

## Notes from the SnowFlower Sangha Steering Council Meeting April 21, 2010

**Present:** Karuna, Cheri, Suzanne, Walt, Savitri, Efrat – **Absent:** Chuck, Karen, Carol. **Notes by Savitri in Carol's absence.**

### **1.) Brief sit, check in, intention setting, additions to agenda and updates from task list.**

**Suzanne** has connected with Mary Michal about the L&U envelopes; they have been updated at both Tuesdays and Fridays.

**Karen** has checked in with Trinity about the rent – confirmed the amount for the year and it hasn't gone up.

**Karuna** did update the current WI sangha listing but does not know whether L&U packets have been sent out.

**Carol** took comments back to the Caretaking Council and if she talked with Jane about her activity (reference previous meetings notes for the context of this statement....).

**Karuna** says books were sent to Columbia and Burke prisons but not yet to Jackson and Thompson— she will work on that.

**Cheri** reported that the current status of the shortened mindfulness trainings is still unknown. She learned more about the history of the current version while in D.C. recently. She will continue working on this and report back.

**Walt** has discussed with David Haskin the STC suggestions to improve the retreat and David had no issue with anything that was brought up. Action will be taken on all items for the next retreat. This year's retreat will be Oct.8, 9 and 10, 2010 and next year it will be two weeks later, Oct. 21, 22 and 23, 2011.

### **2.) Financial Report for 4/21/2010 Steering Council Meeting Submitted by Treasurer, Karen Plum** Budget Update 4/21/10

Operations	4/21/10	
Projected Revenue	Actual expense to date	
1. Weekly donations - Friends	\$3000	\$1127.18
2. Weekly donations - Trinity	\$1500	\$193
Total projected revenue	\$4500	

Projected Expenses		
1. Insurance	\$252	\$252
2. Library	\$500	
3. Printing/Reproduction	\$150	
4. Postage	\$50	
5. Miscellaneous	\$98	
6. Rent - Friends	\$1560	\$770
7. Rent - Trinity	\$1040	\$670
Total projected expenses	\$3650	
Proposed money for Projects	\$850 - \$425 for each project	\$159
Total projected expenses	\$4500	

Additional money paid out:

\$1125 - Unified Buddhist Church per formula from bus mtg

\$676 - UBC from 2009 retreat

\$300 Retreat Deposit 2010

Checking acct balance as of 4/21/10 = \$ 5679.39

## **2B.) Discussion of IDEA about making collections easier**

Curt suggested to Steven Spiro that SnowFlower consider having a Paypal account on its website to make it easier for people to make a donation.

### **Discussion:**

- Karen Pluim did not like the idea because it would make things more complicated for the treasurer.
- Paypal takes 3% of what it collects.
- People can send checks to Karen at any time for their donations.
- Efrat mentioned that there are two ways to look at this. Right now the collection basket is for covering rent costs. Doing something like Paypal ventures into a whole different thing.
- Not a bad idea...going to the site and putting money into various aspects of sangha efforts....
- Actual donation of dollars at the meeting sites, however, has the important symbolism of supporting the community...If people were to write a check a couple of times a year, it goes unseen.
- If we go into something bigger, the whole sangha has to be asked –
- What is the vision? Why are we collecting donations? Where are we going?

**Proposal agreed on: We will continue as we have been, and Suzanne will email sangha stating that it has come to the STC attention that folks are looking for ways to donate to SnowFlower and the current mechanism to do that is to either donate during the meeting times in the baskets provided or to send a check to Karen Pluim our Treasurer, made out to SnowFlower.**

***For the ABM – ask questions of the entire sangha about its vision for itself – where are we going? How do we want to grow?***

### 3.) Guidelines for Volunteering for Councils (Karuna)

**Proposal: Volunteers for the Schedulers Council must be members of SnowFlower Sangha for two years.**

#### Discussion:

- This is one of the significant differences between a leader-lead group and a group-lead group.
- It is difficult to know the middle way between talking about one's life experience and the Dharma.
- Seniority is different from hierarchy.
- The Schedulers' Council determines the tone of the sangha. It is the most important council.
- 2 years is not 5 or 10 years – it still lets folks who are relatively new join in and this is good. It does not “feel” too long.
- Teaming a seasoned scheduler with a new scheduler is very helpful, as is being present at the actual schedulers meetings.
- Need to remember that it is usually hard to recruit enough people to schedule.

***STC likes the proposal and recommends it be taken to ABM for approval.***

### 4.) Steering Council Leadership

Context: Savitri had volunteered to be president next year but is pregnant. Efrat and Walt were approached about assuming leadership.

#### Discussion:

- Walt shared in an email that he was surprised that he would even be approached given his relatively short history with the sangha. He was also concerned about the constraints the council may have put itself under by limiting its options for seasoned leadership.
- Leading the steering council does not necessarily require that a person have a long history with the sangha, mindfulness or the practice....a willingness to do the job, run a good meeting and be a good facilitator seem to be most important for the president's job. Other members can provide the components of sangha history, practice history, etc.....
- Having the president be a one year term is a limiting factor. If term was for two years, leadership could be more vibrant. [What about extending the vice president term to 3 or 4 years?]??
- Remember we have people rotating off....currently terms are 3 years...revisiting the term lengths would be a good idea.
- Karuna's proposal: STC President be a 2 year term; have the Dharma Teacher as a permanent member; allow people to stay on the council longer....(It is at present also possible to sign up again...in the past people may have hesitated to do this, however, probably to enable others to have a chance)
- Looking at 3 issues: composition, leadership and mechanism
- Logistical issue – time is required to work into changing the current process. Suzanne is willing to stay on another year as president to enable a change in structure, ethic and philosophy....in doing this, establish a strong vice presidency.

**Proposal: Savitri resigns from the STC after the June ABM. Suzanne, who would normally be leaving the STC, takes over Savitri's 3<sup>rd</sup> year and remains president for another year. Efrat will**

**assume role of vice president with the understanding that looking at the structure/mechanism/leadership of STC is part of the work in the coming year and, after that work is completed, if it still makes sense for Efrat to be president she will be. Next meeting we will resume this discussion and develop a mechanism for reviewing larger picture of STC.**

Having the Dharma Teacher as a “permanent” member of the STC.....

- It is logical...similar to the emeritus chairs on boards of other organizations/businesses...maintain wisdom, tradition – certain wealth is there.
- Makes Heart Sense
- STC is the governing body and Dharma is at the center of it...
- Whether or not she could always attend the meeting, she could consult.
- If Cheri doesn't feel burdened by the idea, members thought it was a good idea to have her be a permanent member.
- Cheri stated that a few people have already approached her and agreed that it makes sense.

**Proposal: At the ABM, STC will request larger sangha approval that the Dharma Teacher be a permanent member of the STC.**

- After 3 years, which is this coming July, there should be a self review of all three councils and at the ABM report out.... Good time to take stock/challenges/opportunities.

**Proposal: Suzanne will email each council's points of contact (Suzanne for STC, Walt for Schedulers and Carol for Caretaking) and request that they ask the members on their council to think about a short list of questions:**

1. How are term limits?
2. What has worked well and what has not?
3. Is the frequency of meetings enough?
4. What would you change if you could?

**Reports will be made at the ABM.**

## **5.) Sangha arrangement at Friends Meetinghouse**

**Context: SnowFlower has grown in size and when it is bumped from Friends, it is very difficult to fit into the Trinity space on a Friday night.**

Discussion:

- It is claustrophobic with 50 people in the Wesley Room.
- The space at Karen Foxglover's is not aesthetically pleasing for a sangha gathering (i.e. fluorescent lights, bare, etc.)

**Proposal: Cheri and Suzanne will have a conversation with Melanie Saks (SnowFlower's contact at Friends) about how bumping is more difficult for us now that we have grown in size.**

**On the agenda next time – Looking for another back-up place that has an environment that is conducive to practice and is accessible to all. One idea was to look into the University Av. Unitarian Church's space options.**

## **6.) Council Reports**

### **Caretaking Council – Report from Carol Rubin:**

- A) Regarding access to the printed Sangha list which includes addresses, phone numbers, and emails, we agreed that access needed to be tightened up. The lists will no longer be laid out by the entrance. Sangha “leaders,” such as those on any of the councils, librarian, etc., can have a copy of the full list; newcomers to Sangha will normally need to wait six months and then request a copy of the list. (The Council will consider the possibility of the list becoming electronic only, and available to anyone after six months participation.)

**STC requested that Caretaking take a deeper look at this and send a firm proposal to STC. Walt will talk with Carol about keeping it all electronic and after six months attending sangha you get the contact list by email if you request it.**

- B) We talked to several participants who continue to have reactions to scents. Signs will be put up for both Tuesday and Friday Sangha. In addition, for the next 4 weeks, we will mention the problem of scents during announcements, and then announce it on the first meeting of the month thereafter. One challenge is that people have such individual reactions to different things, so we opted for signs that just mention perfume, cologne, aftershave, essential oils, and scented lotions, but the announcements will not mention mothballs, fabric sheets, etc.
- C) We are in the process of reviewing and slightly revising the two page document on Mentoring and Kalyana Mitta groups. If anyone has any suggestions or concerns about those programs, let Susan Pearsall know.

**Scheduling Council** – Walt agreed to be contact person...this report is from Karuna, Walt and Savitri.....

At the most recent schedulers council meeting, It was discussed that a guided metta meditation be offered during the second sit once a month; that using notes or a text is fine for a dharma talk, but exclusively reading to the group should be avoided; that two evenings in every two month cycle be without a dharma talk (to enable sangha to focus on other practice aspects such as “Invoking the Bodhisattvas Names” and formal ceremonies such as “A Rose for Your Pocket”); that the scheduler will preview the week’s program in an email to the listserv and ask for scheduling suggestions before his or her cycle starts.

Because of the size of the group and people’s busy schedules, it is difficult to have good attendance at the schedulers’ meetings.

## **7.) Project Reports**

**Love and Understanding** – No report

**Coming Home** – Project has evolved – and while the project is currently working with prisoner re-entry through a Circle of Support, it may do a variety of activities, such as a letter-writing

project to prisoners, other in-prison work, and training of those working in prisons, such as the Boundaries Training held on May 1, 2010. Sangha is a Time Bank member and it meets everyone's needs. The Circles of Support's main participants are from SnowFlower Sangha. SnowFlower members can participate in anything they want. Kate Edwards, Steve Fleck and Carol Rubin are the coordinating committee for the Coming Home project.

Cheri's organization is separate and this gives it the ability to get volunteers from a variety of organizations and not just sangha. Richie Davidson has agreed to do some research markers with participants of the prison meditation classes....

**Other Project** (not officially sangha endorsed....) Savitri commented that her efforts to recruit volunteers to help with the Deer Park Family Dharma groups has not yielded much – Cheri recommended that the organizers consider doing a family retreat and she would be interested in working on that with them. Savitri will share that with the folks involved.

**NEXT MEETING: June 16th at Cheri's home from 7 – 9 PM. Directions will be sent out with the agenda closer to the meeting time.**

**MARK YOUR CALENDERS: ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING IS JULY 26<sup>TH</sup> FROM 6:30 TO 9 PM AT FRIENDS MEETINGHOUSE.**

**Task List:**

**Cheri** will continue to seek information on the current status of the shortened revised Mindfulness Trainings.

**Karuna** will check in with Susan Pearsall about getting Tuesday rent donations to Karen once a month. Will check on books for Jackson and Thompson.

**Cheri** to email sangha about donation process.

**Suzanne** will request all council's points of contact to email their members and ask the questions listed above. This results in a task for **Suzanne, Walt and Carol** as the points of contact for STC, .Schedulers and Caretaking councils respectively.....

**Cheri and Suzanne** will contact Melanie Saks to discuss SnowFlower's use of the space and the challenges it faces when it is bumped.

**Carol** will take the CTC's address list proposal back to CTC.

**Walt** will connect with Carol about his idea of an electronic contact list.

**Savitri** will write up notes and discuss the idea of a family retreat with the appropriate folks.

Respectively submitted,

Savitri Tsering (subbing for Carol Rubin)