

Minutes of the Zen Desert Sangha Board of Directors meeting

Saturday September 13, 2008

3226 N. Martin Avenue

(from notes by Martin Munro)

Joe Montani chaired the meeting and acted as timekeeper; Dan Dorsey, Shelly Dorsey, Kim Howell, Martin Munro, Fain Rutherford, and Sue Weimer attended from the Board, Philip Boatright, Diana Cederquist, Jim D'Elia, Lucia Grossberger, Jill Jones, Patty Kelley, Malvina Kupinski, and Bob Wallin attended from the general membership, although not everyone was present for the entire meeting. Before the meeting started Kim distributed a printed list to the Board, giving the phone and email contacts of all active members (and also included their membership type, if known: full member, associate, or friend). She also distributed the printed profit and loss comparison with 2007 and balance sheet comparison with 2007 to everyone in anticipation of the Treasurer's Report. After calling the meeting to order, Joe summarized the printed agenda.

1. TREASURER'S REPORT

Kim began by pointing out a change in the balance sheet, which now showed an increase in assets (at least on paper). This reflected ZDS absorbing the Teacher Benefit Fund (formerly the Pat Hawk Sabbatical Fund). ZDS now had an extra \$13,700 in a money market savings account for teacher benefit: it was a restricted fund (listed further down the balance sheet under liabilities). ZDS also had over \$1,000 in the Educational Fund, which we might want to look at spending. In the past this has paid for materials for the Steve Hagen classes, library books, and periodical subscriptions for the library. The Building Fund was down to just \$564.80, having paid for various improvement projects, most significantly the stuccoing of the storage room (Kim thought that even though it was not yet painted, it looked much better than it had before). Membership dues (including all contributions from any type of member, the Contributed Support heading in the printed report) were \$2000 less than in September 2007; she did not know if this was cause for concern, or simply people not paying because they had been away for the summer. Many people preferred to pay right at the start or end of the year in any case. The Teacher Dana heading also showed a change, since Pat had received a raise at the start of the year. Kim did not have the most recent checking account balance to compare with the \$11,563.05 shown on the printed report, but the two had been very close. Automatic electronic bill payments came from the account at various times, so they would often differ by a small amount.

Joe asked if there was any news of a successor to Kim as Treasurer. Kim replied that no one had come forward, and the potential candidates she had asked approached had reacted as if she had some contagious disease. A couple of people had indicated that they would be Treasurer if no one else would do it, and they were probably worried at this point. Kim offered

to bring in the computer and give a demonstration of the accounting software to anyone who was interested. Joe asked if the restricted Education Fund could pay for a DVD projector (anticipating one of the later agenda items). Kim asked if it would be education or entertainment, and Joe thought that the movies suggested had been to do with Buddhist practice, and hence were in some sense educational. Kim explained that since the Education Fund had been almost exclusively contributed by Larry Levine, that we should make sure that enough remained in that fund to pay for the CDs and other materials for the classes he coordinated; she would not want to drain it dry, but other than that it was a Board decision. Joe said he was not asking about the amount so much as the principle of whether it could be used for those types of purchases; he did not know if there was an understanding with the donors on how the money could be spent. Kim said that in principle donated money belonged to ZDS to do with as we saw fit; however in consideration of where the money came from she personally felt that the funds should be available for that purpose [supporting the classes]. Library materials had been the other main use of the fund until that point.

2. MESQUITE TREE AND LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE REPORT

Joe asked who would next speak to represent the Landscape Committee in the matter of the damaged mesquite tree in the front yard. Kim replied that both she and Dan would say something about it. She had just obtained an estimate from a professional tree trimmer; she had tried to have him come on Saturday, but had been unavailable then, and had come on Friday, not letting Kim know far enough in advance for her to open the gate to the back yard. So there were no estimated amounts for the additional work that was required there. She read from the estimate: "Remove storm damage from main mesquite tree located in the front yard. Large scaffolding limb broke out and is not salvageable. Although tree will be one-sided, there is still enough strength to hold scaffold. Reduce weight and wind sail from tree. All work performed to ANSI A300 standards. Disinfect tools." (Kim explained that this was important since we had persistent mistletoe on the mesquite in the back yard) "Chip brush, haul away resulting debris." He had inspected the tree before Dan had removed a lot of material: the estimate was \$750, and she did not know what the estimate would be if Dan was able to remove the remainder (which was for him to decide). But in any case the remaining operations were still needed: "Reduce weight and wind sail from tree". There was a huge almost solid layer of dead growth, which caused the large branch to be

blown off; the growth was too dense, it was interwoven with dead branches, and was too high for anyone here to reach. It needed to have the dead growth and crossing limbs removed, and to be thinned so that the wind could blow through it and not rip any more off. Although there wasn't a dollar estimate for the work in the back, the present estimate did mention assessing the back when they were working on the front. Kim would have preferred not to do things this way, since the tree trimmers had a \$400 minimum call out, so it would be better to have everything done at once, but she would talk to him the following week. The estimate of \$750 for the front seemed reasonable; it had been about \$1200--\$1400 to take down one of the Aleppo pines in the front and thin the other.

Joe had heard worries there might be too little left of the tree to be viable after all the necessary trimming, and it might be better to remove the entire tree: was that too radical? Kim thought the limbs she would want to remove were those remaining; the limb that extended over the roof needed major trimming each year, which was becoming increasingly difficult, so it would be better to remove this completely; the other main limb extended towards the patio area, and at very least needed to come up so people could walk underneath. Joe asked if the decisions should be left to the Landscape Committee, or if the Board should discuss the options during the meeting. Kim thought the Board should make the final decision (and also release the money to spend). Fain said that ideally the committee would assess the options and make a recommendation.

Dan explained that the Landscape Committee had not met and come up with those options; however there was no immanent danger (even if the tree fell it would not do much damage, and the monsoon was over). He would cut up the rest of the downed limb, reckoning that another couple of two-hour sessions would suffice; he had already worked for about two and a half hours on Friday and an hour on Thursday, and the chainsaw was working well. He would stack the logs as firewood against the south fence, where anyone that wanted it could take it. He suggested that the Landscape Committee could then meet, and come up with solid options on which the Board could vote. He suggested that this would be preferable to trying to make an immediate decision in the Board meeting, and Joe agreed. Dan asked if the estimate had divided the operations of chopping the branch, chipping the debris, and trimming what remained, but they had only provided a single total. Kim said she would call him back for a revised estimate. Dan thought that he could reduce the cost by half by cutting all the fallen limb. Shelly pointed out that if he returned for a revised estimate (which could include the option of completely removing the tree), he could also provide one for the back yard work.

Responding to Joe's comments about preserving the tree if possible, Kim said that the professional tree trimmer did seem to think it was still viable. Diana pointed out that replacement with another tree on the same spot might be impossible. Joe and Kim agreed saying that an expensive stump grinder or backhoe would be needed. Kim hoped to obtain the revised estimates in time for the next meeting.

3. DISTRIBUTING MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION

Shelly hoped that members could have an email and phone directory similar to the one the Board had just received, but to ensure privacy people should have the option to opt out if they did not want their information distributed in this way. She proposed sending an announcement to the zdsetree email list, explaining that members had requested an email and phone directory for contact and sangha-building, and that everyone who did not want their email or phone information in the directory would need to opt out (giving details of how to do this). She also suggested possibly including in the gala invitations a note saying "We are putting together a phone list and if you would like to opt out" (for people who do not have email or do not check email) "return this form." She thought it was fair to put the burden on the people wanting to opt out: if they do not care enough to opt out they get on, if they have no problem being on they get on, but if they strongly believe that their information should not be released, surely they will take that step, and we can remove them from the directory distributed to the general membership. She suggested giving people two months to decide, setting some date (possibly in November) before which requests to opt out would be received, and send out a couple of reminders, so that no one could say they were not informed, and then simply producing the directory.

Kim suggested including an admonishment for people to check their contact information along with the option to opt out. Joe asked whether Shelly had considered having people opt in to the directory instead of opting out, since that would automatically provide up-to-date contact information. Kim said the list would be much shorter on that basis. Fain thought that if someone had taken the trouble to join a sangha, a certain willingness to share this information was implicit in being part of a community, so opting out rather than in made sense. Shelly thought the option to opt in would be more time consuming: about six months rather than two. Sue considered that the present membership form already implied that people could opt out of revealing some information, since they could leave many details blank.

Kim noted that the annual membership declaration forms went out in January, and wondered if people could opt out by checking an extra box on that form, and if it would be best to wait until after that mailing before producing the directory, since the Treasurer does receive a lot of updated information from those forms. She thought that many details on the list she had just distributed to the Board were already outdated. Joe worried that having an opt out box on the form might be ambiguous: people might not know what they were opting out of. Kim explained that there were already two such boxes on the form, with brief explanations: one was for sharing information with other carefully-screened dharma groups, and had been added when Seven Thunders Sangha had wanted to send a mailing to all sanghas connected with Pat Hawk to solicit donations to the Sabbatical Fund. Shelly and Kim suggested that a third box labelled "I do not want my contact information included in the internal membership directory" would suffice. Shelly asked if many people filled out

the forms in January, Kim said they did, and Shelly said she would be willing to postpone the directory, telling people that we were waiting to update the database with correct information, and that they would get it in February or March. Kim explained this would be up to her as yet undecided successor. Shelly was then concerned that this would compound the delays: putting it off until the revised information was in, then waiting for the new Treasurer to become familiar with the database, and produce the list while trying to complete many other unfamiliar tasks. Kim said that generating the list with the software was easy, and she would be on hand as a consultant if necessary. Martin observed that the bylaws stipulated that the Secretary should ultimately be responsible for this, so they could be blamed if it was not done. Sue asked if something similar had not been discussed at earlier meetings, and Martin explained that in the last discussion he had proposed an alternative idea, but Shelly's proposal had support and was the one to follow.

Joe asked if Shelly was ready to propose something that could be put to a vote, but she said she was trying to assimilate Kim's information: she asked if people would rather wait until the Spring, when we might have more correct information on the list through the membership drive then, or if they would rather go with the potentially inaccurate information already available, and have something in hand in a couple of months. Sue asked how it would work to send out email messages to everyone now, explaining that we were producing a sangha directory, asking them to make sure that Kim had the correct information, and giving them the chance to opt out immediately; the directory would then be ready in a month or two. Shelly pointed out that this was essentially her original proposal, apart from the emphasis on correcting information.

Shelly repeated that she was proposing two alternatives: to announce it sooner, with an email message asking people to correct their information and possibly opt out, or wait until the membership drive, basing it on the paperwork people complete for their membership declaration, and publishing it then. Patty asked if it could be produced quickly, but subsequently updated when better information was available, perhaps every six months. Kim said that it was just a matter of saving trees: updates could be produced at any time, but frequent updates wasted paper. Malvina pointed out that this could be avoided if the updates were limited to the information that had changed, not the full directory.

Shelly then narrowed the proposal to something suitable for a vote: that we send out a notice through the e-tree that this project is coming, and let people give the information to opt out, as well as updating incorrect information if they could (by sending it to Kim), so that by November we get a communication list. Joe asked Shelly if she would write the motivational blurb to broadcast, and she said she would. Sue said she wasn't sure we needed to kill trees every six months: she suggested instead sending out an email with a list of people whose information had changed. Shelly agreed that people could either print this out, or take the old directory and cross things out; the other alternative was publishing a one-page addendum as Malvina had suggested, and then just stapling that to the old directory. Martin commented that

many members were missing from the email list used for sending out announcements, and some who were supposedly on did not see the announcements: would it not be better to send the messages to the email addresses in the new directory instead? Addresses that bounced would show up immediately. Kim, wanting to be specific for the formal motion, said the directory was to include email addresses and phone numbers only (not mailing addresses). Shelly agreed that mailing addresses were above and beyond its purpose. Kim added that it was mechanically harder to include them, and Shelly agreed that anyone wanting them could always call the person and ask them for it. Shelly asked if the announcement should go out both ways: to the zdsetree list and to the individual addresses. Martin confirmed that it was no additional work to send it to the zdsetree list: it was just another single address from that point of view. The announcement could include an apology for people getting it twice.

Kim then introduced the amended version of Shelly's proposal as a motion, Fain seconded it, and it carried unanimously. Shelly said she would come up with some date in the email announcement for the response deadline.

4. ZDS FALL DHARMA FILM FESTIVAL

Dan explained that at the last meeting the Board had passed in a general sense that screening movies could be part of the fall schedule. The current motion was "For Zen Desert Sangha to present a Fall Film Festival. The films will be the second Saturday of each month, beginning in October, at 6:30 at Bob Wallin's house" (he said he would add a corollary to that in a moment) "Three films will be presented, October will be *How to Cook your Life* (with Zen chef Edward Espe Brown) (running time 90 minutes) 'Zen Master and Renowned Chef Edward Espe Brown is captured on film as he guides students through the mastery of cooking and the importance of how we treat our food. Heartwarming, insightful and often surprising.' November will be *Enlightenment Guaranteed* (a German film with English subtitles: running time 109 minutes) 'Two German tourists go to Japan after signing up, sight unseen, for a week-long retreat at a Japanese Zen monastery.' December will be *Why has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East* (running time 137 minutes) 'Physical and spiritual struggles of the Zen Buddhist master's disciple and an orphan boy are transformed into poetry through recurring motifs of fire wind and water. Ravishingly beautiful. Selected by three international film critics as one of the ten best films of all time.' It will be free, but donations will be accepted to benefit the ZDS Building Fund."

Dan would make up a nice professional-looking flier and send it to Martin in a form that could be posted to the email list. Bob had volunteered the use of his house, but Dan would eventually like to buy a DVD projector so that they could be at ZDS; Dan said he preferred this option, and others agreed: Kim mentioned parking, and Sue thought Bob's house would be cramped for anything over twelve people.

Dan agreed that Bob's was the fall-back option, which left the matter of buying a DVD player. Kim asked for the cost, and Dan said it was \$750 to \$1000 (provoking comments "Sounds like a good investment" and "You could prune a tree for

that!”). Shelly asked if there could be a fund drive for the projector: people might donate \$30 or \$40. Diana asked what we would project on, and Dan said we would also need a screen, but that could be anything (even a white sheet). So there was the motion about the film festival itself, then a corollary about buying the DVD player that could be discussed if people wanted to spend time on it. Shelly suggested that Dan obtain three quotes to present to the Board at the next meeting, for different projectors ranging from cheap and ultra-cheap to nicer, then people could consider them.

Martin asked if Dan wanted a vote on the film festival motion before proceeding, and Dan said he would want a vote at the end of the discussion. He hoped the screenings could be ongoing events: he liked the sound of the announcement for the first season and hoped there could be more, which would enhance the visibility of ZDS. Shelly pointed out that something similar had been running in Bisbee for over a year and a half. Patty wondered if the donations could be used to defray the cost of the screening, rather than going to the building fund. Dan agreed, and said that the other stopgap option was to send an email announcement asking for anyone who had a projector to rent it to ZDS. Immediately Lucia said she could get hold of one (assuming it was the kind that would project onto a large screen and could take inputs from a laptop etc.). Dan explained further that ZDS would pay the person something to cover wear and tear on the projector. Kim commented that the special fund for kitchen appliances had been a success, and something similar might work for soliciting funds for a DVD projector, rather than using the Educational Fund. Lucia said the cost of the projector was around \$700, but in response to a question from Joe about whether this had a sound system, she explained that this did not include speakers. Dan said the models he had priced that included this cost around \$1000. Sue thought it would be a good short--long term goal to set up the fund, but get started with borrowed equipment: that way the screenings could be at ZDS. Shelly thought the donations at each screening could then go directly to the fund. Dan thought that if the screenings were widely publicized, they could bring in members of other dharma groups, and Joe agreed that it was a way of raising the profile of the zendo.

Dan proposed a vote on the film festival motion as he had originally stated it, but with the location changed from Bob's house to ZDS. There was some final discussion about whether the time should also be changed. Shelly asked about Friday as a possible alternative date: Dan said he had originally suggested Saturday because it suited Bob, but this did not matter if it was to be at the zendo. Sue and Joe preferred Saturday, and Martin pointed out that if Bob's was still the emergency fall-back option it would be as well to keep that day. Joe asked if the very first screening [October 11] would also be at ZDS, and Dan said it would: he would take care of the fliers and projector arrangements. Kim seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Bob entered the room (after having given an orientation class) at exactly the point in meeting when discussion had

turned to the annual meeting and gala dinner, so was asked for an update on these. He reported that he had been in contact with Sue Scheff, and she was open for the night of October 25th; to save on the cost he was suggesting getting a couple of main dishes from her, but possibly getting side dishes, hors d'oeuvres, and a salad from other sources. This was the arrangement that had been tried at the 25th birthday party, where there were some Mexican-themed main dishes from Sue, and everything else from Tanya's Mexican Delicatessen, which Bob thought had worked well.

Bob said that we needed to get the invitations out: traditionally there had always been invitations, and now according to Kim there were about 150 people on the mailing list. Kim explained that this was after she had already culled the people with no contact since 2005 (three years), apart from a few people had contacted by email and discovered still wanted to be on the list. Bob said he would have invitations made in the same style that had been used for previous years, but would add a line that we were commemorating Pat Hawk's tenth anniversary in Tucson. Shelly asked when it was going to be mailed out, and Bob explained that it was typically a month before the event (so by the end of September). There was a suggestion to give a mailing party the following week, but that was zazen, and the week after that Bob would be out of town. Sue suggested that if Bob had prepared things in advance that would not be a problem: Kim agreed that the work could be done after the sit on September 27th. Bob was having Kinko's make the copies, Kim said he could bring them to ZDS and she would provide labels. Joe thought the Kinko's copies were quite good, and Bob agreed that they were almost as good as the engraved copies that had been tried many years ago, but at a fraction of the price. Kim thought there would not be huge price difference between getting 140 and 150 copies; Bob agreed, and said there was also a way to get matching beige envelopes, again at much lower cost than a custom-engraved version. He remembered having the envelopes hand addressed, but Kim thought that the previous year had already seen a move to pre-printed labels, and had at least one page of return addresses already printed and ready for use. Kim would also pick up the stamps before the 27th.

Shelly asked if the final decision had been made on whether to include an extra piece of paper in the envelopes along with the invitations, asking if people could update their contact information and say whether they wanted to opt out of the new membership directory. Bob was not enthusiastic about this, so it was decided not to include the extra enclosure, but rely on email messages, and messages posted at ZDS to reach people who might not have valid email contact information. Bob confirmed that he would provide the envelopes as well as the invitations, Kim agreed that she would provide the labels and stamps, and Joe said that a work crew would gather on the 27th to handle the envelope addressing and stamping. Shelly asked if an email announcement could say that it was going to happen on that day, and Martin agreed to do this. Shelly and Bob would meet early in October to discuss the food. Bob asked for a theme for the food this year: Kim suggested something different, and Shelly suggested Greek or Middle Eastern.

Bob suggested keeping the fee at \$25, which should be enough to cover expenses. Shelly said it was all right as long as we broke even, but that we should not make a loss. Kim said that the previous year had made a loss, by buying too much food. Shelly agreed that it could be scaled down: Sue Scheff always provided so much food with the entrees that there was extra, so telling her to provide for 40 when 50 were expected might be appropriate. Bob thought that fewer people had come the previous year since within the same month there had been the special birthday party for Pat (he thought we should have combined the two), then in May there had been the 25th anniversary party as the membership dinner (normally a smaller-scale affair). Perhaps too many parties that year, but 2008 would be different.

Martin reported that there was now a white folder on the table containing both a copy of the bylaws and some policy statements he has extracted from the minutes. Bob had replaced the copy of the bylaws that had gone missing from the folder in the front of the top drawer in the filing cabinet in Pat's room. Martin cautioned that it might be worth comparing the new set of copies to make sure no one had introduced surreptitious amendment.

Kim had a report that fell somewhere between old and new business: there was renewed termite activity at the top of the door in the back corridor. Kim would call Truly Nolen, and would then need someone to let them into the building to see this (she was leaving the termite tubes for them to examine). in response to a question from Joe, Kim confirmed that she would need someone to let the termite exterminator into the building. Dan had already set aside Friday morning from around 9 or 9:30 onward to work on the tree, so Kim would try arranging the visit for that time. She explained that the termite tubes were at the double doors leading in to the zendo: they seemed to be coming out of the moulding and across the top of the door. The tubes looked abandoned, but we were trying not open the doors. There was also a patch of mud at the foot of the doors, inside the zendo. Joe asked if they would use poison that would gas out the zendo, and worried about letting it air before the zazenkaï on Saturday. Kim thought they might just inject something from the outside; they had drilled into the slab before the floor went down. Diana had recent experience of having holes drilled in her walls, something injected, and the holes then plugged up.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Kim asked if there should be a Board meeting separate from the Annual Meeting. Dan suggested having a very short meeting before the Annual Meeting just to pick up any items arising from the current meeting; he wondered if they were not usually combined. Kim replied that in the past few years at

least we had had a separate Board meeting in October; she confirmed that the Annual Meeting would be on the 25th this year, the same day as the gala. Sue asked what items from the current meeting would need picked up at the next. Several people suggested the tree (estimates would be available by then), and an update on the termites.

The potential dates were the 4th, 11th, and 18th. Sue noted that the 4th was a sesshin at Picture Rocks. Kim asked when was the October peer-delivered talk, and Dan explained that he had scheduled it for the second weekend of October because of the conflict with the sesshin. But as an aside he speculated on whether the schedule should be modified for events that were not at ZDS; he would prefer to keep it to the first Saturday of the month if possible. Bob said that several people from ZDS might be attending, but Dan thought the numbers would be only three or four. Joe commented that if the speaker was attending the Picture Rocks retreat that would make things difficult! Sue asked who was speaking in October, and Dan said that this was not yet decided (Sue was suggested, but declined because she would be at Picture Rocks). Dan had some additional people in mind, all of whom had not yet had a chance to give a talk, and would be contacting them soon.

Joe directed the discussion back to finding the date of the short October Board meeting; Kim thought the 18th was the only option. Dan would be unable to attend that day, but was booked up with workshops for all the Saturdays in October. Shelly also had a conflict, but thought the meeting should proceed without her, and there were no further comments from people unable to attend on the 18th. Kim warned that there would not be a full Treasurer's report, since she would be presenting one at the Annual Meeting.

Bob gave some belated committee reports: the zendo naming committee had not yet met, but would try to do so immediately after the current Board meeting. The membership committee had been charged with reviewing the qualifications for membership as they appeared in the bylaws, and had held an impromptu meeting a couple of weeks previously, but had been hampered by the missing copies of the bylaws. The requirements on the membership forms did differ slightly from those in the bylaws. Diana asked if the PDF copies of the bylaws that Bob had distributed to the committee were of the most recent version, and he confirmed that they were. She also noted the differences, and Bob said that it would require further discussion, but that he did not know when to schedule a meeting. Dan suggested starting with email discussions; Bob said that possibly there would be something to report by October 18th.

The meeting adjourned after around one hour and two minutes.