**altimore Shambhala Center**

**Governing Council**

**Minutes**

**May 12, 2014**

**7 PM to 9 PM**

**Members Present:** Susana Arriagada, Edward Hargadon, Chris Kreeger, John Lamoureux, Eric Laufe,

Raymond Robinson, Lisa Wenrich

Ø  Approval of Minutes

§  The Minutes of the April Governing Council meeting were approved.

Ø  Financial Report

§  **April Financial Results**. There is an $8,000 surplus of revenue over expenses for the year, compared to a $14,000 surplus last year. Because revenue tends to drop during the summer months, the drop in this year's positive cash flow is cause for concern. While contributions at programs have kept pace with last year, contributions through member pledges have dropped significantly.

§  **Fleet Maull Program**. The Fleet Maull program, conducted at Morgan University, resulted in a loss of a few hundred dollars. In addition, the $6,000 in revenue generates a $900 liability of transfer payments to Center of the Mandala. Participation was lower than expected, despite massive work on the front end. If we Invite Fleet Back for another program, we can mitigate the costs by holding the program at the Shambhala Center rather than another venue, since it was facility rental and catering that contributed mostly to the program deficit. We have other Acharyas scheduled to come in the fall. Again, their visits have more modest cost structure, and we should be able to manage those visits finance financially.

§  **IRS Penalties and Interest**. The IRS charged us $4,300 in penalties and interest for failure to submit W-2s in 2005 and 2007. The Center paid the payroll taxes and only failed to submit the W-2s. A friend of Greg Caruso specializes in resolving such matters with the IRS and she will see if she can get these charges waived.

Ø  Membership

§  **Membership Coordinator**

·        We haven’t been able to attract anyone to serve as Membership Coordinator. Ray and Janet have developed a simple system for following up when people are behind in their dues. This almost always occurs when there has been some change in the credit card that was providing dues regularly. Essentially, when it is obvious that there has been a credit card change, the member will be requested to contact the office by phone to provide the updated information. If the nonpayment appears to have occurred for some other reason, Ray will contact the person. These instances are rare.

·        Ray suggested that we establish a paid position of someone to serve as a Membership Coordinator. Others felt that the incremental revenue that a paid position could generate from our members would fall far short of the position salary.

·        Ray pointed out that the keep having discussions about membership without nailing down a system for recruiting and engaging new members, securing their dues payments and volunteer commitments. He suggested that we need a business process map that displays the whole process. The map would show where there are gaps that we then need to address. Chris will meet with Ed, Janet, and Paul to discuss the processes that they have initiated and then produce that map.

§  **Conversation with Anna Weinstein on Center of the Mandala Discussions regarding Membership.** Chris recently had a conversation with Anna Weinstein about current Center of the Mandala thinking about membership.

·        Invitations to membership should occur early and frequently.

·        We now can think of four pillars of membership:

¨      Personal commitment to practice and study.

¨      Commitment to service to the Shambhala community.

¨      Financial support.

¨      Personal commitment to serve outside the Shambhala community as a Shambhalian.

·        Shambhala membership isn't for life.

¨      Currently, Acharyas turn in their pins to the Sakyong, go off and practice, and return to the Sakyong saying whether and why they want to continue as an Acharya. The Sakyong, at that point, may or may not reinstate them for another year.

¨      We can take a similar approach to membership: Have people reflect on what they will do in the coming year relative to the four pillars of membership and formally recommit as members.

¨      We decided to send out a survey to the members to explore with their interests are and, at the same time, what their dues commitment will be.

§  **Member Engagement**

§  We have 160 people listed as members in our database, but many of these currently are disengaged.

§  Chris suggested a listening as a systematic way to improve member engagement through the following approach:

·        There are about 200 people in our community who are members or nonmembers engaged in the Way of Shambhala.

·        Recruit and train 20 listeners.

·        Each listener has a conversation with 10 members.

¨      How the person views our community.

¨      What the person would like to gain from our community.

¨      What talents and passions the person has for service.

¨      What the Shambhala Center might do beyond the Shambhala Center.

·        Conduct a facilitated debriefing of the 20 listeners to find out what they learned about our community.

·        Provide feedback to the Community on Listening Campaign findings and use this information for further planning.

§   Ed indicated the Community Development Committee would not be able to mount a listening campaign effort at this time.

§  We currently have a great need for capacity development, since a relatively small number of people are wearing several hats.

§   Chris has begun carrying on the kinds of conversations that a listening campaign would undertake. He will expand his efforts in order to learn more about members’ positive and negative views about our community and how they might want to be involved in the four pillars of membership.

§  **Membership Appreciation.**

·        Last spring, the Baltimore Shambhala Center held a Volunteer Appreciation Day. Kathy Schulman championed this effort. It was, by all reports, very successful in both celebrating the generosity of volunteering and reinforcing the importance of membership. We decided to hold a Membership Appreciation Day at the Harvest of Peace, and Kathy again will champion this effort.

Ø  Administrative Issues

§  During the 10 years the Center had a paid director, perhaps 80% of that person's time was spent on administration, with a smaller percentage devoted to leadership. Times have changed. We now have a volunteer director for the foreseeable future. More importantly, the Sakyong and the Center of the Mandala are urging Center Directors to devote the vast majority of their time to leadership, with the Executive Committee providing for administration. Again, Executive Committee members and our Chief Of Staff, John Lamoureux are volunteer positions.

§  In the past, when our paid administrative support staff were providing support to paid administrators (i.e., the Center Director), the Center Director was able to provide administrative structure. He or she supervised the administrative support staff and ensured that administrative tasks were accomplished. The Council discussed the need to improve efficiency in the office. The Council asked John to look at the methods discussed, and to discuss the issues and suggestions with the staff.

Ø  Marketing and Publicity

§  The Governing Council feels an acute need for a comprehensive marketing approach to get underway. The first Plenary Meeting produced a task force with the mandate to develop a comprehensive marketing plan. This task force has become focused on developing a survey, which is an important ingredient of a comprehensive plan, but does not move forward the development of the actual plan in a timely way. Chris has identified people who can assist with that effort and will work with them to produce the plan. This effort will dovetail with the efforts of those developing the survey.

Ø  Marylander

§  Chris signed the 10 year lease with the Marylander, approved at April’s Governing Council meeting.

§  Lisa Sperl, the Marylander Property Manager, indicates we should have our carpet installed by August 1, the starting date of the new lease.

§  Lisa Wenrich is addressing the leaks with Marylander maintenance.

§  Greg Caruso will lead a fundraiser for $6,000 to match the $6,000 the Marylander will provide for carpet.

§  Lisa Wenrich indicates we need to hire a cleaning service.

·     The Council elected to hire a cleaning firm to clean the center on a biweekly basis for $120 per cleaning session, with one member voting no.

·     There was strong debate over whether cleaning the Center should be a volunteer effort carried out by the members, since this is our home and we should maintain personal responsibility for keeping it clean and elegant. This latter view is in keeping with the Dorje Dradul's teachings on how we take care of our space.

·     The majority of the Council felt that, while we should keep the Center clean this way, because our volunteers already are stretched thin, right now we probably would not succeed in mounting a volunteer effort to clean the Center, and the cleanliness of the Center would decline rapidly. We all agreed that a volunteer effort is preferable and so approved the cleaning service for four months, through August 31, at which time we will revisit this issue to see if we could clean the center through volunteers.

Ø  Monthly Newsletter

§  About a year ago, the Governing Council decided to publish a monthly newsletter.

§  The Council felt it was important to convey our monthly goals relative to member pledges and our status in meeting those goals.

§  The Council also felt it important that we communicate on the other pillars of membership, i.e. Practice and education and service to the Shambhala community.

§  Samantha Solomon has agreed to lead the effort. She’s in the process of recruiting the team she will need, consisting of two other editors, some writers, web design, photography and video.

§  To produce the newsletter, writers will interview people at the Center who are engaged in various activities and write the articles. In this way, we hope we can produce a newsletter consistently and of high quality, not relying on people already engaged in activities to write articles about those activities on top of the work they already are doing.