

Milwaukee Zen Center - Annual Meeting

Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2022

Opening

The annual membership meeting of the Milwaukee Zen Center was called to order at 11:31 A.M. on April 10, 2022 at the Milwaukee Zen Center, with some members attending over Zoom. The meeting commenced with introductions and a reading of the mission statement.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the 2021 annual membership meeting were brought to attention and accepted without objection.

Treasurer's Report

Bob Balderson (Vice President) presented the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Greg York (Treasurer). The current standing of the Zen Center's accounts was examined. A budgetary report was provided. All account balances were noted to be healthy. The value of the PAX-World investment fund had decreased due to volatile market conditions, but healthy income levels had offset these losses by half. The Winston fund was noted to be available for contributions. No substantial changes in financial condition relative to the last year were observed. The financial report was then accepted without objection.

President's Report

Susan Winecki (President) presented the President's Report. The previous year had been more quiet than usual on account of the pandemic. However, the Zen Center responded to the change in conditions by offering flexible hybrid participation options, both in-person and on-line over Zoom. The hybrid participation model has even enabled a new practitioner from Germany to participate in Zen Center activities. Guest speakers at the Zen Center included Jay English, Tonen O'Connor, and Taigen Leighton. The yearly goals were met as well as possible considering the pandemic.

The Zen Center will be celebrating the 36th anniversary in September. A new library catalog system is under development, but is still in need of someone to implement it. Frank Fischer has taken responsibility for the membership committee. Goals for this coming year include:

1. Investigate the possibility of adding solar panels to the roof of the Zen Center
2. Improvements to backyard landscaping and repairs to the backyard wall
3. Replace the chairs at the zendo
4. Find and train a financial person who can eventually become the new Treasurer

Priest's Report

Reirin Gumbel (Resident Priest) presented the Priest's Report. The presentation began with a summary of Dharma events, which include:

- Zazen, kinhin, and service on weekday mornings
- Dharma class on Monday evening, with a new class *Living by Vow* starting in May
- Zazen instruction, informal sitting, and a short class on Wednesday evening
- Well-being service on Fridays
- Full-day zazenkai on first Saturday of the month
- Half-day sit on third Saturday of the month
- Full-moon Boddhisattva ceremony once a month
- Eight-week practice period in the fall
- Dokusan advice available on demand

The schedule of events is maintained on a public website at mkzen.org, which Reirin keeps up to date. Members are also kept up to date by newsletters and regular emails that Reirin prepares. Reirin then presented a summary of special events that have taken place at the Zen Center, including:

- Funerals and memorial services, including one for Sue Morgan
- Ordination ceremonies, with two ordinations in December
- Guidance for two students preparing for ordination
- Interviews about Buddhism for students from the university and high schools

Community activities and participation in events outside the Zen Center include:

- Talks at other zen centers, including at Santa Cruz and Chicago
- Co-taught the *Jewel Mirror Sesshin*
- Vigils for special occasions
- Racial equity training
- Participation in:
 - *Buddhist Peace Fellowship*
 - *Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee*
 - *Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice*
 - MICAH
 - *Soto Zen Buddhist Association*
- Created a video with Noah Johnson (Board Member) for *Teach the Truth Wisconsin*
- Distributing meals to the homeless and people in need
- Zoom calls and letter writing with prisoners
- Participating in the *Branching Streams* conference in Austin, Texas

Finally, there are annual events commemorating Buddha's birthday, Buddha's enlightenment, Buddha's death, the hungry ghost ceremony, solstice and equinox celebrations, Hiroshima Day, and Earth Day.

Membership Committee

Frank Fischer (Board Member and head of Membership Committee) presented the Membership Report. Frank thanked the membership for continuing financial support and extended an invitation to come in person to the zendo so that we may build a strong community around the Zen Center. The membership list from Greg had 46 members, while the reconciled membership list from Frank has 44 members. Membership has been supportive and consistent, with stable membership numbers. Regular contributions have been working well in supporting the Zen Center.

Old Business

There were no points of Old Business to discuss.

New Business

Library

A volunteer librarian is needed for organizing and implementing a new digital library system. Noah has set up a computer system for scanning in existing books at the library. Someone needs to come regularly to the Zen Center to scan books into the system. Matt Anderson previously worked once a week for an hour. Demitra Copoulos volunteered to take on the role of librarian.

New Treasurer

A volunteer is needed to take over the role of Treasurer. Greg York has one more year, but the new person would need to be trained. Greg has worked extensively to make the accounting system much more efficient using online tools, so the new volunteer will need to be comfortable using the Internet-based QuickBooks software. There are lots of small details and procedures that need to be learned, so someone will need to job-shadow Greg to learn how everything works.

Solar Panels

A decision needs to be made on whether or not to add solar panels to the Zen Center. Reirin stated that the Zen Center does not use a lot of electricity, so perhaps excess energy can be sold back to We Energies. The primary reason would be a reaction to climate change – setting an example by moving over to alternative energy. Interfaith organizations are discussing this topic and energy insecurity. Reirin believes solar panels would be a demonstration of ethical action.

Bob has reached out to several solar energy providers. Two such providers have minimum order sizes that would be excessive for the Zen Center. A reasonable offer from a company has been discovered, with installation around \$12,000. Bob is looking into the possibility for obtaining grants. Based on covering electrical needs, it would take 50 years for the solar panels to pay for themselves, but that is not the primary reason for the solar panels, as Reirin mentioned. The Zen Center would not qualify for federal tax credits since the Zen Center does not pay taxes as a non-profit. Jim Zimmerman (Board Member) inquired how the panels related to repairs needed for the roof. Noah inquired about the batteries that would be attached to the panels, which was then explained by James Mueller.

Nomination of New Board Members

Current Board Members were introduced. Bob made motions to nominate to the Board: Susan Winecki, Bob Balderson, Noah Johnson, Frank Fischer, Kellett Koch, Greg York, and Jim Zimmerman. The motion carried without objection.

Adjournment

The Annual Meeting was adjourned at 12:24 P.M.

Minutes submitted by: Noah Johnson