

## Community Meeting August 11, 2019

In attendance: Chris, Kim, Lynn, Mary Ann, Andre, Bev, Michelle, Barbara, Jim, Pavel, Noah, Diane, Gillian, Loretta, Mike, LaDawn via Zoom

### Check in

Barbara opened the meeting with a contemplation about what Shambhala means to us, encouraging us to allow this to inform our discussion about finances.

### Center Finances

The Phoenix Shambhala Center has experienced significant budget shortfalls in recent months, and it is important for the future of the Center to find ways to reduce our expenses and increase our income. Please note that the concern is not imminent; we are **not** going to be closing the Center in the next few months. We are looking at how to ensure that the Center stays open long term.

### Current facts

- At current levels, we will not be able to pay for the two remaining years on our lease.
  - We take in about \$1000/month in membership dues.
  - Rent is \$1900/month and goes up \$100/month each year.
  - We have been taking from savings to cover monthly expenses for 9 of the last 12 months. July 2019 ran at a deficit of \$750, and the average balance for the last 12 months is a **loss of \$644.62**. [Note: a complete updated financial report for the last few quarters is being prepared and will be released when it is finished. –ed.]
  - We have more income in months that we have programs, but we have had a significant dropoff in programming. We reviewed programs offered in the last 12 months. We had nine programs with an average of 6-7 attendees. The highest attendance was 10 and the lowest was 3.
  - We have enough savings, assuming status quo income and expenditures, to last us until first quarter 2021. The lease is up in June 2021.
  - There would be a shortfall of \$500 for the final quarter of the lease, which would have to be covered by the guarantors. **If membership dues or other income decreased, we may need to rely on the guarantors sooner.**
  - The landlord will do a market survey one year from now and will let us know what the rent increase will be, if we make it to the end of the lease and decide to renew. We may wish to start investigating other options early to keep them in mind in the event the new rent is too high.
- Amy, Del, Muffie, Barbara, and Brian Hepler are current guarantors.
  - Amy has expressed concern about the financial situation and is unwilling to remain a guarantor on the lease unless the shortfalls are reversed and/or others come forward to be added as guarantors. Del has also expressed concern but will remain a guarantor until such time as someone comes forward to replace her. Brian has been out of contact for some time.
  - LaDawn has offered to become a guarantor. Lynn offered to make a contribution to support rental/expense needs if it came to that.

- The landlord is not concerned about the guarantor situation at this time, and whether we add, delete, or change guarantors. Legally, the landlord only wants at least one person to come to if we default on our payments before the end of the lease.
- A question: who do we consider ourselves to be? Are we still the Phoenix Shambhala Meditation Center? Are we still coming together with a common identity? A sense of identity and commitment is necessary to keep the Center going, **energetically**, financially and in terms of volunteerism.
  - We should have an additional meeting where sangha members can discuss their feelings about Shambhala.

### Cost cutting suggestions

- Reduce or eliminate our monthly contribution to Shambhala Global Services (we currently give \$200/month). Note that Shambhala Global Services provides many training, IT, and legal services to the Center, and they regard this contribution as payment for these services.
  - Consensus decision making was used; please note that some members could not attend but sent votes, but since they were not present they could not offer elaboration on their votes. The group that was present agreed to continue at \$200 but to revisit the decision next quarter.
- Eliminate cleaning service (\$175/month) and find alternatives for keeping the center clean.
  - One suggestion for replacing cleaning service: making light cleaning part of public sitting every other week, so that everyone who attends takes part in cleaning right after sitting. (This is common practice at Zen centers.)
  - Would cleaning fall to the same few people every time? Would people have to skip tea or book group in order to clean? Who would organize these efforts?
  - If we increase programming, we would need a clean center to attract visitors.
  - What is the role of the Space and Operations team with this? More discussion to come with this team. That said, any sangha member should feel welcome to come in and help.
  - Consensus decision on the proposal “We will temporarily keep the cleaning service, while experimenting with a new volunteer cleaning solution, then reevaluate next quarter.” The group that was present agreed to this proposal.

### Revenue increasing suggestions

- Offer more programming.
  - What do we offer? We can offer whatever our community wants, whether it’s Shambhala Training or anything else.
  - We must consider the costs, especially if we’re bringing in outside teachers; enough people must register to cover the cost, plus bringing in revenue to cover membership shortfalls.
  - But we should remember the benefits of bringing in experienced and inspirational teachers. How do we get the word out about these exceptional teachers? Personal invitations by phone and follow-up email may be best.
- Kunzang Choling – offering of \$400/month to have permanent shrine space. This is a Tibetan Kagyu Buddhist community that rents our space on Thursday nights, and they must take down our shrine and put it back up each week. Currently they pay about \$120/month.

- Chris will meet with them August 15 for more information about exactly what this change will entail. Note that they have welcomed any of us to visit during their Thursday night meetings, so we can get more familiar with them.
- KC's payment has varied in the past. Will they be consistent with this higher payment, treating it as rent rather than a voluntary contribution?
- Concerns: how will adding someone else's shrine impact our sense of identity? Could we have one of their shrines and one of ours in the same room, especially in the L-shaped room? Note that Shambhala has Kagyu lineage.
- Other sangha members are in discussion regarding being guarantors. Leadership team members will follow up.
- Andre will take on further investigation into increasing revenue. He welcomes ideas from anyone, as well as volunteers for the Finance Team.

### **Talking Points on Sexual Misconduct**

Due to time considerations, this topic has been tabled for a future meeting.