

Nebraska Zen Center

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

August 13, 2023

Meeting Notification: Notice of meeting made via email.

Meeting Location: Nebraska Zen Center and Via Zoom video conference.

Board Members Present:

Pam Griffin	President (ending 2024)
Fergus Hoban	Vice President (ending 2024)
Vicki Grunwald	Treasurer (ending 2025)
George Patenode	Secretary (ending 2025)
Scott Rosen	(ending 2025)
Michael Pray	(ending 2026)
Karalee Picard	(ending 2026)
Daishin McCabe	(non-voting member)

Board Members Absent:

None

Sangha Members Present:

None

The meeting was called to order by Pam Griffin, President, at 11:37 am. Attendance was taken and a quorum was present. Board member Eric Thrasher resigned from the Board prior to the meeting.

Agenda

The Board reviewed and approved the Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting of May 16, 2023.

Treasurer Report

Vicki Grunwald, Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report for Nebraska Zen Center (NZC) for discussion. The Report also included the balances for the PayPal and bank accounts as of July 31, 2023, and outstanding balances for both NZC credit cards as of July 23, 2023. Vicki notified the Board that she added two new rows to the Report that describe donated class/sesshin fees and "large donor" membership donations. The Donated Class/Sesshin income figures will include fees paid for participants who later do not attend and direct that their fees be used as a donation to NZC. A "large donor" is defined by Vicki as anyone who donates \$1,000.00 or more for any single donation or \$150.00 or more monthly (exclusive of PayPal fees). The

Membership (Large Donor) row of the Report will help track an important source of donations. Vicki stated that she recently met with Pam and Terra Hall concerning NZC finances, and at that meeting, Vicki recommended that no more than \$10,000.00 in debt be carried by NZC for any given year. It was also decided at the meeting to approach large donors for commitments for any deficit above \$10,000.00. The current projected Net Budget deficit is \$10,897.10.

Vicki notified the Board that she has been unsuccessful in training anyone as a substitute emergency Treasurer due to time commitments for training. She confirmed, though, that strong treasury procedures exist in addition to two individuals other than herself who have some treasury training, and two Board members who have read-only access to MoneyMinder. After discussion, the Board found it acceptable that the level of training for Treasurer succession was appropriate for current needs.

Vicki also gave a presentation of the Treasury exception log that included notice that the previous \$1,000.00 budget for Rev. Nonin Chowaney's grave marker was reduced to \$400.00 due to the final cost of the marker, and of the recently paid \$1,000.000 fee to Omaha Together One Community (OTOC). Membership in OTOC will help NZC in training for organizational building and networking. After discussion, the Board both voted all in favor and ratified the previous email vote of the \$1,000.00 fee to OTOC for 12 months, starting June 2023. The benefits of OTOC membership will be appraised by the Board during the year for consideration of membership renewal for June 2024. The Board also voted all in favor of the final fee payment of \$7,500.00 to the marketing company Filament for branding services.

A concern by Vicki was discussed by the Board of the low earnings paid to the NZC savings accounts and how to improve. The Board voted all in favor of Vicki exploring alternative investments with Edward Jones and to report her findings to the Board prior to the next meeting.

Communications Committee

Pam presented the Communication Committee report for the Board. She confirmed that Matt Huettner ended his membership with the Committee and was replaced by new Committee member, Jenny Schima. Pam stated that the new logo for NZC is now incorporated into the NZC website and newsletter, with the website undergoing content revisions that include the recommendations from Fergus Hoban for onboarding new members and information about new member mentoring.

Technology Committee

Mike Pray, Director and Chair of the Technology Committee, confirmed that Eric Thrasher is no longer on the Committee due to his Board resignation. Mike is now the only member of the Committee. Mike stated that he may not need any help on the Committee in that the NZC site is easily maintained, though the YouTube videos of services and dharma talks are time consuming to edit. Mike recently added a plug-in to the NZC site that tracks visitors to the site and what pages are being read.

Building and Grounds Committee

Mike Pray, Director and Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee, met recently with the contractor that previously installed support jacks in the NZC building and confirmed that additional measurements were made of the repair and no additional structural settling was discovered. The general condition of the NZC building, HVAC and sewage systems was discussed by the Board. Mike also mentioned that a new battery pack should be purchased for the donated electric mower.

Membership Committee

Pam stated that the goal for the next membership drive is 10 new members who each will commit to donating \$50.00 per month. Welcoming packets are being created for recently joined members that will include a sutra book used for chanting at services. Pam also stated that a NZC member appreciation event is tentatively planned for Saturday, September 30th that will include catered vegetarian food and live music. The food, catering and music will cost NZC approximately \$600.00. After discussion by the Board, all voted in favor of the \$600.00 expense.

Guiding Teacher Search

The Guiding Teacher search continues with Pam and Terra Hall sending letters and emails to member teachers of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZBA) and to teacher training centers. Pam stated that two potential candidates for a temporary teacher residency at NZC may become available early in 2024. The Board discussed an appropriate review process for potential candidates and recommended an informal interview process that would include a few select Board members and Rev. Daishin McCabe.

Fundraising/grants

Karalee Picard offered to start a grant search and discussed how a grant process would require a historical narrative of NZC and at least three years of treasury finance history. Karalee stated that she found two potential foundations that grant funds to Buddhist organizations, and potentially a third. Karalee will create a list of potential organizations with due dates for grant application for the Board's review. The Board also discussed the creation of a building fund, with a separate Treasury donation line, for such projects as foundation repair or the replacement of the upstairs windows. Daishin also mentioned the creation of a Guiding Teacher fund for salary and potential retirement plan funding. Fergus mentioned that a home equity loan is another option used for immediate repair needs.

Services, Events and Attendance

Scott Rosen proposed a one-day yoga class at NZC as a fund raising event. He has made contact with a professional yoga instructor who would charge NZC a one-time fee (\$40-\$60) with NZC keeping yoga class fees in excess of this amount. This matter was discussed by the Board, including the potential of Scott developing a yin restorative yoga program. Scott will propose a plan in six to eight weeks for Board review in how NZC could be used as a yoga space.

Outreach

Pam reported that Open Omaha, a city-wide open house sponsored by Omaha by Design held during the weekend of August 5-6, 2023, was very successful with 125 people who toured the NZC site for the first time. Of these 125 visitors, three people signed up for the Introduction to Zen class at NZC.

Miscellaneous

As was discussed during the May 16, 2023 Board meeting, Terra's personal friend who works as a consultant for non-profit financial, regulatory and marketing matters is still available and Terra will coordinate with Fergus, Mike and Pam on setting a date for a consultation via Zoom. Pam and Karalee will create summarized training materials for Board members based on the NAM training that Karalee recently completed.

Notice of the next Board of Directors meeting was scheduled for Noon on Sunday, November 5, 2023 at NZC and via Zoom video conference.

The meeting adjourned at 1:18 pm.

Attachments for the Record

Agenda

Communications Committee Report

George Patenode

Secretary, Nebraska Zen Center Board of Directors

August 13, 2023

AGENDA
Nebraska Zen Center
Board of Directors Meeting

August 13, 2023

1. Meeting to order; attendance; approval of prior minutes
2. Financial Report – Vicki
3. Committee reports
 - a. Communications – Pam/Terra
 - b. Technology Committee – Mike
 - c. Building and grounds – Mike
4. Membership (Pam/Terra):
 - a. Membership drive; goals
 - b. Welcome packets
 - c. Member/new attendee support and onboarding
5. Priest search/guest teacher visits – Pam, Terra
 - a. Priest residency program
 - b. Koji practice week; Bussho in October
6. Fundraising/grants
7. Services, events and attendance – George, Pam, Daishin
 - a. Updated 2023 schedule
 - b. Attendance/service participation
8. Outreach – Vicki et al
 - a. Open Omaha – weekends numbers; brochure.
 - b. OTOC - Vicki
 - c. Yoga - Scott
 - d. Mindfulness outreach - Sharmila
9. Miscellaneous:
 - a. Nonprofit consulting
 - b. NAM and board training

Communications Report

August 13, 2023

1. Committee member Matt Huettner stepped down from the committee due to new baby arrival and other responsibilities. Has been a real value asset from the initial re-start of NZC in fall 2021. Remaining members – Terra, Pam and Jenny

Since Matt was a member of the IT committee, we need to establish a link between CC and the IT committee (which is now only Mike P.)

2. New logo, branding and colors have been incorporated into the website, social media and newsletter.
3. We are working on a general overhaul of the layout and look of the website – have drafted materials reflecting steps for getting started in practice, and guidelines for continuing involvement via service positions, sesshin, volunteering, etc.
4. Created 50 small sutra books to send out with member packets.
5. Created 50 brochures with general NZC information for use in Open Omaha and beyond.
6. Copy services problems – looking for new copy place; Terra knows a “secret Kinkos”
7. Messaging for the Membership drive (emails) are drafted and ready to go.
8. Terra has been “boosting” certain events and messages on Facebook and Insta
9. Benji offered to work with Google Ads to boost our visibility
10. Pam checking on cost of local NPR ads