

## **CLOUDS IN WATER ZEN CENTER ANNUAL MEETING September 30, 2012**

39 in attendance

Attendees listed at the end of this document

### **ELECTIONS**

Kurt Erickson - new

Carol Iwata – renewing

Angus – seeking confirmation from community

Rachel – seeking confirmation from community

All were unanimously approved by voice vote.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT FROM SOSAN**

-- See financial documents attached.

-- Sosan reported that we're a strong community fiscally, she projects having a balance of income and expenses this year.

-- Note that children's practice is included under Programs when looking at the income and expense pie charts.

-- Special fundraising for Jizo Hall is under Appeals.

-- After reviewing the financial documents, a suggestion came up to change Dana to Dana Bowl in the income pie chart, since ¾ of the pie is contributions – all dana.

-- Membership: Current members total 180. This is down 6 from last year at this time. 102 have current membership pledges, that's down 20 from last year, but the fewer members are giving more than last year. Sosan is interested in looking into the reasons behind that.

-- Last year we ended with an \$8,000 deficit.

-- This year we project a net positive of \$400 at the end of the year.

-- Assets – we have a reserve fund, It's made up of part bond and part stocks.

### **LOWERTOWN UPDATE WITH CARLA**

See Carla's report attached.

-- May 2015 is the projected opening time for the Saint Paul Saints Stadium. It will seat 7000. They expect 400,000 people per year.

-- Light rail trains will begin running in 2013 as a test, before passengers are allowed in 2014.

-- Sosan was selected to be on the Lowertown Ballpark Design and Construction Committee.

-- CiWZC's lease expires Aug. 31 of 2014.

*Tom:* We need more than 2 years to make a decision and act on it.

*Carla:* we need to be 100% certain about our vision before a capital campaign.

*Seamus:* Can't we live with the noise as part of Zazen?

*Laura:* Lots of ongoing change in the neighborhood. Evolution. Lowertown has the potential to burst wide open. Big. Can't be understated.

## **STRATEGIC VISION AND PLANNING QUESTIONS WITH NATHAN**

Nathan: community has had a lot of changes, this parallels the neighborhood. These internal Clouds changes have made it difficult for the board to stay focused. "Hopper balls" keep coming up! These are the conditions that we've been working under.

Folks want some clarity – I'm acknowledging that, and at the same time I ask for patience.

Set of 3 questions for creating a vision were outlined by Carol through the conversations she's had with a friend who does organizational consulting:

1. What do we believe about ourselves as a community?
2. What are our main functions?
3. What are the forms or structures to carry out those functions?

Here's an example of using the 3 questions above:

Nathan's Sitting Group

- 1) We are a community dedicated to zazen practice.
- 2) Our main functions are to teach zazen and conduct group meditation
- 3) The forms needed to do this include: teachers, a space, cushions, bells, website.

Nathan feels the changes in Lowertown have made us flip to #3 too quickly. Question #1 needs to be answered. Our practice is to not rush forward. Patience is really important. And it's hard.

### **Getting Sangha Input**

We conducted 3 councils:

20 people were at the Vision Council at Clouds

We held 2 offsite councils (St. Paul and Mpls..)

We have lots of information to sift through.

A sangha member suggested that one more invitation to voice opinions be sent out by email. Rachel Sear volunteered to send the email. She asked to receive the questions used in the Visioning meeting.

Consensus was that any responses should be emailed to Carol (Carol Iwata [carol.iwata@cloudsinwater.org](mailto:carol.iwata@cloudsinwater.org)) no later than Oct. 12. Earlier emails will get more consideration. Please include in your email if you had attended a Visions Council.

*Carol:* I am using aggregating methodology to see the patterns and come up with short statements that will illuminate the patterns. My guess is that we won't see new patterns in this new batch of emails, but we will see new commentary which will be useful.

### **Current Hindrances to Moving**

1. Lack of Clear Vision

Consultants we've talked to say clear vision is key, especially when it comes to programming and fundraising.

2. Not enough volunteer energy

Having difficulty filling board positions, and some of the core folks have had a period of “step-back” or burnout. Energy to move is gigantic, if there is a real passion to move we need lots of help.

3. Current Finances barely cover expenses

Cost to rent or buy would probably be higher than current rates.

Artspace is unique with rental rates for non-profits, below market value

Cutting staff to gain additional funds leads us back to #2.

The economy is still negatively impacting many members.

*Nathan:* All of this could change quite quickly. Vision process could cause all of this to shift. The uncertainty that I experience in this community leads me to say we need to nail #1. Then 2 and 3 could be different.

### **Vision Outcome Statements**

Came out of Board Retreat in Feb. 2012

#### Guiding Teacher

The function of the Guiding Teacher is to teach and model the Dharma from a place of unbounded openness so that both teacher and practitioner feels accepted where they are and inspired to go deeper.

#### Space

A spiritual home for Zen Buddhist practice that is conducive to meditation, learning, liberation and community.

#### Finances

In giving what we can, and receiving with deep respect and gratitude, the sangha upholds the conditions to allow the community to flourish.

#### Collaboration:

Cultivating the family of Twin Cities sanghas, we will collaborate in mutually beneficial ways that bring the communities closer together, support sustainability and respect the individual visions of each organization.

#### Volunteers

Volunteering at Clouds is a nourishing experience coming out of a love of the Dharma, great generosity, a joy of being in community, and an understanding that service is a deep expression of our practice.

*Nathan:* Of these I'm particularly interested in the Collaboration statement. I'm convinced that the sanghas in the Twin Cities need to work together more. Very invested in Collaboration — I look forward to focusing on this, maybe even more after my period on the board is over or after I'm no longer board chair. Collaboration can help with space and finance situations.

### **Next Steps**

(not yet board approved)

Fall 2012

Board will take what we have learned during vision councils, and create a clear vision to guide the sangha.

- Create a Vision Mobilization Committee

2013

Begin cultivating more deliberate connections with the other Twin Cities Zen Centers

- Cross-sangha luncheons
- Common cause connections – marriage equity work for participants is already starting to cultivate relationships. Would like to expand that. Have deliberate connections.
- Clarify and strengthen multiple teacher model.

Summer 2013

- Negotiate with Artspace for short term lease, Board will need to determine length Current lease ends Aug. 2014 (don't have a unified decision from board on this yet.)

Fall 2013 or winter 2014

- Start Capital Campaign (will depend upon discussion around lease)

If board decides on short lease followed by a move, then we will need a robust Capital Campaign. If board decides to stay here longer, we will probably need some additional funds for renovation work.

## **DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS**

*Jenny:* what's the penalty to break a lease if we sign up for a 5 year lease?

*Sosan:* Artspace would try to find another tenant then the tenant could be released, and there are some other options. Could write an option to get out, but rental cost would probably be higher.

*Karin:* Nathan, what aspects of the vision do you hope will be clarified in the next few months?

*Nathan:* statements from Feb. Board Retreat were written as pieces. But really what is needed is a unifying statement that helps define a direction, bringing these pieces together. We need the community to weigh in, and together with the board, mesh all of these thoughts into a cohesive vision

*Carol:* The time was not right for the board to determine the next step back in February.

*Byakuren:* Last year was a very tumultuous year. Children's practice had just changed, Multi-Teacher model was new. Might even be a year before we really feel stabilized.

*Diane:* It's so hard to see the "opportunity cost" of staying where you are. We don't see the members who don't come because they can't find parking. Don't see what you aren't having. It's helpful to acknowledge that. As part of another sangha in transition, I saw the opportunity costs was really huge: membership over time fell, lack of focus, financial loss. There are always those hidden costs for inaction.

*Kyoku:* Thanks to board and Nathan in particular for the care, and ability to try and herd us into clarity. The job here is really for the sangha to come forward with some clarity. We need to decide as a sangha, are the circumstances here such that we want to spend the next 5-10 years here? Or, do we need to move sooner or later? We need a common vision around that. My experience is: if you've got clarity of purpose, then things come to you. We've got some time, and flexibility.

We need energy from the sangha itself. And give the board the backing to go. Need to clarify if we're putting our stake in the ground around staying or a stake in the ground around going , then we could get off the ground!

*Alan:* Nathan, I appreciate that you've painted it as a very realistic picture.

*Sue:* Need to be thoughtful about how we introduce and ground this new vision as it's presented to the sangha. Circles?

*A Sangha Member:* Wherever we move it will still be imperfect. Be aware of pros and cons.

*Carol W.:* impressed with how ArtSpace is so accommodating. Move to second or third floor? I've dealt with landlords and leases and the relationship Clouds has is pretty amazing.

*Ken:* Most sanghas grow up around a teacher. It's more complex with a horizontal model. The Board needs to have support of the sangha, but we also need to take into the account and get input from the Teacher Ryo.

We have the big questions, thank you for the crisp and focused meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

## **SANGHA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Board Members:

Nathan Thompson

Kurt Errickson

Carla Breunig

Rachel Vilsack

Angus Macdonald

Amy Kirkpatrick

Karin San Juan

Carol Iwata

Elizabeth Wroblewski

Byakuren Ragir

Sosan Flynn

Sangha Members:

Sue Laxdal

Jenny Obst  
Alan Williams  
Andy Handler  
Samuel Conway  
Deb Koefod  
Steve Laxdal  
Ken Ford  
Diane Benjamin  
Naomi Siegal  
Arlene Kelly  
Carol Wichers  
Sergio Valuerche  
Tom O'Brien  
Gary Taruscio  
Mitch Stary  
Laura GD Kennedy  
Dan Ryan  
Rob Hubbard  
Seamus Flynn  
Rachel Sear  
Robert Clegg  
Sigrid Finke  
Matthew A Simonsen  
Brad Kelly  
Marion Blomgren  
Magda Olson