**Nebraska Zen Center**

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

September 11, 2022

**Meeting Notification:** Notice of meeting made via email to all Directors

**Meeting Location:** Nebraska Zen Center and via Zoom video conference

**Board Members Present:**

Pam Griffin (2022) President

Fergus Hoban (2022) Vice President

Vicki Grunwald (2022) Treasurer

George Patenode (2022) Secretary

Scott Rosen (2022)

**Board Members Absent:**

Michael Pray (2022)

**Sangha Members Present:**

Daishin McCabe

Ron Semerena

The meeting was called to order by Pam Griffin, President, at 11:56 am. Attendance was taken and a quorum was present. Tom Millie resigned from the Board after the July 10, 2022 meeting and the possibility of filling his vacancy with a new Director was discussed. There was also a discussion concerning the staggering of the term length for each Director in that all current Directors were elected in the same year. It was decided to table a final decision on term periods until the Annual Sangha Meeting in 2023.

**Agenda**

The Board reviewed and approved the Minutes of the NZC Board of Directors Meeting of July 10, 2022.

Treasurer Report (8:55 – 19:00)

Vicki Grunwald, Treasurer, stated that training with Scott Rosen as backup Treasurer continues, though was delayed recently due to a known programming bug that caused the deletion of notation tag fields associated with donor transactions. Vicki was able to recover the missing tag field information and to completely restore the Treasury records. Scott’s training will continue.

Vicki gave a high overview of the current treasury status for Nebraska Zen Center (NZC). Quarter-by-quarter results show that the treasury has a surplus of approximately $530 for each quarter, except for 3Q which shows a net loss. Having expenditures exceed donations for 3Q is not unusual due to the timing of fund raising during the year. Vicki reported that at least 71% of donors have included PayPal fees with their donations. Vicki applied for credit cards and she is still waiting for their arrival and it seems the recent bank merger has delayed the timely issuing of cards. Vicki has made multiple inquiries with the new bank with little effect. Two credit cards were requested for Vicki and Pam’s use.

Vicki stated that she has received budget amounts for each committee, except for the grounds committee. Due to the Board’s use of Slack for Daishin McCabe’s employment contract the Board discovered it necessary to ratify his contract during the meeting. Vicki motioned and the Board ratified by vote the same employment contract between Nebraska Zen Center (NZC) and Daishin that was previously approved.

Communication Committee (19:00 – 38:30)

Pam presented an update of activities of the Communication Committee by stating that the potential impact of our donated social media assistance was diminished due to delays in NZC logo branding and fundraising. Due to these reasons the Board would not be able to judge its impact by year-end as anticipated. Monthly budgeting for Facebook ads and yearly budgeting for the outside social media consultant was discussed and a $5,000.00 budget was voted and approved for the Communication Committee.

Concerning the NZC branding exercise, Pam contacted a marketing company located in Lincoln that was recommended by the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM). The branding exercise would take eight weeks to develop a brand logo and narrative for NZC. Discussion ensued into whether engaging a marketing company is the right path prior to the hiring of a full-time Guiding Teacher or to use a modification of the current logo for the short term. After discussion the Board decided that the branding exercise is worthwhile to explore and for Pam to obtain bids from other marketing companies for comparison.

The membership drive that was planned for 2022 is now scheduled for the first of 2023 due to reduced volunteer support.

Building and Grounds Committee (38:31 – 40:21)

Pam stated that she discussed the condition of the wooden handicap ramp and adjacent porch with Tom Millie and that it required the stabilization of one post followed by power washing and staining. Tom recommended a group of contractors who recently inspected the ramp and porch and gave a bid of $400 for repairs, cleaning and staining. Vicki recommended that a budget be decided and approved. Using the year’s price of mulch, Vicki motioned a $2000.00 yearly budget for the Building and Ground Committee and was approved by vote.

Tech Committee (40:21 – 46:11)

Mike Pray as the Tech Committee chair was not available for the meeting but provided an emailed update for Board discussion. The Google Docs folder for the Tech Committee was

moved to a new folder located on the same page as all other committee folders. A Tech Committee yearly budget of $500 was motioned and approved by vote. The free version of Slack does not allow viewing of messages older than 90 days. The pro membership of Slack that does allow message storing would cost $70 per month. A discussion of the use of Slack by the Board followed and it was decided to keep the free version of Slack and continue to use each Board member’s personal email account as the electronic record of Board email discussions. These email discussions would then be presented in the following Board meeting for entry into the meeting minutes.

Mike’s email asked whether our YouTube videos could be made public outside on the NZC website. Daishin stated that he has dharma talks made public on YouTube. The Board needed more information from Mike concerning the YouTube status and Vicki composed and sent an email to Mike during the meeting. Mike also needed to know who owns the Zoom account for NZC and Pam stated that she did.

Membership Committee (46:11 – 46:34)

Pam will provide a list of current NZC members to Vicki for her use as Treasurer by year’s end.

Nonin Memorial Service (46:45 – 54:40)

NZC will host the memorial service for recently deceased NZC abbot and Guiding Teacher, Nonin Chowaney, on October 1, 2022. Daishin has been working with Pam, Vicki and George Patenode on the various elements of the memorial service, sutras for chanting and the NZC temple itself. Reverend Teijo Munnich, from Great Tree Zen Temple in North Carolina, has graciously accepted the role of service leader for the memorial service. Nonin’s ashes will be interred in a special spot in the backyard of NZC.

Vicki estimated that NZC will incur approximately $2,000.00 in expenses as the host temple. A request for donations will made in the annual fund raiser to help offset costs. Vicki stated that the costs are affordable in that almost $1,000.00 has been spent for Rev. Teijo’s air fare and per diem. Additional costs are waiting such as chair rental and memorial stupa. The board approved $2,000.00 by vote for Nonin’s memorial service.

NZC Expansion (~54:00)

Fergus Hoban stated that there has been no progress since the previous Board meeting concerning the proposed expansion of NZC. Fergus also reiterated that any expansion is dependent on NZC branding, the social media campaign, and that any temple expansion wouldn’t be considered unless a full-time Guiding Teacher is in residence at NZC.

Priest Search (54:41 – 1:23)

Pam emailed eight letters to various Zen centers around the US inquiring into whether there were any candidates interested in the Guiding Teacher position at NZC but with no response. Daishin helped with this task and will follow up with the head priests at these Zen centers including Chozen Bays, Shoken Weinkoph, Konjin Godwin, Ejo McMullen, Teijo Munich and Hoko Karnegis. Most of the teachers concurred independently that the Board should not rush the process, particularly given abuses of power experienced previously by the NZC Board and Sangha. An important consideration should be that a potential Guiding Teacher would be able to build membership in the Sangha.

An alternative option for a Guiding Teacher is to have the position shared between two priests. This option was also discussed, and any two teachers would have to work well together and could potentially offer complementary teaching styles. Daishin stated that a shared teaching position would help the Sangha not center so much around the figure of the teacher but on the practice of the Dharma, and that it can help to prevent abuses of power. Pam will wait for any responses from her mailing and any other suggestions on what course should be taken.

Miscellaneous (1:29 – 1:48)

Sunday morning attendance was discussed and that approximately 15 to 20 people have been in attendance in any given Sunday. Opening weekday morning service via Zoom or adding a morning meal once or twice a week was also discussed.

The training of new doans for Sunday morning service continues with George expressing his concern at the level of involvement of new trainees. Various strategies were suggested.

Pam is working with Jenny on the development of a new ethics policy for NZC based on material provided by Daishin. The combined ethics and grievance policy should be no more than six to eight pages in length, as recommended by Daishin.

Terra will lead a discussion on the Heart Sutra in October under the title of Dharma Book Club. Attendance will be in person only and not offered via Zoom. A short period of zazen will be offered prior to the discussion. Vicki questioned not offering via Zoom to increase both attendance and discussion payment totals. Pam will follow up with Terra concerning this question.

A periodic review of Daishin’s performance with the Board is required as stated in his service contract and Pam will follow up with Daishin on potential availability.

The meeting ended at 1:45 pm.

George Patenode, Secretary

Nebraska Zen Center Board of Directors, September 11, 2022