enough people to help (Kim could not complete the work alone). There was some discussion about waiting until the Fourth of July weekend, but in the end Kim moved "that we schedule a samu day for the specific purpose of finishing the roof coating next Saturday starting at 5:30", and Martin seconded. Kim would send out an email announcement, and post announcements asking for anyone interested to contact her; the work would be cancelled if too few people volunteered, or it was already raining. Everyone approved the motion in a formal vote. Joe asked about tools, and Kim said there were rollers and extensions in the shed, and ladders would also be provided.

## 7. OTHER BUSINESS

There was seemingly no old or new business, but a decision was needed on the date for the July Board meeting. Paul Markl

would be speaking on July 5th (in the peer-delivered talks series), so provisionally the meeting was set to July 12, with the proviso that if Dan was unavailable it could be shifted to July 19. Kim, Fain, Martin and Joe were available on either date, but Sue's schedule was still uncertain.

In response to a final request for any pending business, Kim commented that at some point during the summer the Board would have to think about scheduling classes for the Fall. She knew that the Steve Hagen group was soliciting opinions on what they might want to do in the Fall, and thought the Board should see who else might be offering

classes, for example Dan, for either the July or August meeting. Joe asked if there were any public dinners scheduled; Kim mentioned the gala, which was typically around the time of the annual meeting, theoretically the last Sunday in October. She hoped Bob wasn't too burned out with organizing dinners, prompting Martin to ask if he would need any help with the Fourth of July party, since this was largely a potluck.

The meeting adjourned about one hour and three minutes after the opening gong, or 58 minutes after it was brought to order.