Nebraska Zen Center
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
June 14, 2026

Meeting Notification
Notice of meeting was provided at the last board meeting and via email.

Meeting Location
Nebraska Zen Center

Board Members Present
Benji Frith, President (ending 2028)
Pam Griffin, Secretary (ending 2027)
Jon Bakehouse, Director (ending 2029)
Diane Jorgensen, Director (ending 2029)
Matt Hawkins, Director (ending 2027)
Yupin (aka Joyce) Chao, Treasurer (ending 2029)

Board Members Absent
Sarah Neppl, Vice President (ending 2028)

Sangha Members Present
Brian Shinkyu Cote, resident priest in training
George Patenode, Ino
Ileana Monarrez
Archie Sayre
Sam Sowl

Board Meeting
The board meeting was called to order by the President at 12:30 pm, and opened with a minute of silent reflection. Attendance was as indicated above; a quorum was present. A motion passed unanimously to approve the previous Board Meeting minutes. Pam noted the website governance page has been updated with recent meeting minutes and current Ethics and Conflict of Interest policies.

Benji reviewed the action items from the last meeting:

- The Walnut Hill block party: canceled due to rain, re-scheduled for August 8
- Program schedule for Communications Committee: George and Daishin updated the committee on the 2026 program schedule; some open dates around Shinkyu's shuso should be set soon. Related to that, Diane noted the lay teachers group met recently and some lay talks may be added into the schedule. Diane will take responsibility for reporting results of those meetings to the group.
- Lenz Foundation grant: Joyce can apply the Lenz Foundation grant money to Shinkyu residency pay. She asked the board to approve application of it to Shinkyu's stipend; on motion and second, the board so approved.
- Joyce updated the annual budget as requested; it does not include the projected building and grounds projects.

Treasury Report

Joyce reported that, as of the end of May, the back account balances are healthy, with total income year to date of $23,384 and expenses of $17,333, leaving a positive balance of $6,050. $2,500 of that is designated as matching funds for the Building and Grounds campaign, leaving a free balance of $3,500. She raised a concern about direction from the board to provide a parting monetary gift to Carol, as opposed to the Board's prior direction regarding the ending date for her stipend. Board members described it as a one-off based on a late suggestion from Daishin. There was some confusion about the actual amount of cash paid, and the board concluded additional cash paid was a gift from an individual in the sangha. Upon motion and second, the board approved reimbursement to Archie of $500 cash given to Carol, with the other cash gift separate from NZC accounts.

The board then addressed major building and grounds projects that may arise in the three to five-year range. Jon indicated the amount designated for building and grounds in the current annual budget is fine for now. We are still collecting information about the major projects which are the subject of the current fundraising campaign, so they're not reflected in the budget at this time.

Finally, Joyce requested that the board find a replacement for her as Treasurer, as it is more time-consuming than she can commit to. Archie knows some accountants he can talk to; Pam will contact Nonprofit Association of the Midlands to see if they offer accounting services or have recommendations; Diane has a friend who may be willing to provide a free consult. Joyce noted that regardless of accounting assistance, someone still needs to serve as Treasurer and be responsible to the board. She suggested that the priority should be to find someone internal to do the work, so that outside help might not be needed. An internal search could be initiated through the website, newsletter or other means, to see if anyone has experience and wants to volunteer. It may raise an issue whether the Treasurer needs to be on the board.

On motion and second, the board voted to accept the Treasury report

Fundraising Committee

Pam referred to the report she provided prior to the meeting, and offered a couple notes on that. The current fundraiser has launched with the first message distributed by email. Our website has a home page message and a separate landing page linking to Zeffy for donations. The Zeffy site, including peer-to-peer functions, is ready to go. Archie and Matt are organizing the Heart Sutra marathon for Saturday July 4, and are setting up a team page on Zeffy.

NZC has recently received donations of many very nice items, so depending on the results of this campaign and the board's direction, we could consider an auction as a fall fundraiser.

On motion and second, the board accepted the fundraising report.

Building & Grounds Committee

Jon gave a report for this committee. NZC's insurer, Church Mutual, conducted an inspection and has provided a list of tasks they would like us to complete. We will be getting estimates for completion of these items. One item is an electrical inspection, which would cost up to $750. Board members suggested some electricians, including a former sangha member who did electrical work for the previous building renovation.

On motion and second, the report was accepted.

Sangha Committee

Benji reported for the Sangha Committee. The committee met and went over the open forum and survey results. Diane can send out a summary of conclusions from the forum.

The committee has created a membership database, based on a review of recent Paypal transactions. Joyce said Money Minder provides the most accurate member list, as it includes both Paypal and check contributors as well as volunteer-time members. The committee would like to start sending out a quarterly newsletter just to members; Benji will draft the content and send it to Communications Committee to edit and distribute to members. Finally, the committee suggested to George it would be nice to have a greeter for SOZ, and George agreed to add a greeter to his service assignments. Shinkyu agreed to set up coffee and tea water before SOZ.

The committee would like to send out another survey. Benji asked each of the board members if they would come up with two questions they would like to ask the sangha. The board also discussed the usefulness of keeping attendance and participation data; we do have records of all program registrations over the last three years, in the document archive.

On motion and second, the board accepted the committee report.

Communications Committee

Pam summarized the committee report, distributed to the board prior to the meeting. The committee has been focusing largely on fundraising messaging, including content for various Zeffy sites, newsletters and separate fundraising email messages, as well as postcards to mail. Recent updates have been made to the governance page on the website, as well as priest residency information. Sam has been very helpful with IT matters regarding the website and the Zeffy platform, and George and Daishin have provided program information for the rest of 2026, although we're awaiting specific dates for Shinkyu's shuso ceremonies.

On motion and second, the board accepted the Communications Committee report.

IT Committee

Diane gave a summary of the more detailed report sent out to board members prior to the meeting. Sam Sowl has been a wonderful addition to this committee, and has been working with a number of committees to address technical issues. The registration form for sesshins has been updated to be more user-friendly. Diane requested that George and the priests review all the form questions and determine what should be required for registration. The carding issues on Paypal have been resolved; Joyce pointed out that Paypal charges us to resolve them. Diane acknowledged Ileana for updating the membership page on the website; the membership application will be updated to include email, address, name and phone. Sam is working with Ileana on updating or fixing a number of forms on the website that need updating, including the forms for merchandise such as t-shirts.

Sam wrote up the pros and cons of Paypal versus Zeffy as a payment platform. The board requested that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting so extended discussion is possible. Diane also requested that all committees and board members review systems and functions that they use or are familiar with and ensure that we have backup for administrator rights on everything, so we can be "bus-proof."

On motion and second, the board accepted the committee report.

Ethics Committee

Diane requested board review of the list of people who should get an email to agree to the confidentiality obligations of Section C2C of the revised Ethics Policy. The board members reviewed and made suggestions.

On motion and second, the board accepted the committee report.

Old Business

Benji requested input from Shinkyu regarding his status or any other matters. Pam suggested the board get a regular priest report at each meeting. Shinkyu agreed to provide one.

Benji will contact Karalee and find out what dates work for her for the next strategic planning session.

New Business

Matt reported on the Heart Sutra marathon he and Archie have planned as a booster to the current fundraising effort. It's scheduled for July 4th, starting at 8am. Sam will provide food for participants, so people can chant and eat in shifts. Shinkyu and George will work on liturgy for it.

Shinkyu mentioned a inquiry from the locals who host the Tibetan monks from India, if NZC might be able to house them for a week-long visit. Shinkyu does not mind, but needs to confirm dates for his shuso ceremony. Archie mentioned he has a vacant trailer they would be welcome to stay in.

Benji asked for input from attending sangha members. Ileana asked for information about the Zeffy vs. Paypal pros and cons, and Diane will send that to her.

The next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, July 12, after Sunday Open Zen. Shinkyu offered a dedication, and the meeting was adjourned at 2 pm.

Attachments for the Record
Agenda
Committee Reports: Treasury, Fundraising, Communications, IT

Secretary, Nebraska Zen Center Board of Directors
6/22/26