Board Meeting

6/28/2020

Attendees: Molly Kuramoto; Justin Kuramoto; Sensei Hayashi; Ken Nakamura; Mr. Yamashita; Andrea Chapman; Maya Horio; Jay Lindenberg; Archer Harmon

1) Consent agenda: No questions or concerns. MOTION to accept consent agenda. Made by Justin, seconded by Andrea. Unanimous approval.

-Finances have been essentially at the same level compared to last year. Donations still coming in at a good rate.

2) Sensei Report: Plan to re-record entire first July service. Plan going forward is to have 3 versions of virtual service: full service; chanting only; and dharma message only. Purpose is to give the viewer options. Data shows that more people are completing video’s that are 10 minutes or shorter (Vimeo stats).

3) President’s Report: Nothing significant.

4) Reopening: Last month, tentative plan was to reopen July 12 (Obon service). COVID-19 data shows Northern Virginia remains on downward trend, with Phase 3 reopening scheduled for July 1. (Nationwide, COVID-19 numbers are worsening). With phase 3, numbers won’t be restricted, but social distancing will be enforced. Ekoji plans on going forward with July 12 reopening.

-Ekoji attended a webinar on temple reopening. Useful in understanding how different temples have approached reopening. Several temples have set up safety/reopening committee, tracking local numbers, working with local government, etc. Agreement from seminar: BCA temples must proceed with lots of caution, perhaps more than other religions. Sangha not attached to physical temple per se.

-Documents from webinar were posted on Google Drive. President has borrowed them for Ekoji’s use (safety items, cleaning protocols, service recommendations, etc.). Some recommendations are no chanting, no incense, no refreshments, mandatory mask use, no shared community items (no books, handouts, etc. Use projector instead. No robe for sensei, as it is difficult to wash). There is a spectrum of measures a temple can take, some more extreme with others. Must find balance.

-Ekoji has legal liability both as employer and as landowner. Will need assumption of risk waiver.

-Maya will prepare reopening protocol documents tailored to Ekoji (will include contact tracing questionnaire, RSVP form with liability waiver, and form saying what to expect from service, designed for Sangha members). Once drafts are completed, documents will be sent to Board for review.

\*Debate among board regarding reopening

-National numbers are really bad and worsening, even though Northern Virginia is doing relatively good. Archer said his business is staying in phase 2 based on national numbers, and fact that VA borders NC, a state that is doing worse.

-Surveys show that Sangha is happy with virtual service, but many miss just being physically in temple. One option is to allow reservations for people to safely visit temple to fulfill this need (example, allow a certain amount of people on Wednesday when Andrea is there), but still continue with virtual services. This option will keep things manageable regarding cleaning the temple after people visits. CON: not everyone available during the week to do something like this.

-Will need number of volunteers to do tasks associated with reopening (taking temperatures, greeting, etc. Lots of tasks will go into this)

-Will need CDC/EPA approved cleaners (Lysol, bleach, etc.). Molly can get peroxide based cleaner from work (Rescue brand). Possible for Ekoji to get healthcare based cleaners? Something from Costco? Presidents will take inventory regarding current cleaning supplies. Will need enough supplies for the long-term.

Should keep capacity to less than 50. Possibly limit people to two services per month? Set up overflow seating in garden? (Depends on demand). Everything remains tentative based on COVID-19 trend.

5) Special Bylaw meeting: Scheduled for evening of July 12, 5:00 pm. Virtual meeting.

-Comment from Joy (sangha member): virtual benefits are more limited than associate member. Wonders if we should split those into two categories.

-Board response: practically this is not really the case. Suggested contribution is the same, and a member can move from associate to virtual as needed, for example if they move, or if they’re high risk for COVID.

-PLAN: keep virtual membership as subset of associate membership.

ISSUE: Should virtual members have access to Nokotsudo (assuming they meet all other requirements)? Not in the draft text that was sent out in preparation for meeting, but this issue will be discussed as a possible amendment at the special meeting.

Plan: Board will amend proposed bylaw change to allow inclusion of virtual members to Nokotsudo.

-Maybe provide Zoom discussions for virtual members only?

-As culture of the country changes regarding use of technology, it’s important for future of Ekoji to have a virtual category.

ISSUE: Bylaw requires a person to be a member for 90 days to participate in special meeting. What about people who let their membership lapse? Ken said that the purpose of that rule was preventing other denominations at the time who were trying proselytize to take over Jodo Shinshu temples (e.g. Nichi Ren). The Board can get around this issue by waiving that 90 day requirement by vote at the special meeting.

6) Membership Surveys:

-Results have been overwhelmingly positive.

-42 total responses (we can see 40 based on our survey subscription)

-Majority of respondents are above age 40, and are members.

-Various reasons given as to why they became members (diversity of Sangha, etc.).

-Three respondents were not members. Reasons include cost, too far away, didn’t want to commit, not sure about Buddhism.

-Lots of things people enjoy about the service. Camaraderie, dharma message.

-One response did not like the lack of togetherness, felt that after service people were rushed out. Felt that Ekoji has “lost their way now that the Sangha is not predominantly Japanese.

(note, the stewardship groups addressed this at start of year, but COVID-19 has changed everything).

-Overall, the survey responses regarding services have been overwhelmingly positive, other than one critical response.

-Lots of suggestions as well (different online options, prison ministry, etc.). More education, more greeters, mentors/intro pamphlets for new members (Stewardship groups were addressing lots of these concerns regarding new members). More open house hours for the temple during the week (for example, tours).

-All but one responded that the Dharma message fulfils spiritual need.

-Surveys emailed to 500. Nobody elected to unsubscribe from Ekoji emails after receiving the survey request by email.

7) Dharma talk watch party:

-Short dharma talks, 10 minutes or less. Then Zoom discussion, play sensei’s dharma talk, then discuss as a group. Similar in format to book discussion and Sunday senior chat. Purpose is to allow people the opportunity to discuss Buddhism, as opposed to the other Zoom groups which are more social in nature.

-Possible timing: Sunday evening? Require people to register for meeting on Zoom, and limit meeting to an hour in time.

-Tentative start date: July 19

8) Facilities:

-President has contacted another contractor regarding kitchen, to get a second estimate.

-General maintenance plumbing issues.

9) Closing:

Next board meeting scheduled for July 25, 7:00 pm. Keep meeting virtual (Tsuji center will remain closed).

MOTION TO ADJOURN: made by Molly. Second by Archer. Unanimous approval.