

## Clouds in Water Zen Center – Board of Directors meeting -- Sunday, February 26, 2012

Present: NathanThompson, Sosan Theresa Flynn, Carla Breunig, Grant Fosteson, Elizabeth Wroblewski, Carol Iwata, Rachel Vilsack

Absent: Karin Aquilar-San Juan, Byakuren Judith Ragir, Amy Kirkpatrick, Angus MacDonald

Nathan called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.

Nathan began the meeting by welcoming Rachel Vilsack, who is considering joining the Board. Rachel gave a brief introduction about herself and her connection to Clouds in Water.

### Proposal for Clouds in Water Involvement in Marriage Equality Issue 2012 – Carol and Carla

Carol and Carla presented the Power Point presentation – see attached.

Discussion followed.

- Grant asked which groups are doing training about how to have a conversation about marriage equality. Carla explained that OutFront Minnesota and Minnesotans United for All Families are doing this. If we wish, we could ask to have a training at Clouds.
- Sosan suggested that Clouds take an official position on the amendment.
- Nathan said that he wants Clouds to take a position.
- Carol said that Unitarian Universalists are leading the St. Paul Interfaith group.
- Carol quoted #10 from Thich Nhat Hanh's book, Interbeing: 14 Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism: *Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community, however, should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.*
- Grant feels that human rights are basic, and should not be up for a vote.
- Sosan discussed Quakers who took a stand years ago against slavery and still allowed for voices expressing differing opinions. She said that it is clear from our ethical guidelines and non-discrimination policy that discrimination is not acceptable at Clouds. She feels that the board can take a position and people can disagree.
- Nathan feels that when institutions take a position, it also supports others who are not in a position to be vocal (e.g. Catholics who do not feel that they can speak out against the amendment due to possible negative ramifications).
- Elizabeth likes that Clouds could make our community visible in this way.

Motion by Elizabeth and seconded by Grant: **That Clouds in Water Zen Center Board of Directors is in favor of marriage equality and supports work to defeat the marriage amendment that will be on the November 2012 ballot.** All voted in favor. Motion passes. Please note: the Board approved all of the proposed actions (see page 4 of the Marriage Equality 2012 Power Point presentation). Carol, Carla and Alan will keep the board updated about future developments and plans.

### Financial Update: Sosan

See Sosan's handout dated 2/25/12. She will give an update to the sangha as well.

Highlights:

The shortfall from 2011 was \$8,176.

Account balances, 12/31/11: Checking \$15,500; Reserve \$95,402.

Primary reasons for shortfall:

1. Reduced earned interest on our reserve funds (we had moved some out of the bond fund)
2. Rental income \$5,700 under budget, due to some pre-payment of rent in 2010 and to loss of rental

partners in 2011.

Positive news:

Although charitable contributions were lower than budgeted, these contributions were 2.92% higher than in 2010.

Program income from classes and retreats was 10% higher than in 2010 and \$2,500 more than budget.

We limited expenses when we were facing a shortfall: total expenses for 2011 were \$9,900 under budget.

For January 2012, we are on budget. We are over budget for Program Income by about \$900 and \$500 for Other Income (rental income and interest).

Our Account Balances in Checking and Reserve accounts are up due to higher interest earnings.

Fundraising for the East Hall: There was a miscommunication. Sosan thought that someone had pledged \$3,000 per year for 3 years in a row. The pledge actually was \$1,000 per year for three years in a row. The matching person will still match the pledge. So, we are still short about \$2,000 for this year and will need to make this up in 2013 and 2014 as well. Sosan is less concerned about this now as Rachel will start to help with fundraising. Sosan will still be involved. Sosan feels that the idea of separating the Youth Practice fundraiser was a great idea and was effective because it was targeted.

Spring appeal: yet to be finalized but Sosan is thinking that it may be just to raise funds for Youth Practice. There will be no Silent Auction this year. We did one for the past two years. We will do some kind of dinner/social event. Rachel Sear will take the lead on this. Rachel will likely be the main staffperson on the Call to Membership in Fall 2012.

Elizabeth expressed a bit of relief at our encouraging financial news – that we can operate a bit less austere.

#### Demographics Report – Sosan

- Elizabeth stated that she and Sosan thought it would be a good idea to do more research on our members and supporting friends, and extract relevant data from our database. Knowing more about ourselves in terms of basic data will help us align our goals and strategies to those we are serving.
- Please see their report, attached.
- The volunteers working with Sosan are Arlene Kelly and Liliane Chase.
- More information is forthcoming about age demographics and men/women demographics.
- Carol asked: how might our class numbers change if we could make classes available online?
- Carol noted that in the Engaged Buddhism class, 1/3 are people of color. This is significant compared to other classes. One person is new to our community, and Carol is not sure how active the other two people are. Elizabeth noted that this topic seems to be hitting a nerve in our community.
- In the area of membership retention and attrition, no data is available yet on this.

#### **Follow-up to Board Retreat held in January 2012: From Vision Outcome Statements to Plans**

Nathan and Carol reviewed the outcomes and came up with some specific things that could be done. They tried to form a framework and move our outcome statements in certain directions. See attached.

Nathan stated the Overall Vision:

*To cultivate the soil;*

*When we worry about the amount of work needed to make changes, a lot of that worry is coming from*

*current conditions and sangha culture. It is dynamic and always changing.*

## **I. STABLE FINANCES**

The current outcome will be revised. Carol and Elizabeth will work on this. The current outcome as written is in flux – a work in progress. Carol will be involved in updating our Development Plan.

## **II. SPACE**

Discussion: Sosan stated that our lease actually expires August 31, 2014.

Nathan mentioned that we should do a Council about Space – as we told the sangha that we would.

Carla brought in an article from the Star Tribune (2/24/12) about 3 churches in Minneapolis which merged and now share one building. She noted three things that made their project workable: each church had real estate assets, some of which they sold to get money to remodel/renovate the building they now share, they had a location that worked to make the project a “go”, and they had a similar mission (social justice).

The Board discussed a deadline of September 30, 2012 as when we need a decision to try to stay in our current space or seriously consider a move after our lease ends. Sosan mentioned that we need at least 2 years for a capital campaign to raise funds for a new place or to modify current space if we stay. So, lease termination and fundraising timeline is driving our necessity to make a decision in early fall. If we choose to remain in our current space, we could have an adjusted timeline for fundraising.

Carol mentioned that we could put out a “Want Ad” of sorts to the Interfaith community that Carol, Carla and Alan have been attending as part of the Marriage Equality work -- some “Want Ad” to the effect that we are considering partnering with another faith community or non-profit.

Action: Within 10 days, Carla will prepare an email and send it to the Board. She will propose various Prospectus’ for Space outlining the major features of various models. Factors to be included are:

- Unpacking thorny issues: urban location, connection to community, natural world, privatized notion of space.
- Sharing space with another faith-related, non profit or compatible community – and finding ways to make ourselves known to people knowledgeable in St. Paul Development and/or faith communities that we might be looking to share, rent or sell space.
- Buying our own space: which may involve building new or renovating a current space
- Leasing in another location
- Multiple spaces: e.g. downtown storefront, virtual community, separate space for sesshins, etc.
- Staying where we are now: explore all options including extending our lease, finding/securing our own parking spaces, etc. May involved speaking with Lucy Thompson, St. Paul Planning & Economic Development.

We agreed that we should not yet begin any kind of Capital Campaign because we need to be clear about our vision and goals so that we know what we are asking donors to fund.

We agreed that we should have an all sangha meeting, possibly in June, and the primary topic would be to discuss space models. The annual meeting would still be September 2012.

The Space Committee could use more members to diversify it with representation from different constituencies. Board members will mention any possible names to Carla and she will contact them.

Sosan mentioned that she would like to consider partnering with a school, perhaps a charter school – a group

with a similar mission. Classrooms would be available that we could share.

### III. VOLUNTEERS

- For the preparatory phase, we need a group to work on this.
- Sosan is interested – she should be involved, at least at first.
- Rachel Vilsack is interested and said that she would love to work on this. She mentioned that she has many ideas about this.
- Nathan: We could have a work session after Sunday program. Call it work practice. Reframe it.
- Carol: Build on the notion that work is our practice.
- Sosan: we need to build on when people are here – the golden opportunity is after Sunday program. But we would need to figure out: post jukai group, full moon ceremony, board meetings, etc. Maybe have this work practice be once per month?
- Elizabeth: play music, make it a party, socialize and clean our center.
- Carol: churches and temples are like a center of social activity.
- Nathan mentioned that some people have mentioned to him that our center could use more socializing – and time to get to know one another casually.
- Nathan said that this ties in with Space: is our center primarily a contemplative center? How do we balance this with a center that offers conversation and social gathering space?
- Carol mentioned that some churches offer dancing and she likes the idea of church suppers.
- Carla mentioned that Common Ground has quarterly community potluck dinners.

### IV. COLLABORATION

This involves trying to strengthen our connection to other Twin Cities Buddhist communities. This has already begun with Carol, Carla and Alan William's work on the marriage amendment. Nathan is interested in working on this. Elizabeth is interested as well – but her commitment needs to be small due to time constraints. Grant and Carol are also interested. Carol's level of commitment is to be decided.

Sosan suggested that a brown bag lunch topic be one about Youth programming.

The board agreed that this is important but perhaps not a priority immediately. Maybe we will pick this up in Fall 2012. Space topics are higher priority now.

### V. GUIDING TEACHER

Sosan is okay with the outcome as written. She, Byakuren and Kyoku will continue working on their vision of a guiding teacher and report to the board monthly on progress.

Elizabeth will prepare and make the board announcement for Sunday program on Sunday, March 4, 2012.

At the end of the meeting, Rachel Vilsack said that she would like to join the Board. Yeah! **Carol made a motion, that was seconded, to welcome Rachel as a new member of the Board. All voted in favor.** Motion passes. Welcome Rachel!

The meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Carla Breunig, substituting for Amy Kirkpatrick, Board Secretary

[Attachments:]

1. Marriage Equality 2012: Power Point
2. Marriage Equality, 5 page memo to Board from Carol, Carla and Alan
3. Resource List about Marriage Equality

4. Financial Update for the Sangha, 2/25/2012
5. Post-Retreat: from Vision Outcome Statements to Plans
6. Demographics