

## **Milwaukee Zen Center – Board of Directors**

Meeting Minutes  
February 20, 2022

### **Opening**

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Milwaukee Zen Center was called to order at 12:03 P.M. on February 20, 2022 at the Milwaukee Zen Center, with some board members attending over Zoom.

### **Present**

Susan Winecki, President  
Bob Balderson, Vice President  
Greg York, Treasurer  
Noah Johnson, Secretary  
Frank Fischer, Board Member  
Jim Zimmerman, Board Member  
Reirin Gumbel, Resident Priest

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the December 12, 2021 board meeting were brought to attention and accepted without objection.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Greg presented the treasurer's report, which began with an examination of the balance sheet. On account of a downturn in the general market, the PAXWorld fund had a loss of \$3,000. However, cash on the balance sheet was down only slightly, even after payment had been made for landscaping work. The balance sheet examination proceeded to a fund report representing the budgeted portions of the checking account. The annual fundraiser had raised just under \$3,000, which was certainly higher than the printing and overhead costs associated with the fundraising. Regarding routine corporate filings, the state annual report had been filed, sales tax had been paid, and federal employment taxes were filed. The Associated Bank checking account is still linked to Amazon Smile deposits and Ooma automatic payments, which continue to prevent the account from being able to close to complete the transition to Educators Credit Union.

Bob raised a few questions about details of the accounting statement. The first question regarded the initial contributions made to the PAXWorld fund, for purpose of evaluating its performance since the account had been opened. The answer was uncertain since the account had been opened by a previous treasurer, but it was estimated to be less than \$3,000 initially, although an extra \$15,000 had been contributed in 2021. The overall amount in the fund had perhaps decreased slightly from the value of these investments due to the recent market volatility. The second question concerned the total payments made to Rodriguez Landscaping for recent work performed at the Zen center. The total payments for landscaping work amounted to \$5,732.

Reirin then asked about the net return from the fundraiser, factoring in the printing and overhead costs from Clark's. Clark's had charged a total of \$667 for printing and mailing. Contracting all the mailing work out to Clark's this year had greatly simplified the work of setting up the fundraiser this year, though Reirin still personally writes thank-you note acknowledgments. Therefore, deducting the overhead costs from Clark's, the net return from the fundraiser had been \$2,248, which Susan mentioned was in line with fundraisers from past years.

Reirin also offered a suggestion about the Amazon Smile deposits, which were still automatically deposited into the Associated Bank account and have proved difficult to reconfigure. Reirin suggested that the Amazon Smile deposits, which are all of very low amounts, might just be put into the Winston account as donations. There followed a brief discussion about what Amazon Smile is, which Greg then explained. Reirin suggested mentioning Amazon Smile on the newsletter and the website.

Jim then asked about the tax deductibility of membership dues. Since benefits are received in return, it was determined the dues are not deductible, although direct donations to the Zen center are deductible.

Finally, there was a discussion of the membership report. The number of paying members had slightly decreased, with the last total being 46 paying members, though questions remained concerning the status of certain members. The discussion of the membership status was deferred to a separate discussion after the board meeting.

The Treasurer's Report was then accepted by the Board without objection.

### **Priest's Report**

Reirin presented the Priest's Report, which began with an update on activities that had been mentioned as upcoming on the last Priest's Report. The leadership training with MICAH had been moved online to Zoom on account of the ongoing pandemic. The New Year's sitting and New Year's Day peace gathering had taken place as expected.

During January and February, the Zen center had welcomed a guest speaker, Sylvester Jackson from the Milwaukee chapter of Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO), on Martin Luther King Jr. Day to speak about the Wisconsin criminal justice system. Reirin had also participated in criminal justice reform training, which continued on through February. Professor Christopher Cantwell from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee had asked to send students to the Zen center for interviews. Other activities included:

- Memorial service for the recently deceased Thích Nhất Hạnh
- Workshop on "Gooder English" by Jay English
- Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, Tuesday lunches, focus on climate change
- Zen poetry class

Reirin finished her report by mentioning upcoming activities, including the Branching Streams Conference from April 25 through April 28 in Austin, Texas, for which Reirin is on the planning committee. There will also be a sewing class starting in March. The priest's report was then accepted by the board without objection.

## **Old Business**

### Humidifier for the Zendo

Reirin stated that humidity measurements in the Zendo were down to 18%. Bob had brought a humidifier in, which had been effective at raising the measured humidity to over 30%. However, the change in humidity did not appear to have an effect on the squeaky floor. Bob reasoned that the humidity in the Zendo is unable to penetrate the sealed surface of the floor, and humidity would need to also be adjusted in the basement for it to have any effect on the floor. In an effort to reduce the noise of the floor, Bob had screwed the floor down more securely. Bob's generosity had removed the need to purchase a humidifier, and despite the limited effect on the floor, the comfort of the air within the Zendo had been significantly improved.

### Landscaping project

The Rodriguez landscaping company had completed the landscaping project at the Zen center. \$6,000 had been approved for the project, and \$5,732 was the final cost. Bob and Reirin both agreed that the company had done excellent work with the project. Once the new season arrives, planting will need to be considered, and names were already mentioned about people who might help with the work.

### Solar panels

Bob had contacted All-Energy Solar and had an interview with them. A further meeting was desired to discuss the project in further detail.

## **New Business**

### Tonen's Birthday

Planning for Tonen's upcoming birthday was touched upon, with discussion of various possibilities for the event. It was decided that Reirin, Susan, and Bob will talk to Tonen about her expectations for the event before further discussion of the matter.

### Annual Meeting

Susan brought up planning for the annual meeting, which is usually in March, though there is flexibility, as the bylaws state only that it must take place within 60 days of the end of the fiscal year. The annual meeting is for all members of the Zen center. April 10 was decided as the date of the meetings. There followed a discussion of which Board positions are expiring.

Greg is into his third year as Treasurer, and there was talk of finding a replacement to relieve Greg of the workload. The matter is complicated by the need for training. Noah suggested splitting the many responsibilities of the Treasurer to make the position less imposing. Reirin also suggested to give Frank more access to membership related materials.

## **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 1:10 P.M. by Susan Winecki. The date of the next board meeting was set for April 10, 2022 from 11:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. following the Annual Meeting.

Minutes submitted by:        Noah Johnson