

**Minutes of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
September 10, 2010 at Birken Forest Monastery**

- Agenda:**
1. Attendance
  2. Minutes of last year's AGM (October 20, 2009)
  3. Matters arising
  4. President's Report (Ven. Sona)
    - a. Monastic Training
    - b. Retreats and events held at the monastery and off site
    - c. Monastic comings & goings
    - d. Renovations and construction projects
    - e. Other news and concluding observations
  5. Financial Report (Tom Frisby)
  6. Board of Directors
  7. Motions

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1. **Attendance:** A total of 8 members & 5 guests attended the meeting:  
**Members:** Ajahn Sona, Vens. Subharo, Dhammavaro, and Suvaco, Linda Furrow, Tom Frisby, John Derk, Amin Kabani,  
**Guests:** Tyson Lupol, Doug Perry, Karen Brough, Jennifer Brooker, Richard Griffin
2. **Minutes of last year's AGM,** were approved unanimously without amendment.  
Moved by Linda Furrow, seconded by Doug Perry.
3. **Matters Arising:** (none)
4. **President's Report:**
  - a. **Monastic Training**  
Bhikkhus Subharo, Dhammavaro and and Suvaco continue to train at Birken under Ajahn Sona as *acariya*.  
  
During the Rains of 2009, Ajahns Sudanto and Karunadhammo came from Abhayagiri to support the Birken monastic community in Ajahn Sona's absence. Ajahn Sudanto offered astute and encouraging direction to the junior bhikkhus and Ajahn Karunadhammo conducted detailed Vinaya classes (5 times weekly) for the Bhikkhu community – he also introduced some of the finer points of robe-sewing to the Birken monks.  
  
Winter retreat 2010 was spent in silence & seclusion by the junior monks, culminating in a final two weeks of one meal per day for the entire community and no formal community practice

Ven. Pavaro is spending the year of 2010 at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery, absorbing community life in the monastery led by his preceptor, Ajahn Pasanno, and (until recently) Ajahn Amaro.

Sister Mon has been living & practicing in Thailand supported by her family.

### **b. Retreats and Events**

The following list indicates the more relaxed (!) teaching and travel commitments during the 2009-10 year. Unless otherwise indicated, all events listed below were at Birken Forest Monastery and led by Ajahn Sona:

<b>Rains Retreat 2009</b> July 5 – Oct 5 (Bhavana Society)	Teaching Duties, for Ven Gunaratana
August 19-23	5-day retreat led by Ven Pavaro
August 30-Sept 5	10-day retreat for Portland supporters, led by Ajahn Sudanto
Sept 18-27	10-day retreat, led by Ajahn Sudanto & Bhante Seelananda
Oct 5-16 (California)	Ajahn Sona @ Buddhist monastic conference Abhayagiri Kathina
Oct 17	Birken's first Kathina celebration
Oct 18 (Kamloops)	morning meditation / talk
Oct 23-31 (Ottawa)	8-day retreat
Oct 27-31 (Edmonton)	Ven. Pavaro 5-day retreat
Nov 22 (Kamloops)	morning meditation / talk
Nov 30-Dec 15 (Thailand)	WAM (Elders' gathering)
Dec 20 (Kamloops)	morning meditation / talk
Jan 1 – March 30, 2010	Annual Winter Retreat
Jan 21 (Kamloops)	talk on meditation @ TRU, Kamloops
Jan 31 Feb 28 March 28 (Kamloops) April 25 May 30	morning meditation / talk
May 7-10 (Victoria)	public talk & weekend retreat (100 attended)
May 14-16 (Vancouver)	weekend retreat at Rosemary Heights (22)
May 21-23 (Vernon)	public talk and weekend retreat
July 18 (Birken)	Kamloops field trip for tea

### **c. Monastic comings & goings:**

Ajahn Sona spent the 2009 Rains Retreat at Bhavana Society at the request of his preceptor, Bhante Gunaratana, who is taking a year sabbatical.

Ajahn Sudanto and Ajahn Karunadhammo, of Abhayagiri, spent the 2009 Rains retreat here at Birken.

Ven Pavaro left in December 2009 to spend a year at Abhayagiri, returning for a brief visit June 27 – July 7. He plans to spend next year in Thailand.

Maechee Quinn McDonald, and supporter from Birken II days who has spent the last 9 years in Thailand training as a maechee, visited for 4 days in April 2010.

Steward John Derk undertook Anagarika training in April.

Luang Por Sumedho & Ajahn Pannyasaro visited Birken June 29 – July 7, 2010.

### **d. Building / Improvements**

- the office was relocated to room 8 in the fall of 2009
- 4 ft Shed Extension with large sliding doors on the North side of the woodshed recently completed, to house wheel barrows, tools etc out of the weather
- replacement or refinement of several cedar planks on exterior front entrance.
- the railings and deck of the cedar front steps all received a new coat of oil, as did the outside door and window frames
- a 45 ft boom lift was rented for 7 days for the following work on the weathered (badly so on S + W sides) windows:
  - cleaning and re-oiling all window frames
  - washing windows;
  - cleaning eaves troughs
  - some siding washing (bird guano)
  - coating all bottom ledges with clear Dap
  - all fascias on Vihara building and Outbuilding repainted
- E side of woodshed, along with all fascias, repainted
- green paint and decoration to Foyer
- many lighting/electrical issues improved assisted by Ajahn Sudanto

The above work was mostly conducted by monastics, with some kind assistance by guests.

Extensive repairs were done to the walking path at K2 (the posts were rotten) by Stephen Roehrig, with the help of Linda Furrow & John Derk.

of wood & heating system:

- At the fall collection of firewood, we noted that we've nearly come to the end of the extensive pine pre-cut by Mike Mahony. As it turns out, we had *exactly* the right amount in the woodshed to last through the winter.
- Spring wood gathering operations (fir) were greatly assisted by the purchase of a utility trailer for hauling, a block & tackle, a new Stihl chain saw, and a log splitter (which has provided many hours of entertainment for guests).
- We're grateful for approval received from BC Forestry to remove fallen trees of any size; we've harvested almost exclusively fir this year.
- A new (high-efficiency, gasification) wood boiler was purchased and installed, along with a 4000 gallon hot water storage tank.
- Fine-tuning of the domestic heating system continues to this day.
- We expect that our wood consumption will be cut by more than half (from 30 cords a year down to 15), and so the tractor will be housed in the empty area of the woodshed for the winter.

#### **e. Other news / Concluding Observations**

Long-time steward George Robinson left in December 2009 to pursue "life in the real world". Helpful Guests Derek Sheahan, Kian Fellahi, Gordon McKusik served the community in succession. We now welcome Ricardo Navarro.

Steward Linda Furrow has served Birken for 5 years, and will be taking a 3 month leave of absence to serve at Sati Saraniya Hermitage, October – December 2010.

Projects planned for the fall include insulation of the ceiling, and perhaps 1 or 2 more soapstone wood burning stoves in kutis to further reduce our propane use.

For next year, Phase 2 of the new heating system envisages a 750 sq ft solar hot water array mounted on a 15' x 50' building, to be used as a workshop. This is expected to provide 100% of our heating needs 9 months of the year, including domestic hot water. Supplemented by the wood boiler in the 3 coldest months, we hope to reduce our wood-fuel needs to 5 to 6 cords of wood.

We would also like to begin what might be a 3 year project to convert the Outbuilding into a Monastic Cloister, to provide a much-needed space for *samana-saṅṅa*, for monastics in training. This would have many other advantages. Cooking for the monastics, and dedicated dana meals, could be prepared in a small kitchen, simplifying cooking duties all round. Septic would be relieved by Zen toilets and a monastic shower with separate field.

Ajahn Sona notes that Birken is at capacity for monastics; there is no room for more candidates for training or ordained monks wanting to take up residence here, although such requests are received frequently.

Ajahn Sona intends to travel very little during the next year, staying within BC until the “Elders’ gathering” scheduled in Thailand for December 2011, to be followed by a second combination meditation retreat and cultural exploration with a group of Canadians, this time to Sri Lanka. Watch the website next year for details.

**Green Monasticism:** We are proud to offer Birken as a cutting-edge example of economic & ecological responsibility. Our ongoing efforts to reduce energy consumption and to use to a higher percentage of bio-fuels (wood from dead trees) have resulted in a significant reduction in our propane & diesel use with consequential financial savings and reduction in use of non-renewable resources and emission of greenhouse gases. More and more, “the sun does all the work”. 90-95% of our energy is provided by solar power.

The experience we have gained with innovative technologies and simple energy-savings measures are shared with other monasteries, both Buddhist and Catholic, and with guests who come wondering, ‘but is alternate energy really accessible? what could I do?’ We’ve done the experimentation, shortening the learning curve for others.

Our process is being documented step by step in video as well as photos & text, and one day there might even be a video on YouTube!

## **5. Financial Report:**

We are happy to welcome Kanthi Randeni, one of our early treasurers, back on the scene as bookkeeper & accountant. Her prompt delivery of the Financial Reports has allowed us to have the AGM a month earlier than usual this year.

And we’re glad that Treasurer Tom Frisby is able to attend this year’s AGM.

Tom reports that our donation stream and our expenses are fairly consistent from year to year. The contingency fund recommended 5 years ago has slowly come into being, so that we now have 6 months’ operating expenses in savings, to provide for ‘anicca’ experiences of unexpected capital expenses or reduction of donations. But in fact, donations have remained fairly steady during the recent years of economic downturn, a heartening sign that the Dhamma is appreciated. Donations this year were down 10% from last year; 5% less than the average of the 6 preceding years. The number of donations is rising, which bodes well for the future when the economy recovers.

Clear vision coupled with prudent management has led to a small positive cash flow each year, with capital projects undertaken as funds become available. No new debt has been incurred for many years now, and the one remaining loan (interest-free) is being paid down steadily at a reasonable rate, agreeable to Birken and our lender.

Financial procedures have been streamlined in recent years, with the old system of manually produced, signed, hardcopy tax receipts mailed out 3 or 4 times a year being replaced by electronic tax receipts usually e-mailed within a month of the donation. Another ecological & economic savings in paper and postage, to say nothing of volunteer hours! This allows us to focus on what we are really here for.

## 6. Board of Directors:

This is a non-voting year:

George Robinson stepped down from the board when he left Birken in December, 2009.

Gordon McKusick was drafted as a short-term director in June 2010, and departed in July.

John Derk is nominated as director, and third signing authority for cheques.

Moved by Ajahn Sona, seconded by Linda Furrow, carried unanimously.

Except where indicated, Board members for the Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery society reside at the monastery, (7000 Smith Lake Forest Service Rd, Roche Lake)  
Postal Address: PO Box 5, Knutsford BC V0E 2A0

Ajahn Sona, President

Ven. Subharo, Vice-President

Tom Frisby, Treasurer: 5509 Pearson Rd, Vernon V1B 3K8

Linda Furrow, Secretary

John Derk, Director

## 7. Motions:

that the 2011 AGM be held at Birken Forest Monastery on, **September 11, 2011**.

Moved by Linda Furrow seconded by Ajahn Sona.

Carried unanimously.

to adjourn the 2010 AGM.

Moved by Ajahn Sona seconded by Ven. Subharo.

Carried unanimously.