*Baltimore Shambhala Center*

*Governing Council*

*Minutes*

*July 14, 2014*

*7 PM to 9 PM*

**Members Present: Susana Arriagada, Eric Laufe, Ray Robinson, Lisa Wenrich, Chris Kreeger**

I         Approval of June Minutes

The June Minutes were approved.

II       Financial Report

A      John Lamoureux is at Sacred World Assembly until July 18, and so there is no financial report as yet.

B      We received another letter from the IRS regarding our failure in previous years to file 941s. This letter states that we overpaid our obligation for 2005, and that the overpayment is being applied to what we owe for 2009 and 2011. Since we were unaware of any 2011 liability, this raises concern that the IRS might not have fully informed of our IRS liability yet. Chris will be speaking with Robbin Weiner on July 15. Robin deals with tax issues such as these professionally and has agreed to help us pro bono.

III     Update on Carpeting and Other Facility Issues

A      Status of Carpeting Installation.

Lisa is getting good cooperation from Wendy Morgan, the new Resident Manager of the Marylander. Wendy has opened up more options for carpet selection, and Lisa has chosen what she hopes to have installed. The vendor is checking on availability and price.

B      Status of Air-Conditioning System Flooding

1       On at least two occasions, the downstairs area of the Center has suffered flooding from the PVC pipe meant to drain water condensation from the condenser.

2       Lisa has posted instructions for anyone who discovers future flooding to contact her and then to contact Marylander maintenance.

C      Additional Needs

1       We have one month to go on the contract with our current vendor who cleans our Center. Previous Governing Council meetings have expressed a preference for hiring cleaners with a membership affiliation with the Center. We now have two options for people seeking to clean the Center, both of whom express interest in membership but no commitment as yet. We will make a decision on Center cleaning beyond August at the next Governing Council meeting.

2       The Marylander is receiving bids for removing the dead tree in front of the Center.

3       The shrine room needs painting. Lisa will speak with Stephen Lenocha, who often helps us with painting.

IV     Update on Front Office Issues

A      Progress. We have received samples of job descriptions for office managers from other Centers. First impressions indicate these job descriptions align with what we are looking for in Baltimore.

V       Goals Arising from May 2014 Plenary Meeting

A      Review of Goals. Chris reviewed the results of the May 2014 Plenary Meeting and converted the meeting’s decisions into a set of goals. For some of these, Chris also has identified people who have been asked or could be asked to work on these goals. Further development will include clearer definition of tasks and time frames for implementation.

B      The Governing Council discussed some of the goals at this evening’s meeting.

1       Member Engagement

a        What Is a Member

(1)    The Plenary Meeting requested that the Governing Council take up the issue of defining what a member is.

(2)    The Center of the Mandala, under the Unified Giving Initiative, in consultation with the Sakyong, has begun talking about four elements of membership:

(i)     Financial Contribution

(ii)   Practice and Education

(iii) Service to the Shambhala Center

(iv)  Service to the Larger Community

In addition, the Center of the Mandala also is discussing membership as a status that one would renew annually. Currently, once people become members, they remain members indefinitely, in some instances remaining members long after their intention to be connected to Shambhala or the Center has ended.

(3)    Governing Council members expressed the following ideas about membership:

(i)     The Center of the Mandala proposal for annual membership renewal and four elements of membership makes sense to us.

(ii)   The four elements of membership are aspirational rather than rigid or absolute criteria for membership. One’s status as a member is ethereal, something that one establishes in one’s heart and not subject to external verification.

1.     During different periods of one’s life, one will find that one’s time, resources, and personal needs render one able to address these four elements unequally. There may be times when an individual will be able to address a specific pillar very little or not at all.

a.     At times, an individual will be able to contribute very little money or volunteer time to the Center.

b.     Service to the larger community might mean involvement in some specific project that benefits the larger community, or it might mean bringing Shambhala vision to one’s family or work situation.

2.     During annual membership renewal, people would ask themselves if they still consider themselves members of the Baltimore Shambhala Meditation Center. They would reflect on the four elements in much the same way the Sakyong asked all of us to reflect on these three related questions he proposed at the end of his *Letter of the Morning Sun*:

a.     *What personal commitment will you make to practice and study?*Since personal training and transformation is a lifelong journey, it is the method by which we constantly remind ourselves that, as beings with tremendous potential, it is up to us to constantly see each day as an opportunity to deepen and grow—that in fact the journey itself is the joy of life.

b.     *What will you offer to Shambhala?*

Shambhala is a profound lineage, but its goodness and glory depends solely on the commitment of its warrior students. This sublime wisdom is our responsibility.

c.      *What do you aim to do in the world as a Shambhalian?*

d.     The ultimate purpose of Shambhala is to benefit the world, to reawaken basic goodness in all of humanity. This is the way we can manifest fully as warriors and benefit the world.

3.     When someone approaches membership in this way, membership is a practice. It is way of being a warrior in the world, a Shambhalian.

a.     By contemplating the four elements as they apply to one’s life, one reaches conclusions about what one has to do as a Shambhalian.

i.       If one decides that he or she will be a Shambhalian mainly by their activity in the world, they then would ask what practice and study they must engage in and what communal activity they must engage in to ensure that their activity in the world brings Shambhala vision to it.

ii.     If one decides that, at this time in one’s life, a focus on practice and study is the critical thing, what service to the community and to the world must one maintain to ensure one’s practice and study does not become ingrown or narcissistic?

b.     An individual might share the results of his or her annual review with the Center or might keep these results to themselves, depending upon what they felt would be the most helpful approach to their member practice.

(iii) While different people have different financial circumstances, and, for some people, financial issues are extraordinarily challenging, we should ask members to contribute a minimum of one dollar per month to serve at least as a signal that they are members.

(iv)  Membership reaches its fulfillment communally rather than individually. Individually, a person might specialize more in one pillar of membership than in others. In doing so, they contribute to the community’s fulfillment of that pillar.

1.     When one member provides meditation instruction at the House of Ruth, all engaged members support that effort and through that support participate in the House of Ruth meditation instruction.

2.     When one member becomes immersed in practice and study at Gampo Abbey or Karme Choling, all engaged members support that effort, and through that support the community’s practice and understanding deepen.

b       While, in this evening’s meeting, the Governing Council shared ideas on membership, these and other ideas require further reflection before we would say we have reached consensus. Upon consensus, we will need to devise methods for communicating membership definitions to the community and engaging them in the reflective process on an annual and perhaps ongoing basis.

2       Marketing

a        We have a set of marketing goals. Recruiting people to develop and conduct marketing activities has proven challenging.

b       Chris has spoken with a number of people and gained different levels of commitment from some. There are a few others he plans to speak with.

c        It is hoped that the marketing group can come together this summer and begin developing and implementing a comprehensive marketing plan.

3       Newcomer Engagement

a        The Community Development Committee has developed a comprehensive plan for newcomer engagement.

b       Different pieces of the plan have gone into effect, while others have not, largely through the lack of comprehensive communication to everyone’s whose involvement is necessary for the success of the plan.

c        Chris will speak with the Community Development Committee with the request that they take the plan and walk through the implementation requirements with each party, gaining their understanding and commitment. He also will request a process for monitoring the faithful execution of all of the processes the plan requires.

4       Capacity Development – Training in Project Management

a        One of the goals proposed that member volunteers receive training in project management so that we have some uniform language and procedures for implementing decisions.

b       Ray volunteered that he has a plethora of project management materials and experience in training in project management. He would like to be involved in implementing this goal.

c        We also have a few others who have project management experience and expertise who could be helpful.