

Nebraska Zen Center

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting May 5 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 2027)
George Patenode	Vice-President (ending 2025)
Vicki Grunwald	Treasurer (ending 2025)
Mike Pray	Secretary (ending 2026)
Fergus Hoban	(ending 2027)
Karalee Picard	(ending 2026)
Daishin McCabe	(non-voting member)

Board Members Absent:

Scott Rosen (ending 2025)

Sangha Members Present

Taizan Alford (resident priest in training)
Terra Hall
Diane Jorgensen

Board of Directors Meeting

Meeting was called to order by Pam Griffin, President, at 12:00 noon. Attendance was taken and a quorum was present.

Agenda

The Board reviewed and approved the Minutes of the NZC Board of Directors Meeting of February 18, 2024

Treasurer's Report (12:02)

Vicki Grunwald, Treasurer presented the financial report, including exception log items. The board discussed issues with the Venmo charity account, which is linked to our Money Minder account. Vicki reported that Venmo charity accounts must be set up in someone's personal account and these charity accounts in Venmo are not visible in Money Minder (the application the Treasurer uses to monitor payments). Vicki brought this up as a risk to the board.

A few changes were made to the structure of fundraising - instead of just saying "large donors in fall and spring" we now have a fall and spring categories with subdivisions by donor size. When structure changes like this are made, Vicki goes backwards to make the changes to historical reports so that year-over-year reports can be compared.

Vicki is benchmarking historical financial data in order to compare what salient efforts are making a difference in membership and donations. Vicki is preparing for an audit and has an auditor in mind. Vicki noted that historical treasury information is for benchmarking purposes only, and not for P&L (Profit & Loss) perspective.

Finance committee meetings should be quarterly, and Vicki will schedule the next one soon. The Q1 requirements are satisfied by the training sessions with Carrie Wisniewski, who is assisting Vicki in Treasury.

Communications Committee Report (12:12)

Pam Griffin, Board President gave a brief report about the activities of the communications committee, including preparing for spring fundraising drive, introducing Shinkyu (the upcoming resident priest-in-training), thinking about a summer survey to unengaged people, while focusing gradually on website updates.

Technology Committee Report (12:13)

Mike Pray, Committee chair of the Technology Committee, gave a report discussing the activities of the technology committee. Current committee members: Mike Pray (Board member and committee chair, Corson Androski, Roger Schmeits)

Added Venmo to WP Give as a payment option.

Added WooCommerce (industry standard WordPress plugin for selling products) to the website. Enabled PayPal/CC/Venmo payments. The intention is to use this to sell calligraphy and possibly other merchandise.

Added Corson Androski to the IT Committee.

Taizan discussed email where we should route incoming emails, we agreed that priest@nebraskazencenter.org should be routed to whoever the priest is, and resident.priest@nebraskazencenter.org should go to the resident priest

Building and Grounds Committee Report (12:18)

Mike Pray, Committee chair of the Building & Grounds Committee, gave a report discussing the activities of the building and grounds committee (current member is Mike Pray):

Work day was April 20. Next one is June 1. 5 people attended the last one. Mike closed up hollow in the catalpa tree and shored up the compost pile. Jenny cleaned the kitchen; Jason and Monnie raked leaves while Pam worked in the garden.

Mike is handing off mowing duty. Pam and/or Terra are purchasing a battery for the electric mower in the garage. This will probably fall to the resident priest-in-training.

Mike and Ken replaced the upstairs sink earlier in the quarter.

Report on services and practice (12:21)

Pam presented an idea to have a regular board meeting report regarding whatever the priest wants to discuss. Daishin then gave a report expressing gratitude for the level of organization within the board, and to Taizan for efforts and volunteering, as to George for Doan and services given that he has spent more time with family recently.

George, Daishin, and Taizan discussed how service and forms are going and they believe it is satisfactory. There is a shared Google document where they are documenting proposed forms and ritual. Daishin indicated this is a starting point based on Sotoshu forms, which can be changed based on sangha input and adapted to NZC over time. George will send the board members the link to the Google doc so they can review and comment; it should not be distributed further at this time.

AD Report (12:31)

Terra Hall, sangha member and Administrative Director, gave a report discussing the activity of the Administrative Director.

Terra discussed how auctions are the current trend for fundraising, and how NZC is preparing an auction involving calligraphy and other donated items. The next step is to spread the news, invite people to share the information on social media, send dedicated emails and communications. Taizan and Daishin offered to send an email to an association of Soto Zen Buddhists.

Pam described that there are a lot of items for auction, including miscellaneous items of low- to high-value, including memberships to museums, pottery, season tickets to the Creighton Theater.

A platform called GiveButter will be used to administer the auction.

Pam indicated that we reached out for calligraphy appraisals which were not highly favorable regarding Narasaki's collection. There is some more work for Daishin to help us with identifying the artists and content of the calligraphy. Two pieces of Narasaki calligraphy will be offered, ten of Nonin's smaller works and 6 larger ones will be offered for auction.

Terra indicated that we are still waiting to hear back about the Ashoka grant around June 15, and other grants are in the hopper. She has learned that the grants take time to write and pursue. It is difficult to focus on these with the time Terra has. Vicki asked about the balance of doing work for the grants. Terra writes the grants, Jenny edits, Pam and Karalee Picard review, and Karalee submits the grant. Vicki asked if the Trello board is working for the group, which we have not used much.

Karalee offered to donate a few hours of career coaching and business consulting as an auction item.

Terra met with Filmstreams to partner with the movie *Walk With Me*, about Thich Nhat Han. NZC will offer guided meditation during screenings of the movie. Daishin asked how the community collaboration came about. Terra explained that it's up to the non-profit organization to come up with a film and activities. NZC had tried previously and were not accepted until today. Filmstreams is a well-connected and beloved local non-profit institution and Terra hopes that this will expand our organization's visibility within Omaha. Other collaborators for the screening include the Honey Locust Sangha, the Vietnamese Buddhist temple, and likely the Mindfulness Outreach Initiative.

Shinkyu is coming the first week of June, with a 2 week overlap with Taizan before Taizan departs. We are planning a going-away party for Taizan.

Terra expressed the organization's need for more volunteers. The spring auction fundraiser and all the other things we do call for more volunteers.

Pam expressed the need for teachers to teach the importance of work practice. Daishin's thought is that work practice should be integrated into any retreat longer than three hours, and suggested that work practice could be on the same day as Open Zen to take advantage of attendance. Mike suggested that work practice be done instead of Open Zen, or in addition to a brief meditation period.

Pam indicated that we applied for Open Omaha again this year, but we were denied. The reason given was that Open Omaha wants to centralize around certain neighborhoods and there were not enough other venues in our area.

NZC Roles and Responsibilities (12:51)

Pam Griffin, Board President, discussed the attached "PJG Roles" document, which is a description of the roles and responsibilities that she currently undertakes. The board undertook the question of if the NZC should appoint an Ino position. Taizan indicated that the NZC might be too small for a dedicated Ino position, instead looking at giving more of that work to the resident priest or priest-in-training..

Pam described how Taizan has stepped into a lot of the responsibilities. Taizan agreed that he can take more of the roles and responsibilities. Daishin mentioned that Shinkyu, or anyone in his position, should be prepared to take on the responsibilities for the role of Ino. Shinkyu does not have as much experience, but Daishin is prepared to teach him and train him. Daishin expressed that this kind of work is part of the training. Terra expressed that Pam and Terra will still be needed to help Shinkyu as "boots on the ground". Taizan will be useful in the first two weeks of Shinkyu's tenure to help train.

Pam discussed the problematic volunteer situation (lack of enough engaged members and volunteers). Pam requested that the board members can take a role in approaching sangha members and visitors to get them involved in more volunteering. Pam expressed the need for a membership committee, and how more volunteers will be useful for this.

Fergus Hoban (Board member) discussed the practice of using a Kanban board (e.g., Trello) and suggested using a physical whiteboard and sticky notes for volunteer work which generated some discussion and agreement to create such a kanban board to manage volunteer work. He agreed to take the lead on this item.

Board Action (1:04 pm)

Pam discussed certain actions that were taken without a meeting, which is valid according to our bylaws. Two items: "Administrative Director position" and the 2024 Budget were ratified via email. The vote by email was March 22nd: for each item, five votes in favor and one abstention.

Pam discussed the Conflict of Interest Policy and requested the board's input for which committee might own the policy, and suggested the ethics committee. Fergus, Daishin, and Diane Jorgensen in the Ethics committee offered to own the work regarding conflicts of interest as described in the Conflict of Interest Policy. Pam requested that they go ahead and distribute and collect the annual conflict of interest statements from "key players" as defined in the policy, so those are on record.

At 1:09, the Board approved the Conflict of Interest Policy and that it be managed by the Ethics Committee, which is Fergus Hoban (Board member), Daishin McCabe (Guiding Teacher and non-voting member) and Diane Jorgensen (Sangha member). The motion passed unanimously with six votes.

Pam indicated that all board members have completed the NAM board training.

Karalee discussed the board visioning exercise accomplished earlier in the quarter during a special March meeting. Karalee summarized the output of the NZC Visioning document attached. A summary of the goals from the workshop:

- goal for fundraising, including fundraisers, auctions, and grant writing
- goal to maintain the physical building
- goal to manage staffing (including administrator and paid positions)
- goal to grow the membership

Daishin indicated Doshin Johnson, currently interim priest at Cedar Rapids, may be interested in a priest or resident position with NZC after her 6-month tenure at Cedar Rapids.

Miscellaneous Item (1:21)

Pam said that the Secretary of State information needs to be updated. Vicki offered to do this.

Pam said that the NAM training emphasized the need to file a Federal Form 990, which we have not filed. Both Pam and Vicki confirmed federal law exempts NZC from the filing as a church. Pam asked if there are other reasons to do this anyway. Vicki is concerned that if we file a Form 990, that might trigger some unwelcome scrutiny. Karalee indicated that the lack of a Form 990 will not hinder grant writing efforts. Daishin said that in the state of Iowa, a Federal Form 990 is not required for Zen Fields but there is a 2-year communication required. Vicki indicated that she has been on top of this for NZC under Nebraska law.

Next meeting date is Aug 18 2024.

Next annual meeting date is Feb 16 2025.

Pam asked for any other items to discuss. Vicki mentioned that in Japan she met Gyokei Yokoyama Sensei, who currently serves the Sozenji Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles. He will be visiting NZC in the fall

of 2024 as a representative of Sotoshu, the Japan headquarters of the Soto School. This is part of a Sotoshu initiative to schedule regular visits to Soto temples in the U.S. Vicki welcomed him to stay at NZC during his visit. Pam asked Daishin for suggestions on events and activities to schedule during this visit.

The meeting adjourned at 1:27 pm.

Attachments for the Record

Agenda

Communications Committee report

AD Report

Proposed Bylaws Change Article 7

PJG Roles

March Vote Ratification

Conflict of Interest Policy

NZC Visioning March 2024

Mike Pray

Secretary, Nebraska Zen Center Board of Directors

May 5 2024