

**DRAFT**

Still Mountain Community Meeting Notes  
**Sunday, May 17, 2015, 11am**

Present: David L., Jackie M., Su H., Yair, Jim W., Peg, Simon, Anita, Usha , Erica, Linda, Sandy, Mary, Mike, Phred, Bilha, Judy, Linda Lawson.

**DECISION: The bullet points listed in Board minutes, plus the two points suggested by Linda, should be dispersed to the SM community at large to see if anyone would like to volunteer for the marketing position. In the meantime, Teacher's Council's process of getting the word out will proceed.**

Facilitator: Su

Notes: Jackie

Agenda:

I. Teachers Council (5 mins)

David: Meeting this week Wednesday. Working with Rec & Ed to develop relationship, including with new coordinator (Seema Jolly). Need to determine frequency of meditation offerings. Need to plan October retreat in Howell and publicize on the web. Expect more detail next meeting.

II. David (10 mins)

On community: Community is healing, but we can't heal each other. Can't "march directly" in the direction of anything of value you want, but you can do the practice: noting what's inside.

Three reminders on community:

- 1) Commitment: commitment to each other, to ourselves, even as outward relationships may change.
- 2) Respect: Means "looking again," seeing the whole person, not just a caricature of the person. Understanding we're all in this together, this sangha, this life, this Dhamma—that which gives spiritual support.
- 3) Not knowing: Conflict is always going to happen and it always pushes up against people's sense of identification, in mysterious ways. Most poignant is not knowing whether the thing you set out to do is the right thing...and sometimes not knowing even after it's done.

David: I'm committing to support Su in this meeting, commitment to not leading and to not abdicate the responsibility for listening. Comes back to respect. We may not necessarily agree on everything, but based on respect we know we can work together. Su and Sarah are working to help us work towards a middle path with our meetings, so that they're not rigid, but not so amorphous.

III. Community Organizing Group – Ground rules (10 mins)

Su: The Community Organizing committee is currently Su and Sarah. Board brought to us, and people agreed to the following:

- We'll be setting the agenda for the monthly meetings based on emails from the community, not just the standing items. We want to decide this ahead of time so we can make sure we have

enough space for it, and we have enough clarity about what is meant. Community can discuss with Su and Sarah in advance of request for agenda items, if you want.

- We'll facilitate the community meetings, but this is not "herding cats." We will use our skills so that everyone can get heard, but we also get decisions. Sarah and Su will make mistakes. Would appreciate if community could be very gentle in letting them know they've made a mistake: they want to know that.
- We'll identify a volunteer to take minutes.
- We'll arrange for snacks for community meetings. Judy will bring coffee regularly!

If anyone would like to be part of the committee, please let Su and Sarah know. Need to be "a process person," interested in bringing practice into everything to do with the committee. We would like to have two facilitators at community meetings each time. Would be good to have more facilitators.

We would like community input on ground rules for community meetings. Tremendous amount of excitement in this group sometimes results in difficulty hearing everyone.

Sandy: In Robert's Rules of Order, when a topic is brought up, a person doesn't speak a second time until everyone else who wants to speak has had a chance to do so. Allows us to be very conscious of whether others want to speak.

Yair: Suggest a talking baton: you only talk when you get the baton and no one speaks until you finish. Helps avoid interruption and respect for one who is talking. Then need to decide priorities for who speaks next.

Bilha: When you're finished with baton, you can put it in the center again. If multiple people want to talk, they sense into who will take it next.

Su: Putting baton in the center gives us a few moments between speakers.

Mike: Even in supporting a conversation with everyone's participation, still need a leader to guide conversation to avoid repetition. (Su: Yes, facilitation)

Su: Currently no voting structure in this group.

Phred: Perhaps make sure people have paper and pen for those who don't like to talk, or have thoughts after the discussion is over.

Simon: Consideration for people who process differently, but then won't have an opportunity to discuss/air those ideas in the group. Delicate dynamic.

Phred: Also, not everyone can attend every meeting. Some may not come because they don't like to speak. For things where you really need to hear from everyone, need some mechanism/invitation.

Su: Invitation to people who aren't at meeting to share their ideas by some means.

Judy: That could get unwieldy. Another way to handle it is to say that those who come to meetings have a say in what is addressed. My preference would be that if you want to weigh in, come to the meeting.

Jackie: Different topics/content of meetings call for different meeting structures. Sensitive topics call for talking stick. More cut and dried topics might just need strong facilitation.

Mary: For big topics, could offer that decisions wouldn't be made until a second meeting.

Mike: Agree that if you want to participate in decisions, you should be here at the meeting. Otherwise could lead to confusion.

Sandy: Seems we've opted for consensus. For people to write their thoughts without being present makes it very difficult to reach consensus. Consensus has a lot to do with being in the same room and communicating with people. Agree with Mary that for big topics, have two discussions before deciding.

Su: I will take suggestions, put in written form, discuss with Sarah about how to bring them together in the best way possible. Sarah will bring back to the group for firming up. Not for further discussion at that time. If you have other thoughts, please respond to Sarah and Su after the minutes.

#### IV. Treasurer's Report (5 mins)

Yair: Have about \$2,500 in the bank, about \$1,500 available (required bank balance of \$1,000). Next fee is for insurance in June. Deposit has been returned to Deep Springs.

#### V. Marketing brainstorm next steps (10 mins)

Su: Linda compiled a list of brainstorm ideas. Next steps meeting was held (Linda, Su, and Sarah). Three basic areas:

- Communications (list of places to advertise/communicate Still Mountain activities)
- Promotional activities (methods to pull people in)
- Core value actions (actions or events promoting our core values, outreach/support)

Su: Current bylaws say that proposals at community meetings will be recorded and taken up by board and/or teacher's council as appropriate. We sent our recommendations to the board. Asked the board: when will we hear back? And if a member wants to implement an idea sooner, is there a mechanism for that to go ahead? Does the board want to have an ad hoc committee come up with a description of the marketing person?

#### VI. Board report (10 mins)

Yair: (reading from summary compiled by Jim M. from Board minutes, available on website)

- Recruit a volunteer to market SM teacher and retreat offerings. (We might focus now on low-hanging fruit, easiest to achieve, as well as need.)
- a) The Board solicits one or more volunteers to write a short job description. Then, following Board approval, recruit a volunteer to fill the SM marketing position. The position would include the following activities, relying in part on the local publications and venues listed in the 4/12/15 Brainstorm data:
  - i) Create a spreadsheet that contains local publications, timeframes, deadlines, and costs of using various publications.
  - ii) Create a list of local venues for posting SM flyers on teacher offerings and retreats.

- iii) Annually update spreadsheet and local venue list.
- iv) Work with SM teachers and retreat leaders to disseminate offerings to local publications and venues. (Teachers and retreat leaders are responsible for supplying content.)
- v) Required credentials: None, except for passion and commitment.

Linda: Could we get a volunteer from outside SM?

Linda Lawson: Consider student interested in marketing.

Sandy: If student intern, might wait until fall.

Su: Sounds like job description is already developed. Can we skip to next step? If an ad hoc committee is needed first, can they come up with different ideas for job description?

Bilha: Why do we need an ad hoc committee when requirements are passion and commitment?

Su: Originally we asked if the Board wanted a committee to develop the description, but seems Board already developed it.

Judy: Agree the Board already has a job description. The low hanging fruit now is to promote teacher offerings and retreats.

Yair: Agree, bullet points are the job description.

Linda: I would just add that it's a non-paid position and who does the position report to?

Phred: An outside person in marketing could improve on our list of ideas, and have additional tools.

Judy: May be undue optimism about student help.

Yair: To look outside implies another ad hoc committee to do so. We can either find a volunteer to do the job, or to "look outside." No one has volunteered to do so.

Sandy: Let Board know that we'd like to skip the ad hoc committee and see if anyone would like to volunteer for the position.

Erica: Would like to add Linda's two procedural points.

David: If low-hanging fruit is getting the word out about teacher offerings, then perhaps teacher group should take this on. Would put favorable pressure on the teacher group to think in terms of getting the word out. Teacher group could figure out how to do the work or how to find a volunteer. Instead of this going back to the Board. Teacher's Council would need to discuss it.

Yair: The Board doesn't want it back.

Linda: Second step is to put the description out to the entire SM community to see if anyone would like to volunteer. In the meantime, teachers need to go ahead and get the word out on their own.

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Yair: Second point of Board Report. 2) The Board noted that some items on the Brainstorm data that deal with recruiting new members beg the question of how large do we want our organization to be and how aggressively should we pursue growing Still Mountain. At present, the answer to this is unclear and calls for a specific discussion on this topic by the Community. This discussion should take place at a future Community meeting.

Su: Suggested that the Board or a representative meet with Su and Sarah to discuss a process for having this discussion that will be most fruitful. This discussion will happen at a later time.

Yair: Third point 3) Approval process for new ideas within the SM organization. The Board discussed the need for a formal procedure to process and approve ideas/proposals from members of the Sangha and felt that a formal process is not necessary. We are a small organization and the Board believes that it is very important to minimize bureaucracy. Thus, if any Sangha member has an idea that they would like to act on (e.g., other items from the Brainstorm session), they simply need to approach one of the Board members or teachers with their idea for further consideration. In general, the Board will handle administrative, business or financial issues and the Teachers' Council will handle items that deal with teaching, retreats, and the spiritual direction of SM. If someone is uncertain as to where their proposal should go, just submit it (verbal or written) and the Board and the Teachers' Council will sort it out.

Community expressed support.

Yair: Term limits were discussed at the Board meeting. Yair will stay on in a one year position; Hugh made the suggestion that he stay as treasurer for the remainder of this year, then move into an at-large position while working with a new treasurer. Jim and Anita both expressed a preference for one year terms and will continue to think about it. All agreed on the need to start looking for new fall board members to come on in November.

Implication: Every year, at least two members will need to be replaced.

Sandy: After staggering, should change to two-year terms or else some years all five will need replacing. Usually staggering is just for the initial year.

Yair: Bylaws don't say that. Board will need to consider further.

Mary: Michigan law requires minimum of three. We're a small sangha, and trying to get five new people in some years is a lot.

Judy: Having five members means that you usually have at least three people at each meeting.

Sandy: Can bylaws be changed?

Su: Bylaws are still in flux at this point. Strongly recommend that everyone look at bylaws on website. There are some issues that need clarification. In future need an agenda item for community to approve bylaws.

Erica: Can we provide printouts of the bylaws at a meeting? In the past, people have forgotten to print or read.

Su: Will take into consideration for when we discuss the bylaws.

Sandy: Very fruitful to have copies of the document available at the meeting for everyone.

Yair: Concern about paper.

## VII. Announcements (5 mins)

Linda Lawson: Additional fun photo shoot proposed at the peony garden at the Arb. Email to let everyone know. It will happen next Sunday after the sit. Pack a sandwich. Enter off Washington Heights.

Mary: Flyers available for Mary and Bilha's third-level beginners class. Please take flyers for posting around town. Begins June 9<sup>th</sup>, Tuesdays at 9:30am every other week.

Mary: Jackie Deron. Car stalled on railroad tracks. She got out of her car, but car was demolished. Please consider sending a note.

Su: Dana basket.

Sandy: Request tonglen and metta for my sister Sally, hit by a car ten days ago and in hospital.