

# Minutes of the Snowflower Sangha Steering Council Meeting: December 8, 2011

Present: Don K.; Chuck H.; Karen R.; Karen P.; Jim R.; Susan P.

Absent: Carol R., David H.; Walt K.

Also attending: Karuna N., and Micha re: scholarship committee questions

The meeting convened at approximately 7:00 p.m. at Jim's house and opened with a short sit, check in, and review of the agenda.

## 1. Budget Approval:

- Karen P (treasurer) presented the income statement for YTD 2011. Although a few items are still outstanding (due to timing of the meeting relative to the EOY), financial information and rationale were reviewed using best estimates for those items not yet finalized for EOL numbers. It was noted that our biggest expenses were for mold removal and related maintenance and construction of the meeting house, as well as a large donation to charities. We will continue to budget dollars for the meeting house since the project is expected to be ongoing.
- After a thorough review and discussion, the group decided to keep the 2012 budget at the same level as it was in 2011 (no increase or decrease overall)—at \$5,300. This may change slightly when final numbers are known at the EOY, however with an approximate balance of \$2,900, we are in good shape.
- Micha (representing the finance committee) shared observations that although there is still a healthy reserve fund on hand, we are seeing a downward trend in both meeting revenue and retreat revenue. This is not likely to cause us difficulties in the immediate future, however we will want to keep this in mind when making decisions.
- The next part of the discussion concerned the 2012 Scholarship Plan and the Charitable Donation Plan. A distinction was made between “cash scholarships” which is money given to Sangha members to help pay for registration and travel to retreats, vs. “discounts” given to participants attending the Snowflower Sangha Annual Retreat at Bethel Horizons (which don't require cash to spent, but instead reduces the revenue received). The amount budgeted for scholarships will be for “cash scholarships.
- The next question raised was whether to broaden the scope of retreats eligible for scholarship usage. In the past, scholarships have been limited to events directly linked to Thay and/or the monastics: e.g., Plum Village, Deer Park, Estes Park; and also the annual Plano retreat. Other possible retreats were discussed and it was decided to make several additional opportunities available, to include retreats sponsored and facilitated by members of our Sangha such as: Mindfulness and Recovery Retreat; Thaypassana Retreat; Sharon Salzburg Retreat; and other retreats sponsored by the Center for Mindfulness and Justice. The scholarship committee will be responsible for deciding how the money is allocated.

- The decision was made to reduce the amount allocated for scholarships and donations from \$2,500 to \$2,000 for 2012. (\$1,200 for scholarships and \$800 for charitable donations). How donations will be distributed will be decided by an open meeting of the Sangha in February, as in past years.
- No decisions were made regarding the 2012 discount amount for the annual SF retreat); the Retreat Committee discuss and approve specifics when they create their event budget (with input from the scholarship committee) in a separate meeting.
- Karen P. has agreed to continue as Treasurer for 2012. She expressed a willingness and desire to have an additional person on board as back up should she need assistance.

## **2. Annual Business Meeting Planning (Set for January 23 at 6:30 p.m.)**

- Don presented tentative agenda for the upcoming ABM along with minutes from the last STC Meeting held in November. He also had a copy of the Roles and Responsibilities document on hand for reference.
- Members of the council discussed and rearranged the sequence of events slightly. Don will apply the suggested revisions when creating the final agenda document.
- Next we reviewed what was needed to prepare for the meeting and assigned various council members to specific roles and responsibilities, specifically:
  - Don will duplicate documents to be handed out during the meeting
  - Jim and Don will set up the room.
  - Don will facilitate the appreciation activity and ask Jane P. to present the mindfulness song
  - Don will facilitate the discussion on the proposed changes in Sangha governance and decision making process, as well as that for council and committee member changes. Specific councils, committees, groups will provide summary reports as follows:
    - Karuna agreed to present an overview of our current governance structure
    - Karen P. will present the financials
    - Steering Council (ask Walt to write; Jim will present)
    - Caretaking Council (Celeste Robins)
    - Scheduling Council (Susan O'Leary)
    - Love and Understanding Project (Mary Michael)
    - Coming Home (Carol Rubin) (including the request for \$200 to join the Moses group of faith)
    - Website (Don)
- We discussed some questions by Micha about the proposed Sangha governance change. We clarified the following:
  - If the proposal is approved, the councils will have the same roles and responsibilities as at present. The sole difference will be that the councils will make decisions and not recommendations.

- Council meetings will be open to any Sangha member, even if they have no pressing issue. However, councils can ask visitors to leave if something confidential needs to be discussed.
- In addition, if a Sangha member strongly disagrees with a decision made at an earlier council meeting, they can ask the council to reconsider the decision at a later meeting at which they can be present to express their concerns.
- Don will amend the proposal to incorporate the above decisions/clarifications.
- We postponed until the next meeting discussion of Micha's other questions (regarding the volume of communications, and future evaluation/reconsideration of the proposed change).

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, March 15, 2012 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Jim Roseberry's House, 2220 West Lawn Avenue.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Karen Reppen, December 13, 2011.*