

**Notes from the Sky Creek Dharma Center Strategic Planning Meeting
September 2007**

Present

- Bob Egert
- Amos Clifford
- Jessica Mackenzie
- Jasper Lerch
- Joanne Hamilton
- Tracy McDonald
- Lakshmi Ariaratnam
- Kirsten Boyd
- Greg Mirrick
- Janeese Charpentier

Topic 1: Identification of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Dharma Center

Strengths	Weaknesses
Beauty of the facility and setting	Setting is seen as far out of town by many
Suitability of the facility to multiple purposes; Size of the building	Facility needs significant energy retrofitting. Large facility consumes much energy and requires significant maintenance and cleaning. High utility costs. Low utilization of facility; almost all weekdays and many weekends the facility is not used. Much work remains to bring the landscaping up to standards reasonable for wedding rental.
Location	Location: distance, time to get to meetings, fuel consumption. Need to use cars to come to facility. No exposure to walk-by traffic. Lack of public transportation to site
Plentiful Parking	Not accessible for disabled.
Zoning (no conditional use permit required for our type of organization)	
Meditation hall	Maximum capacity of Meditation hall too small for some events (about 50 max).
Lots of people involved with a wide range of skills and connections	Relatively narrow base of support (Buddhism). Perhaps 25-30 consistent participants. Over-reliance on Amos to get many things done.
Visible improvements have been made in facility and landscaping since we moved in; significant donations of cash and labor have been contributed to this project.	Maintenance needs are high; poor turnout for work days (poor advance notice and promotion).

Old trees and landscaping (potential)	Landscaping incomplete, multiple projects need completion to bring it up to standards of marketability for weddings.
Landlord has been supportive and flexible	
Sanghas have been supportive	Some sanghas members have stopped attending due to distance or principle (fuel consumption)
Website	
We have established some recognition/identity in the community	Poor publicity and promotion
We offer a diverse range of practices without conflict between groups	Little presence of Tibetan practices
Steering committee has put lots of time and energy into project	Lack of formalized board and organizational structure. Poor follow-through; many decisions made but no action taken. Feels like “wheel spinning.” Records of meetings have not been easily accessible (lack of transparency).
Resident caretaker	Amos not here full time (only 3 nights per week). It’s a voluntary position with a very high workload. There is role confusion over what is expected of the resident vs. of board and of groups.
A great opportunity to build sanghas, particular for the larger Buddhist community; pot-luck and fundraisers bring people together.	Few fundraisers, little leadership emerging for organizing fundraisers (a few people). Low turnout on work days.

Topic 2: Financial Solvency

Budget:

Jessica presented a budget worksheet. We have been averaging about \$1800 per month in income and expense. This represents a “bare bones” budget that pays the bills without leaving much for property improvement, program development, etc.

Base Income: Example A

30 people x \$30 per month	\$900
Rent Office	\$400
Rent Residential Side	\$700
Total	\$2000

Base Income Example B

20 people x \$100 per month \$2000

Fundraising Ideas

Optional Memberships: Some people may misunderstand the term membership and equate with health clubs etc., and thus think that if they are not a member they are not allowed to participate. It may therefore be a good idea to come up with another term. (Pledges?)

Ideas:

- Get 20 people to pay \$100 per month
- Build into the website the capacity to have an automatic monthly recurring withdrawal for those who wish to pledge that way.
- Different levels of members
- Email-a-thon
- Phone-a-thon
- Radio time
- Recognition wall
- Keep a graphic display of monthly dana membership (thermometer graph)
- Hat, badge, monk bags, other premiums for membership

Topic 3: Tasks

- Ask 20 people to commit to \$100 per month each (Joann letter to send out)
- Complete tax-exempt applications (Lakshmi, Bob, Amos)
- Job Descriptions (Amos)
- Agenda for Board Meeting on November 7 (Jasper, Amos, Ann)
- Minutes from Today's Meeting (Amos, Ann)
- Email Minutes to Board (Amos)
- Advertise for Rooms and Office (Greg, Kirsten)
- Make web donations easier (Bob Amos)
- Send Bob's List of Dharma Center Maintenance Tasks to General Email List

Staff and Board:

Potential/Acting Board of Directors

Lakshmi

Joanne

Kirsten (acting secretary)

Greg

Ann (acting secretary)

Jasper (acting chair)

Jessica (acting treasurer)

Janeese (temp)

Bob

Staff: Amos expressed desire to be volunteer staff (not board) and requested clarification on roles and responsibilities of board and staff.