

Dharma Rain Zen Center

Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

Thursday, December 16, 2021, 7:00 pm @ Uji West/via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84712667246?pwd=RURRQ1FDdGJ4UzVJY0VPOGFUVklwUT09>

Meeting ID: 847 1266 7246

Pas

Meeting ID: 847 1266 7246

Passcode: 653120

Time	Item/s	Assigned to	Notes
7:00-7:15	Silence Check-in	All	
7:15-7:25	Approval of previous meeting minutes Review of any incomplete action items Member concerns (open)	Hogetsu	
7:25-8:00	Siskiyou Cohousing (5 mins) Financial report (10 mins) DEI (10 mins) HSC (5 mins) Teacher support followup (5 mins)	Kakuon Zonnyo Zonnyo Kakumyo Kakumyo	<u>Quarterly Financial Report</u>
8:00-8:10	Membership subcommittee report (5 mins) Board membership update (5 mins)	Membership subcommittee Kakuon	
8:10-8:25	Garden future direction (10 mins) Property updates (5 mins)	Kakuon Kakumyo	<i>See email from Gabe below</i>

8:25-8:35	Recap of action items	Hogetsu	
-----------	-----------------------	---------	--

Email from Gabe Penk re: vision for the DRZC garden

Hello,

I wanted to follow up after the sangha forum about the future of the garden at Dharma Rain. Currently, my plans as garden manager are to see the garden through the end of the year and then evaluate my role and involvement going into next year's growing season. As I consider my role, I'm also interested in hearing more about the temple's vision for the garden.

From those who shared at the forum, it sounded like people were happy with what the garden offered this year. If the board is still planning on funding a part-time garden manager position it would make sense to have more collective input about the vision of the garden, both short and long term. Questions I have are:

1. Who do we prioritize as recipients of produce? (temple, food bank donations, volunteers, etc)
2. How does the garden fit into the long term plans for the temple grounds?
3. What should the relationship between the garden and residents, retreat participants, volunteers, members, and the community be?
4. How will the garden be inclusive of and accountable to Native communities, recognizing that the temple occupies Native land?

I hope these are valuable for consideration and I look forward to being in discussion about the garden's future.

Thanks,
Gabe

Gabe resignation email:

Dear sangha,

I am writing this to let you know that I will be stepping away from my position as garden manager, as well as from practice at Dharma Rain generally. This has been a long process of discernment for me, and I would like to share some of my reasons for leaving in an effort to be honest and transparent about this decision.

When I first came to practice at Dharma Rain in January 2019, I was inspired by the community of devoted practitioners who were serious about their practice and willing to share it with others. It felt like the community I needed and I knew it would be a place where I could grow and be both challenged and supported. I eventually took on various responsibilities including Sunday

meal prep, sacristy, DEI work, and running the garden. All of these roles, as well as participation in service, ceremony, retreats, and sanzen have impacted me significantly. I am appreciative of all the ways this community has shaped me these past 3 years.

My decision to leave the temple entirely has grown out of my observations of the temple's overall culture which have repeatedly caused me concern and disappointment. The main factors include an inability to recognize and substantively address issues of privilege, a relatively "apolitical" attitude, and limited demonstration of appreciation for all the ways the temple receives support.

My work with the DEI committee has consistently run up against blocks from leadership bodies and individual members which has slowed and stalled its progress. I personally felt disrespected and discouraged putting care and effort into this work only for it to be rejected or undermined when we offered a recommendation. Without having greater autonomy within the temple overall, I believe the committee is not able to effectively serve its purpose. While I know the awakening to whiteness program has been useful, I still see very limited progress when it comes to being able to talk openly about issues of race, let alone make tangible changes which would create a safer, more inclusive environment for people of color and other oppressed identities. The work of examining privilege and dismantling barriers to practice based on race, gender, sexuality, class, etc is urgent and should not be delayed just because it may feel uncomfortable.

Related to this, I am very concerned by the caution around engaging with political issues. There is a noticeable silence at Dharma Rain regarding issues of power/politics which, one way or another, affect all of our lives. We live in a time when there is so much at stake as we are witnessing increasing violence against Asian-Americans and people of color more broadly, an empowered fascist right, a continued crackdown on migrants, and ever-worsening climate chaos, to name just a few concerns. The silence surrounding many of these realities feels like an attempt to avoid issues that may be partisan and therefore controversial. However, this approach only ends up dividing the spiritual from the political. It is not possible to be neutral in a world with such a severely unequal distribution of power and privilege. I am afraid too many people see Zen as an escape from the messiness and discomfort of politics rather than a practice integrated with their engagement in the world. I cannot continue to practice with a spiritual community that is unwilling to take a clear and definitive stance on matters of oppression. A predominantly white, middle-class sangha like Dharma Rain must be especially proactive in examining and undermining the ways in which it perpetuates systems of oppression, and must be willing to demonstrate its political commitments in tangible ways.

Finally, as garden manager I have been disappointed by the lack of sangha collaboration, and bothered by the sense that my efforts are taken for granted. On the one hand, I have been deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with the land at Dharma Rain and form connections with the plants and soil, as well as with neighbors and volunteers. The garden has supported

me in countless ways and so much of my life and energy this past year has revolved around this work. I never sought visibility or acknowledgement in this work, however, I am struck by how often I feel unseen and underappreciated by the sangha. It was telling that even when board members asked how they might show their appreciation, they could not commit to attending even one garden work party. Although I have become quite connected to the land at Dharma Rain, I have decided that it is best to move on to places where I can share my love of farming with others and where my work is recognized and affirmed.

I will be hosting one more garden work party this Saturday to close out the season with the regular garden volunteers. After that, I will be giving myself space from the temple to reorient and create my path forward. I am still willing to answer questions if they arise and to pass along resources (garden notes, planting spreadsheet, crop plans) to whomever will take care of the garden after me. This has been a difficult decision for me to make and I want to acknowledge again how much I have been positively impacted by the care, vulnerability, and openness which I have felt from the sangha. I am sorry it is necessary that I leave entirely but I have come to realize that the temple no longer serves me in the ways I need. I hope these reflections will be given consideration and that they may be useful for the sangha going forward.

Respectfully,
Gabe