**Nebraska Zen Center**

Minutes of the Annual Sangha Meeting

and Board of Directors Meeting

February 18, 2024

**Meeting Notification:** Notice of meeting made via Nebraska Zen Center (NZC) website, newsletter and email.

**Meeting Location:** Nebraska Zen Center

**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)

Mike Pray (ending 2026)

Karalee Picard (ending 2026)

Daishin McCabe (non-voting member)

**Board Members Absent:**

None

**Sangha Members Present:**

Terra Hall

Diane Jorgensen

Juniper Deruiter

Taizan Alford (resident priest in training)

**Annual Sangha Meeting**

The annual meeting of the Sangha of Nebraska Zen Center (NZC) started at 11:55 am. Pam Griffin, President, mentioned that the NZC annual report of activities for 2023 is located on the NZC website and she invited all members to review. Pam also mentioned that the Board should continue to search for new Board members including potential members outside of NZC that have some affiliation with it.

The Director terms for Pam Griffin and Fergus Hoban have now ended. The Voting Members present nominated both Pam and Fergus as Directors and all voted in favor for their retention. The Director positions for both Pam and Fergus are each three-year terms.

Pam and George Patenode were both nominated for the Board President position with the majority of Directors voting for Pam to remain as President. George was nominated as Board Vice President and was elected by majority vote. Vicki Grunwald was nominated for Board Treasurer and all Directors voted in favor to retain Vicki as Treasurer. Mike Pray was nominated as Board Secretary and was elected by majority vote. Each term of office will start at the end of this annual Sangha meeting of 2024.

Daishin McCabe, who joined NZC as an interim priest in 2022, will continue to attend Board meetings in his capacity as a non-voting member.

**Voting Members**

The current list of NZC Voting Members at the time of the annual Sangha meeting were as follows:

Yupin (Joyce) Chao Jose Correa Benji Frith Ann Gentle

Pam Griffin Vicki Grunwald Terra Hall Max Hjermstad

Fergus Hoban Matt Huettner Diane Jorgensen Jon Kayne

Ken Krise Alisa McDuffee Tom Millie Jeff Moore

Sarah Neppl Jason Padilla George Patenode Karalee Picard

Mike Pray Scott Rosen Jaime Sauceda Jenny Schima

Roger Schmeits Tom Schulte Ron Semerena Burke Smith

Deb Spicka Bryan Trogdon Summer Wind Carrie Wisniewski

**Board of Directors Meeting**

The Board of Directors meeting was held immediately following the annual Sangha meeting with the same Board Officers and Directors in continued attendance from the annual Sangha meeting.

Meeting was called to order by Pam Griffin, President, at 12:13 pm. Attendance was taken and a quorum was present.

**Agenda**

The Board reviewed and approved the Minutes of the NZC Board of Directors Meeting of November 5, 2023.

The Board generally discussed potential models of NZC governance and what roles a future Guiding Teacher, the NZC Board, and an executive “decision maker” and/or administrative staff would play in the strategic and day-to-day operations of NZC. Pam also reminded the Board of the ongoing mission-vision-values and strategic planning needs as lead by Board Director, Karalee Picard. New training videos for Board governance were also discussed.

Treasurer ReportVicki Grunwald, Treasurer, notified the Board that she has started training Sangha member Carrie Wisniewski as a backup Treasurer. Pam recommended that Vicki create a new finance committee and include Carrie and Scott. Vicki stated that the fundraising for 2023 yielded a record total amount of over $27,000 that included $13,000 from a single donor. After expenses, though, NZC ended 2023 with a deficit of over $2600.

Vicki discussed various sources of expenses that included the administrative contractor position that represents 22% of total expenses. There were no objection to having no more than two paid, visiting teachers and no more than two paid dharma talks by teachers (other than Daishin McCabe) for 2024, all budgeted for $1,500.00. The Board also decided a $1,200.00 budget for 2024 for the temporary priest in training position. A $500.00 budget for grant writing expenses for 2024 was proposed but not approved pending a mission-vision-values meeting set for a later date. The “Treasurer for Nebraska Zen Center Roles and Responsibilities” document as proposed by Vicki was approved by the Board pending recommendations by Karalee.

Technology CommitteeMike Pray, Director and Chair of the Technology Committee, stated that he is still in control of the content for the NZC website and dharma talks to the YouTube Channel. Roger Schmeits is still providing help to the Committee and that a third committee member is not currently needed.

Building and Grounds

Mike Pray, Director and Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee, stated that a structural engineer recently performed the assessment of the NZC building with provided a report. The overall assessment of the building is good. The engineer confirmed that the settling of the center wall on the first floor most likely occurred during the first ten years after initial construction and that the additional supports for the center wall added recently are sufficient mitigation. Mike stated that he has plans in 2024 to improve the drainage in the backyard. He and Ken Krise were successful in rebuilding the access ramp to the NZC building, and the upstairs bathroom sink will be repaired soon. The backyard Catalpa tree was also discussed. A representative from Hughes Tree Service looked at the catalpa and said it's healthy and still growing, despite multiple lightning strikes. He recommended we close up the hole at the bottom to keep creatures from hollowing it out any further.

Communications Committee

Terra Hall, Sangha member, stated that the NZC click rate has increased and she is searching for a way to convert clicks to donations. She also has plans to make the NZC website more readable, and that the NZC social media presence on Facebook has held steady with an increase on Instagram. The Committee’s use of a follow-up communication to attendees of the intro to Zen classes will continue. This communication helps to determine how each attendee discovered NZC. Communications Committee Report was provided to the Board prior to the meeting and is included as an attachment to these minutes.

Committee Formation

Pam proposed the creation of a new ethics committee and suggested several Board and Sangha members who could participate. The ethics committee will investigate any formal complaint of harmful conduct using the NZC Code of Ethics as a resource. Daishin, Fergus Hoban and Diane Jorgensen volunteered to sit on the ethics committee. A conflict of interest policy for NZC may also be developed by the ethics committee.

Pam also suggested the creation of a new fundraising committee with Pam and Karalee as members. The name and purpose of the fundraising committee could develop from general fundraising for NZC to grant development as needed. Current fundraising includes the recent grant proposal related to the cataloging of calligraphy held by NZC with potential grants for the resident priest program. Daishin also recommended the creation of a priest fund for future priests.

Attendance

Vicki provided attendance figures for Sunday Open Zen (SOZ) services. For 2023, average attendance was 15.4 persons without the inclusion of Zen Fields members; 22.8 including Zen Fields members. For 2024 (YTD), the figures were 16.6 and 24.8, respectively, and represents a 33% increase. Vicki concluded that Daishin as interim Guiding Teacher was the contributing factor in the increase of SOZ attendance.

Miscellaneous

Daishin mentioned that a priest from the Soto Shu (Soto Zen Administration in Japan) will visit NZC later in 2024 as part of a routine visit and will offer a dharma talk. Daishin also mentioned another potential source for board governance training and will provide additional details later.

Notice of the following Board of Directors meeting was scheduled for Noon on Sunday, May 5, 2024 at NZC and via Zoom video conference.

The board decided to postpone voting on a budget until a future meeting

The meeting adjourned at 1:44 pm.

**Attachments for the Record**

Agenda

Communications Committee report

Mike Pray

Secretary, Nebraska Zen Center Board of Directors

February 18, 2024