

Oak Spirit Sanctuary Board of Directors Meeting: June 13, 2021

Attendees:

Board members:

Patrick Finney (President)

Dawn Finney (Treasurer)

Absent: Josh Kirby, Larry Brown, Kerry Easter

Advisory Board Members:

Aaron Oates

Shannon Bagwell

Robyn Nall

Chuck Cook

Recording secretary: Dawn Finney

Board or Relevant Organizational Activity since last meeting: May 23, 2021

May 24, 2021 Naiya Jones, who was elected May Queen by an agreement to hold a vote this year in the Sisters of the Sanctuary group, makes announcement on OSS Facebook Community page of chosen May King: Jake Chaney, which was met with displeasure by some community and leadership members. Comments on post were felt to violate OSS Social Media policy so post was removed.

May 24, 2021 Amy Cook resigns, effective immediately.

This was her second time on the Board of Directors from April 11, 2021 to May 24, 2021

May 24, 2021 Rebekah Guffie resigns, effective immediately, Secretary position vacant

Rebekah was on the Board of Directors from April 11, 2018 to May 24, 2021

May 31, 2021 Joshua Kirby voted and appointed to Secretary position by Board of Directors

June 6, 2021 Patrick Finney, first student to complete the OSS Clergy Training program, has final interview process with Rev. Tiffany Andes and Board of Directors and is recommended for ordination by Rev. Tiffany Andes. Board of Directors votes to approve ordination as recommended by Rev. Tiffany Andes.

June 6, 2021 Tiffany Andes resigns, effective immediately, vacates organizational lead positions of Ecumenical Director and Ritual Arts Coordinator

June 8 2021 Tori 'Taz' Chance is voted onto Advisory Board

Meeting called to order at: 7:03 PM

I) Old business: Updates from continuing projects, tasks from previous meetings

1) Registration Forms, looking into options:

a. Survey monkey: although free, does not comprehensively meet the needs that we have

- b. Calendly: useful for booking meetings, but does not allow booking meetings at same time, so not useful for booking concurrent camping slots
 - c. Wordpress: Aaron could not log into Wordpress, software programs for registration
 - d. Eventbrite: Big paid event registration site/ service. Widget to use in Wordpress?
No solutions at this time, will keep looking into options
- 2) Campers at OSS mentioned: “Hip Trip” app--for listing your site nationally, for people looking to camp to be able to find your site. Would this be something for OSS?
 - a. Considerations: Would be good to have online camping registration form and payment system in place for this
 - 3) Camping registration form data field needs to have license plate number to confirm registration
 - 4) Anyone supervising camping needs to have access to these forms. Mention of previous idea of volunteer “camp hosts” to check in/ supervise, perhaps on-call or schedule of who covers what weekend.
 - 5) Message boards/ Sign boards
 - a. Message board at retreat center: updating message board with camping information hasn’t happened yet.
 - b. State Park Style board: Cost of lumber have skyrocketed. Be careful about how extensive a design is right now because costs of building materials are so high. Maybe later.
 - c. Make full use of message board at house: have some sort of secure place for camping forms at retreat, with a sign on the gate for campers to go up to retreat for info and sign in?

II) Departmental or Committee Reports

A) Land Management

- 1) Mowing maintenance:
 - a) Not a lot of people available to keep everything mowed, lack of on-site work crew involvement due to COVID
 - b) Half of land is very tall and can’t get mower in. Brush hog is may be needed at some point.
- 2) Kerry Easter told Chuck vacating cabin in September, while this is OK, she is responsible for cabin maintenance. Condition of cabin is very bad. Maintenance not kept up in the cabin. Chuck had people look at cabin, and building condition is bad and Chuck feels it could potentially be condemned.

B) Retreat Center--no reports

C) Clergy

- 1) Future of Clergy Department:
 - a. Questions about what is next, i.e. “Who is still active in ritual presentation, teaching, curriculum creation etc.”
- 2) Idea to create an Ecumenical Council/ Clergy Committee
 - a. Comment that such a committee could involve community members who have an interest in this area as well as those with clergy training. The skills of experienced clergy are essential but community perspective is also important.
- 3) Someone is needed to simply coordinate rituals and leads for rituals, even if doing so temporarily.

D) Oak Scouts--no reports

E) Financial

- 1) Debt load for OSS is increasing
 - a. Last year's and this year's well pump repairs
 - i. About \$3,000.00 for OSS share of electrical pump repair of 2021 in addition to last year's substantial replacement
 - b. Largest debt is to Catherine Carpenter, payment in progress
 - c. Paying into escrow account for payment for legal services. We do not know what the final court costs will be to OSS
- 2) Main point: OSS needs a cash infusion, asking for brainstorming ideas from everyone for ways for OSS to obtain money. In past years: Timber sale was done which brought in revenue. Stating this as an example of the kind of idea needed, not suggesting we do another timber sale at this time as this is not a well-liked idea nor very viable due to time frame from past timber harvest.

F) Fundraising

- 1) In relation to previous mention for fundraising effort for gravel from past meeting: Now is not a good organizational environment to kick off a fundraising campaign, since there is a current community conflict.

G) Legal

[Redacted with advisement from attorney due to being an ongoing legal matter.]

H) Outreach / Social Media

- 1) Website: out of date, needs updating.
- 2) Mike Carroll had been assigned head of the website, and Aaron was working with him, but they ran into issues of access the site.
- 3) Passwords, get people who need access the passwords

III) Events

A) OSS Events / Calendar

- 1) Reports on previous events--no reports/ no events
- 2) Upcoming events
 - 1) June Lunar--First on site OSS event since COVID shut down
 - a. Amy was going to run this but she resigned. She was asked if she still wanted to do this Lunar and she declined
 - b. Patrick and Dawn volunteer to do this Lunar.

B) Outside rentals ---no reports

IV) Special Projects

A) Strategic Planning

- 1) Patrick Finney started and led this process a few years ago. Got about 1/3 of the way through but board resignations and new member additions, plus board lack of

scheduling meetings to work specifically on this project caused progress to drop off. Patrick states he would like to get back to this project. Aaron Oates states he would be interested in helping with this and has previous experience with several groups.

V) Any other new business / Miscellaneous

A) “Listening Circle” presented by Patrick Finney as an idea to explore for beginning to process community conflict

- 1) Communication has not been happening in a constructive way online, and no one is speaking directly to each other.
- 2) Explanation of process: In person or virtual “listening circle,” formally structured, each person expresses their statements for a certain amount of time, instruction in non-violent communication and use of “I statements” without imposing intentions on others.
- 3) The idea is to have a safe space for structured communication that helps people speak from a thoughtful place.
- 4) The overall goal is not to make plans for solutions. The goal is to have a container for people to express their concerns and feelings, ask questions, and hear information directly from a source.
- 5) Could start with a grounding exercise.
- 6) The purpose of first round is to allow everyone to voice concerns with active listening by others in the circle.
- 7) Second round: people get to ask questions. Person addressed answers questions. The key is that it does not turn into “free for all” back and forth--clarifying questions are asked and answered.
- 8) Comments and Questions from others in board meetings. Responses follow in outline
 - a. Who would be invited to a listening circle?
 - i. Open to anyone in the community who wishes to participate
 - ii. Choose format that allows most people to come who wish to, and may need more than one listening circle.
 - b. Is this a format used with OSS before?
 - i. Patrick has never used this format at OSS, but it is a variation of a one-on-one mediation technique that Patrick has used. Explains his training and experience with mediation.
 - c. Are there options outside of the community for a facilitator of a listening circle?
 - i. Needs exploration. There are professional mediators, which would incur a cost.
 - ii. May be non-profit conflict resolution options that would need to be explored.
 - iii. Mention of Badger Johnson who has led co-counseling trainings and may be able to be a resource or help find others in the area.
 - d. A time limit for speaking would be good, but what if someone has multiple issues with multiple people and needs more time? Who will take minutes? Will there be actions taken from the data point presented in a listening circle? Idea to break these up into categories and talk about the processes and how they work as opposed to actual issues (eg grievance process, how events work, transparency, how mediation gets handled). Then another one for actual grievances, so these don't run so long.
 - i. Response: This is just one step in a longer, larger process in terms of organization communication and resolution.
 - ii. The point of a listening circle is really to listen to others: the first step in resolving a conflict is to get people involved to express themselves in a productive non-violent

way, and to help them to listen to each other. It isn't about organizational processes at this point, it's about communication.

- iii. There are a lot of people who don't feel heard or listened to and the idea is to provide some kind of format for people to feel heard and listened to.
- e. Comment that this needs to be a "board listening session:" the board needs to listen and not respond.
 - i. The listening circle is for everyone to listen to each other and asking clarifying questions in the rounds, but the board members participate not as "board members" but as "people in a listening circle." It is literally about expressing and active listening--this is the only goal.
 - ii. A listening circle is about expressing one's feelings as a "person," in a container of safe space--including board members. Because sometimes, if a board member is expressing very strong emotions, this may be happening in counterproductive ways that undermine the harmony of the community.
- f. Statement made that if the people in this meeting are having difficulty grasping this concept of a "listening circle," the concern is that to bring something like this to a larger group might be unwieldy.
 - i. Idea then, to have a smaller, trial group to test this, perhaps the General Council could be a test of a listening circle, at another time.
 - ii. Could also test out the timing--how does 3 minutes feel? Should it be more or less?
 - iii. Idea: To also provide other kinds of opportunities for communication such as written statements, if someone would prefer to have something read or couldn't make a live listening circle group exercise.
 - 1. May wish to encourage people to come prepared with their thoughts written down even for an in-person listening circle.

B) Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services

- 1) There is a need for basic conflict resolution with mediators as shown by past conflicts between individuals at OSS. Statement that this has been made available in the past.
- 2) If this is a service that can be provided by clergy, what have been the barriers to accessing it?
 - a. Each case where mediation was agreed to but didn't happen has been for unique reasons. In one case, it was a scheduling issue. In another, parties ended up working it out on their own.
- 3) Promote more information about conflict resolution protocols available.
- 4) Idea: Create a committee for conflict resolution so that it isn't just the board running this process. It would have a board member or two on it but be composed of clergy/ community members with training.

C) Discussion regarding petition presented on OSS Community Facebook page

- 1) Reason petition came out now, because board is in a state of flux which makes it a good time to make changes.
- 2) Tasks: Breaking down the topics, finding supporting documents, updating information, need to collect documentation from all over the place, gather it, review Binder of policies and procedures--existed at one point? or in pieces? needs to be gathered
- 3) Newsletter idea for communication
- 4) Give better direction for how to use processes
- 5) Website good place to catalog information and direction

- 6) People have worked on trying to catalog policies in the past.
- 7) Big project, will take time.
 - a. No timeframe on the petition, but progress needs to be made to be able to find information, know what is going on, and how to help
- 8) Individuals are in positions where they don't know what it is they should be doing, don't know expectations and endpoints, and where limits are so they don't overstep their roles. Need clarification and definition of roles
- 9) Question regarding grievances against board member with another board member? Who decides in these cases? Outside mediation? Use the advisory board. What would the process be?
- 10) Brief discussion on board composition and number of members
 - a. Board had opportunity to add other members when those in positions of head of clergy and land management were interested in applying. Question of whether positions of land management or head of clergy can be on the board?
 - i. Clarification that Don Breuer had to exit the board when he became the land/house steward because his arrangement was part of his rental and living arrangement between the board and himself. Thus, his being on the board was a conflict of interest. This may not apply in the same way to the Head of Land Management
 - ii. The Head of Clergy does not sit on the board because there are unique authority and powers in this position and if put onto the board, would exceed the power of any one singular board member.
 1. Question: If, once there are a number of ordained clergy persons, they would also be empowered to make decisions for the clergy department and thus sole decision-making power would not rest with one person?

Meeting adjourned at: 9:05