

**MINUTES OF THE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY**

January 29, 2006
Citizen Building, Baxter Centre

PRESENT

Peter Black, Linda Brett, Cheryl Brooks, Johanne Carpentier, Oli Cosgrove, Mark Cuddy, Heather Davis, Wendy Donner, Lionel Edirisinghe, Tim Gerrard, Rhona Goodspeed, Trish Heal, Dilani Hippola, Lalantha Hippola, John Hird, Linden Holmes, Subadra Kappagoda, Paul Maillet, Valerie McLennan, Hemantha Pussegoda, Nissanka Pussegoda, Ajith Stratton, Chandra Stratton, David Topp, Andre Vellino, Alex Young.

Call to Order

President Oli Cosgrove called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Peter Black moved and Trish Heal seconded adoption of the agenda.

Minutes of the 2005 Annual General Meeting

Oli read the minutes of the 2005 AGM. Nissanka Pussegoda moved Mark Cuddy seconded that the minutes of the 2005 Annual General Meeting be adopted.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Oli reported that we still do not have a system in place for taping Dharma talks. We need a group of people who go to the Quaker House, Days of Mindfulness and retreats who are conversant with MP3 players. David offered to take on this issue and to teach others how to use the MP3 player.

Assistance fund.

Oli reported that no requests for assistance were received this year. Dilani reported that there is a request for assistance for the next retreat.

Oli reported that when she sends emails to members the same 25 bounce back each time David offered to work with the communications secretary to straighten this out.

Annual Report

Oli reviewed the activities of the OBS for the year 2005 and notable donations OBS made to various charities. She thanked all the volunteers, the executive, the board and the nominating committee as well as Ajahn Viradhammo.

She reported that teachers for all but two months of the 2006 Days of Mindfulness program have been booked. One teacher, Leigh Brasington, is also booked for September of 2007 because his bookings are done two years in advance.

Membership this year was 98, compared to 91 in 2004. Library holdings also increased this year.

The outreach committee hasn't done much this year because the co-ordinator has been ill.

Linden moved to accept the annual report. Heather seconded.

Andre asked if the Annual Report should be put on our website and Oli asked how everyone felt about this, since we haven't done this before. Peter asked if we should post the minutes of the 2005 AGM. David said it is standard practice to do so.

Peter moved that these be posted. Chandra seconded.

Treasurer's Report

Alex Young presented the unaudited Treasurer's Report for 2005. Indra Fernando has kindly offered to do the audit for 2005.

Going Forward

The first survey ever taken of OBS membership was presented by Mark on behalf of the Survey Committee. Forty-six of 98 members responded in detail and provided us with a road map for OBS' direction for several years to come. The following main points gleaned from the survey were approved by 2005 executive and will be forwarded to the 2006 executive for their guidance.

RECOMMENDED FOR ATTENTION (not necessarily in the order given)

1. Practice Centre

One of the survey's questions concerned a practice centre of our own, a key objective the Society identified in its application for charitable status. When funds accumulated for a centre were insufficient by the target dates of 1994, and then 2000, the OBS was granted extension of its charitable status until 2010. Should the OBS decide that a practice centre is no longer an objective, Revenue Canada requires that in that same year, 80 per cent of funds accumulated for a centre should be dispersed to other charities, and that requirement would apply to every subsequent year. The OBS could thereafter retain for operating expenses only 20 per cent of all income in any year.

With savings of approximately \$50,000 in early 2005, a reading of the members' wishes regarding a centre seemed desirable. If there was no centre in our future the savings, instead of earning interest, might be better used by our associated monasteries and other charities.

Of the 40 who responded to the question of establishing our own centre, 25 agreed

and 15 dissented. Six abstained. However, the allied question asking for the level of financial support showed it wasn't strong enough. Only 28 of the 40 indicated any support, and 24 of those were in the under \$50 a month category. It is doubtful that mortgage and maintenance costs could be met even with fund-raising activities in which more than half the respondents were willing to participate

There were several suggestions that the idea of a practice centre is now linked to the forest monastery proposed by Ajahn Viradhammo. Ajahn has, however, made it clear that this will not be a practice centre.

Question for the 2006 executive:

If we are to switch our focus from a centre to the forest monastery, do we need Revenue Canada's approval? Or can we legitimately consider the monastery as the recipient charity for our accumulated funds? It should be borne in mind that the requirement is to disperse accumulated funds in the same year that a centre ceases to be a goal; the monastery won't materialize for at least a couple of years.

2. Sense of Community/ Membership Involvement

These were two separate questions but could be related. While time available and transportation were often identified as factors that prevented more involvement in OBS activities, a noteworthy number of respondents mentioned they hadn't been made to feel part of the community. This could prevent them from becoming more active in the Society.

The OBS cannot improve the time factor, but transportation, mentioned by a quarter of respondents (11), warrants consideration. The pagoda's location is inconvenient for members without a car. This has been brought to OBS attention before, at which time car pooling was suggested but not organized. This is still a possibility. A number of respondents also suggested accessibility to Dhamma teachings could be improved with smaller, informal discussion groups and mentoring in the proximity of their neighbour

hoods. One respondent mentioned that Joyful Land is experimenting with sessions in a regional library.

The silent nature of our Days of Mindfulness, and the need to go home right after the evening study sessions, discourages interaction between members and

contributes to newcomers' feeling of exclusion. While we have two socials a year, not everyone is able to attend them. Other solutions suggested by respondents: a) hold an hour's social session after every Day of Mindfulness b) have an official greeter at each event to watch for newcomers, introduce them to others including the president, and help to orientate them c) produce a brochure explaining protocols, sometimes a barrier to feeling part of the community d) develop more awareness among the membership of each other's needs; cultivate a greater awareness of members experiencing health and financial problems.

3. Connecting to the Community at Large

Respondents were fairly evenly divided on the question of members volunteering in the greater community as representatives of the OBS (23 yes, 19 no). Some felt that it would encourage a drift from our primary focus on the Dhamma, and that if members had time to spare it would be better used to help OBS develop a sense of community. Others felt working in the greater community would be in keeping with the Dhamma's teachings on compassion and would also help to raise the OBS' visibility.

Those who endorsed it cautioned that both the selection of the charity and the OBS representative working with it would require executive approval.

4. OBS Visibility

A clear majority of respondents (23 yes, 10 no) favoured raising OBS visibility in the community, almost all with the proviso that it be done only to inform others of our presence, not promote it. Listing in the Bell directory and a notice in Tone magazine were mentioned as acceptable methods.

Respondents indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the current program, which seems to offer something for everyone. It appears that the broad range of weekly practice and study sessions combined with opportunities for long or short retreats and

Days of Mindfulness meets the diverse needs of our practitioners, and no one event dominates in importance relative to others.

Approach to any proposed adjustments to the current program should be cautious.

There is a distinct mixed feeling about further expansion of the program given the

potential risk of diluting the effectiveness of current activities. Also, the members' priority is clearly centred on meditation and study whereas views on the importance of social activities and outreach are somewhat mixed.

Other Business

Peter Black submitted a list of proposals for the new executive to consider and report back to the OBS about by June 30th of this year. The proposals were to improve the hospitality of the OBS towards new members and to enable members to get to know each other and be better informed about Executive decisions. The following were the specifics:

1. To establish a coffee hour after DoMs.
2. To start a buddy system for new members
3. To create a pamphlet about the OBS
4. To communicate the decisions of the Executive to OBS members
5. To communicate the annual budget for the OBS to its membership within 3 months of the fiscal year end (by March 31).

Installation of the new Executive Committee

Johanne announced the proposed slate for the 2006 Executive:

President	Dina Fox
Secretary	David Topp
Treasurer	Alex Young with Mark Cuddy assisting
Librarian	Rhona Goodspeed with Cheryl Brooks assisting
Youth Program Co-ordinator	Chandra Stratton

Board of Directors

Lionel Edirisinghe	3 years
Priyani Mendis	3 years
Johanne Carpentier	2 years
Andre Vellino	2 years
Heather Davis	1 year
Dilani Hippola	1 year

Other Volunteers:

Monastic Co-ordinator	Oli Cosgrove
Retreat Co-ordinator	Dilani Hippola
Webmaster	Jeremy Gribben
DOM Co-ordinator	Nissanka Pussegoda and Hemantha Pussegoda
Membership Secretary	Tina Prudhomme
Social Committee	Subadra Kappagoda and Linden Holmes
Pagoda Study Group	

Co-ordinator	Rhona Goodspeed
Quaker House Co-ordinator	Valerie McLennan
Outreach	Unfilled

Oli asked if anyone objected or had other nominations. There were no objections or nominations.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30.