

**ZCLA
FENGSHUI WORKING GROUP**

Meeting #1 -- Sunday, June 14, 2009

Minutes (by Senshin)

Present: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao, Lynda Golan, Diane Enju Katz, Rosa Ando Martinez, True Joy Fazio, Paul Joshin Johnson, Tom Yudo Burger, Evi Gemmon Ketterer, Darla Myoho Fjeld, Katherine Senshin Griffith, Jeanne Dokai Dickenson, Ty Jotai Webb, Sensei Raul Ensho Berge, Nelli Cartolin

I. Roshi outlined the agenda.

GOAL: To come up with plans for the grounds and the facilities, incorporating the Fengshui reading and other information.

Plum Hermit will get everything that has been in Roshi's head down on paper before we try to raise money.

We will document in a concise way our regular maintenance needs (like the need for arborists & repairs to the exterior of the buildings, etc.) so that in the future, rather than playing catch up, we can attend to these ongoing major and minor needs as part of an overall plan.

As Grounds Steward, Faith Mind has been assigned to document what our maintenance needs are, so that we can start to have a schedule, now that we have "caught up" with a lot of the maintenance issues.

Roshi always looks at what we have. Sometimes what we have is not always adequate but we make do. Examples: sufficient space for parking, a decent sized room large to meet in for larger groups, etc.

We physically (our behavior) also helps create the Mandala.

So we are looking at more effective ways to create the mandala, in our behavior, like paying attention to trash and our physical environment.

A call to notice the environment you're in and your contribution to it. This should be a part of the long term visioning.

II. The Group was asked to comment on how they related to the Fengshui reading and its principals, etc. Some of the points made:

- The report's emphasis on the vertical hierarchy and how that may apply differently in a Zen context.
- The importance of securing the perimeters of the center, particularly those around the Founder's Room.
- The 1/8 of the center that is not being used because it is not protected (the yard on Irolo Street etc.). Connected to ongoing budgetary limitations.
- The importance of the demarcation of the center's space, how you enter the space, should remind us what we're here for.
- How the buildings connect, the visual link of the buildings is now stronger and we need to keep doing more of that
- Energy leakage. All the windows. Do we feel safe here?
- One who witnessed the reading commented on the strength of the non-verbal communication aspect.
- How the use of space affects the mind. The center as a physical mandala that holds our collective and individual awakening.
- The danger for those who live here to fall into another mode.
- The "gate" is not to close out but to allow entrance into.
- The aspect of too many doors and altars talking to each other all made sense.
- The Gate needs to go out to include the Founder's Room.

- We are each holders of the whole, connecting intentionality with design. How each thing belongs, how we and each thing fits in and are all connected.
- Los Angeles's use of color as part of its new civic design.
- In Japan (in the 70's), the "Welcoming Gate" was everywhere and you very clearly knew when you entered a space that was cared for. That feeling of intimacy.
- The disjointed feeling of the Niapolita and the yard by Irolo.
- The need to clean out some bushes.
- Moved by the statement that it's all to be of the greatest benefit, to save all sentient beings and accomplish the Buddha's Way.
- The connection between sound and the confusion/clarification of space. The part our bells, han etc plays. The ongoing noise of this neighborhood.
- Clear energetic communication. Can almost see it moving or not moving, where it goes in or out, whether it's gentle or ferocious. "Like a black and white movie that suddenly turns into Technicolor." Making things so vivid.
- Several newcomers have mentioned not being able to find the entrance to the Santa Monica Zen Center or the Shamabala Center.
- People often come into our drive way and end up looking around. Mothers and their kids often stop by the front fountain. How this center stands out in the middle of Korea town.
- The problems of the upkeep of all the windows.
- Wherever dust collects, the energy stops. The number 1 thing we can do is clean it all out. Just keep cleaning. (3 big dumpsters were brought in when Roshi first came back 12 years ago.)
- The Pine House being the energy seat of the lineage. Making clear all the other "seats" The Founder's Room is the Heart. The Zendo is the "practice heart."

- The “energetic gate.”
- Eva only recommended things that we could do. We won’t be tearing down the buildings. How remodeling must abide by zoning codes and handicap considerations, etc.
- Contemplating the difference between the “Hazy Moon of Enlightenment” (Zen) and the “Great Eastern Vivid Sun” (Shambala). How you can visually see the differences in the various traditions.
- How many of the Glasgow plans agree with the principals of the Fengshui reading. How each is a piece and we can incorporate many pieces in the plan we will come up with.
- The importance of low maintenance and cleaning things up.
- Always remembering our objectives: This center’s purpose is to save all sentient beings. Different mindset than dealing with personal apartments, etc.
- Noticing how the plan to “consolidate” all the places of the center has been coming together, turning this into more than just a practice place but a safe place to do what needs to be done.
- It has taken a decade to “plug up the holes” but now we can start to think differently.

III. Notes on the specific aspects of the Report

General Note: Until we raise the money, we don’t do the work. Our new order of business is to:

- 1) Prioritize
- 2) Raise the money
- 3) Do the work

A. The Pine House

- Nothing major is needed.

- The signs have been elevated.
- The need/expense of removing one of the Redwood Trees along the fence.
- A new front porch will be put in that should last 100 years.
- The needs of the fence between the Pine House and the neighbors. Safety issues. Graffiti next door. Protection is one thing, energy is another issue.
- Discussion on entering the Pine House always from the front, the path there is not important.
- The pathway between the Sangha House and the Pine House is hard to keep clear because of parking needs.
- Having all the meetings outside the Pine House has been good for Roshi and has helped her focus on teaching aspects. Now the PH is only used for practice consultations and meetings with the teachers (because of the lineage connection).

B. The Zendo

- We have already spent about \$80,000 this year, so no major project on the zendo can be done till money is raised. A lot of the issues around the zendo are connected to a bigger project that will take a lot of thought and re-conceiving and can't be done piecemeal.
- The stairs -- having risers between each step, a bigger landing. Making it clearer and more impressive.
- Renaming the entrances: "The Abbot's entrance" and the "Main entrance." So, the (old) back entrance is now the ABBOT'S ENTRANCE and the (old) front entrance is now the MAIN ENTRANCE. Making this clear and putting it into practice.

- The side entrance is treacherous.
- The possibility of knocking down the shower and moving the wall farther back, eventually getting a 2nd bathroom. The issue of where the visiting teachers can change.
- Gemmon can solve the bench problem with some hangers on the wall. It is very hard to store the benches in an orderly fashion. Often people store benches where shoes should go.
- Gemmon can make some sliding doors for the zendo storage area.
- Gemmon will come up with a temporary simple plan that can help make things work until we have the funds to do a big overhaul.
- Shoe gridlock problem
- Wait for rice paper on the windows till bigger remodeling.
- For later: removing the gaiten wall. Right now, just clean things up and make sure latecomers have a place to sit.
- The cleaning stuff in the closet is a mess.
- Using the side entrance is only good for extra big sesshins.
- Using the shades in the zendo.
- We want the awning up over the stairs before the July sesshin.
- With the altar moved, we now can see Manjusri from anywhere in the zendo (more in keeping with the Japanese Zen tradition). Eventually, it will be on a smaller table and that altar, possibly moved to the Buddha Hall (possible issues of fitting through the door.) Protecting the vulnerable feeling of the back of the altar.

- The need for retraining/reinforcing the way to do kinhin in the new configuration. Again, the element of how we conduct ourselves being as important as the physical space.
- Returning to slow kinhin for the bulk of the kinhin period and then not go into fast kinhin until right before it's time to return to your seat. Incorporating a new way to cut out of line to go to the restroom. Reinstruction needed for this.
- Safety concerns: Tuesday night candles on the shelves. Strips needed on the stairs.
- Discussion about the small window in the front gaiten, using it to see what's going on in the zendo.
- Not a lot of people to model off of in the service positions makes it hard to train new people, hard to learn.
- It's hard to schedule in advance the minor service positions because of people's busy lives, unlike in a monastery situation where it's rare to even touch a bell. Adapting to the way things are here and making the best of it.
- The emphasis that training is a lifelong practice, ongoing embodiment and curiosity. The monitor's role is to help create the environment for the zendo. Comportment important. Not said too often. Zen is a "body learning" practice. You can hear it in the way the bells are hit.
- If the entrance is strong, the rest will follow. All the problems are connected. The main gaiten should be like a special chamber.
- Right now, Yudo is our "alive" gate keeper.
- A new front gate in the future

C. The Gardening Shed

- The shed has been painted.

D. The Buddha Hall

- A new curved porch will be built in July with a new shoe rack and pillar, should clear up the shoe traffic problem.
- The importance of keeping the service position folk's shoes separate and neat -- no spillage. Again, training.
- Limiting access to the Founder's Room to only the officiant, jisha and chiden. Everyone else in the Buddha Hall. Keeping the doors always closed so it's secure and private. The need to opening it up has served its purpose. It's not a casual space and now it's time to retreat back, let it be what it should be which is a tomb/womb where the Founder's live. Respecting the fact that you just don't walk in and out of where someone lives. Putting it behind the altar is not a usual place but for now, it's the best place we have now. When it was upstairs in the zendo, no one went in.
- Rethinking the storing things in the chiden area.
- Discussion of fire safety for guests, etc. in the Buddha Hall and which doors to close off, etc.
- Finding a better use of the chiden area: shelves for food.
- Discussion of the real need for a cloth over the doors and what can be done.
- How to reclaim the front gardens... the energetic gate, retaining wall (\$30,000 to \$40,000 job). Not sure what we want. Tricky because it's a steep area. The Grounds Group has been cleaning it up so we can at least see what we have, opening up the space so we can think about what to do with it.

IV. Closing remarks/notes:

- Next meeting will pick up where we left off on the Fengshui report, continuing to make short and long term plans.
- Roshi's admonition to the people in each area of the Zen Center to look for things.
- Next meeting: some Sunday afternoon in a few months, TBD