



Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery ('Sitavana') Annual General Meeting – October 27, 2019

MINUTES – AGM 2019

1. Attendance

Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Teresa Wixted, Hazel Plumbley, Brent Styra, Leslie Hanrahan, Ryan Syme, Will Bucci, Sarat Vulimiri, Scott Matthews, Reinhold Lutz, Kush Tilakaratne, Rachel Telesmanick, Dinka Pignon

2. Minutes of last year's AGM (November 4, 2018)

The AGM 2018 Minutes were accepted unread.

Moved by Teresa Wixted, seconded by Hazel Plumbley. Motion carried: 13 approval votes, 1 abstention.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS APPROVED PRIOR TO AGM:

Several special resolutions came up for board consideration in May and June 2019. Special resolutions require an approval vote by at least four board members; the record of voting is shown below. Copies of all the approved Special Resolutions are attached to this report:

a. Special Resolution Approving the Purchase of Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV

Approved: Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Teresa Wixted, Hazel Plumbley, Brent Styra, Leslie Hanrahan
Abstention: Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon)

b. Addendum to Special Resolution Approving the Purchase of Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV

Approved: Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Teresa Wixted, Hazel Plumbley, Brent Styra
Abstention: Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Leslie Hanrahan

c. Special Resolution Approving Purchase of New Lithium Batteries/Inverters for Off-Grid Power Storage and Construction of New Year-Round Tractor Outbuilding

Approved: Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Teresa Wixted, Hazel Plumbley, Brent Styra, Leslie Hanrahan –UNANIMOUS

PLEASE NOTE: construction of the new year-round tractor outbuilding was augmented as the building process began. Please see section 5.e.: "Renovations and construction projects" below for more details.

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

a. Resident Monastics:

Ajahn Sona continues to offer wisdom and guidance in his pivotal role as Abbot of Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery. 2019 marked his 65th birthday and his 31st vassa (rains retreat). With this new stage of life comes his continued commitment to solitude in support of his meditative practice. His determination to bring the Buddha's teachings to more and more people has resulted in a rich harvest of 90 YouTube Dhamma video talks and podcasts available online for our worldwide audience of practitioners.

Sister Mon remains in her active role as Senior Nun at Birken which includes more daily responsibilities in running the monastery. We still await word on the status of her third Canadian Permanent Residency application which was filed in July 2018 under the Humanitarian and Compassionate Considerations (HCC). As we shared with you in last year's AGM report, our attorney has told us the HCC application process can take from 1-2 years for review. We will update you again on Sister Mon's progress towards permanent residency at next year's AGM. In terms of her work permit, she applied for another extension in June 2019 to allow ample time for the review of her HCC application, and was granted a 28-month work permit starting in August 2019 through the end of December 2021.

b. Monastic and Dignitary Visitors:

The Royal Thai Consulate General's Office visited the monastery again in August 2018 as they travelled back to Vancouver from Calgary. All members were given a tour of Nimitta House and the construction site of the Abbot's new kuti.

In August 2018, Ven. Siri Nanda and Ven. Pannadhamma visited us along with two long-time supporters. Both Bhikkhus are staying at the Sri Lankan temple in Vancouver, BC.

Ven. Siriniwasa, Ven. Saranapala, Ven. Chandananda, and two lay people from Vancouver visited the monastery in October 2018 for our mid-day meal and spent time with Ajahn Sona as well.

Ajahn Sudanto, the Abbot of Pacific Hermitage in White Salmon, Washington, visited us again last winter, arriving in November 2018 and departing in January 2019. He returned in May 2019 for the annual Pacific Hermitage Retreat. This private 14-day silent retreat, led by Ajahn Sona, includes visitors from the Portland, Oregon and White Salmon, Washington areas.

Our most senior Western monastic in the Ajahn Chah tradition, Luang Por Pasanno, arrived at Birken in December 2018 for the final six months of his year long retreat. We were blessed by his gentle and wise presence during his stay with us. Luang Por Pasanno left Birken in June 2019 for several teaching engagements and visits with family before returning to Abhayagiri Monastery as its Guiding Elder.

Tan Sid Udaggo, a Laotian/Canadian monk, who first visited Birken in April 2018, returned in February 2019 for an extended stay.

In March 2019, Ajahn Vajiro, the Abbot of Mosteiro Budista Sumedhārāma in Portugal, visited Birken for the first time. We were delighted to share in his Dhamma teachings and hear his stories from nearly 40 years as a monk.

Ajahn Jotipalo, previously from Abhayagiri Monastery, arrive in June 2019 for a year-long retreat with the intention of developing a practice of using icon writing as a means of meditation.

c. Retreats and events held at the monastery

Sincere thanks to all who helped us organize the past year’s retreats and events (August 1, 2018 – July 31, 2019):

September 7 – 9, 2018	Upasika Group III Welcoming Weekend
September 16, 2018	Pah Bah Fundraising – Potluck Lunch / Ceremony
September 28 - October 7, 2018	Fall 10-Day Silent Retreat at Birken, led by Ajahn Sona
December 23, 2018 – January 2, 2019	10-Day Metta Retreat at Birken, led by Ajahn Sona
January 2 – February 20, 2019	Annual Winter Retreat at Birken
February 20 – 27, 2019	Upasika Group III Winter Retreat
March 3 – 17, 2019	Two-Week Jhana Retreat at Birken, led by Ajahn Sona
March 20 – April 10, 2019	Annual Winter Retreat at Birken
May 1 – 15, 2019	Pacific Hermitage 7-Day/14-Day Retreat(s) at Birken, led by Ajahn Sona
July 19 – 21, 2019	Absolute Beginners Weekend Retreat at Birken
July 26 – 28, 2019	Upasika Group III Closing Weekend

d. Dana meals and guest totals

During this past fiscal year, we shared in the generosity of so many people and welcomed over 900 visitors to the monastery, up from approximately 780 visitors last year. That represents an increase of nearly 14%. Some offered dana meals, others dropped in for a day visit, and nearly 400 meditators took time away from their busy lives to come to Birken for a Personal or Scheduled Retreat. Below are the total numbers for each group:

- 395 overnight guests, up from 349 in the last fiscal year (Personal Retreat and Scheduled Retreat participants)
- 154 day visitors, up from 139 last year
- 60 full and partial dana meals, up from 41 last year
- 358 dana meal participants, up from 293 last year

e. Renovations and construction projects

In September 2018 a new diesel tank and delivery system was installed near the generator shed to provide a constant source of fuel. Also we are now able to easily dispense diesel from the tank to our tractor which makes for a more efficient re-fueling option during our cold winter months.

The Abbot's new kuti was completed at the beginning of November 2018. Ajahn Sona moved in for about six weeks to work out the kinks prior to Luang Por Pasanno's arrival in mid-December 2018. Very basic landscaping around the new kuti was finished last November with just enough gravel and mulch to get through the winter. A more formal Japanese garden with stepping stones, cedar deck, and pathway was started in the new 2019/2020 fiscal year.

During the summer of 2019 we began several large projects to improve upon our infrastructure and the aesthetics of the monastery. As mentioned earlier in the approved special resolutions, our plans to construct a year-round tractor shed were augmented when we received the initial quote for the excavation work that far exceeded our budget. The plans were re-imagined and the project shifted to other areas of need around the monastery.

In late July 2019 work began on new decks and roof extensions at the back of the Vihara (main building) as well as Nimitta House. The field of solar panels behind Nimitta House was relocated to its roof with plans to attach additional panels to the walls of the soon-to-be built two-car covered carport and nearby work shed. At the end of the fiscal year work was well underway on all of these projects.

f. Other news & concluding observations

In September 2018 our generous Thai friends sponsored a Pah Bah at the monastery to raise money for landscaping around the Abbot's new kuti. Over 50 visitors joined us that day for a potluck dana meal and Dhamma talk by Ajahn Sona. As of this date we have raised just over \$9,000 in donations for this landscaping project.

After extensive research we purchased a new Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV (plug-in hybrid electric vehicle) in June 2019 to replace our aging 2005 Sienna van. This first Birken electric vehicle will considerably reduce our gasoline dependency and provide reliable transportation throughout the year. Included in the building plans for the new covered carport is an EV charger that will reduce the charging time for our PHEV from 12 hours on standard 120v power to 3 hours on this 240v EV charger.

The third Birken Upāsikā Program for Dedicated Lay Practitioners began in September 2018 and concluded in July 2019. Ajahn Sona has decided this will be the final formal Upāsikā Program held at Birken. Guidelines will be announced next year as to the next phase of this inspiring program.

It was 25 years ago that Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery began in a broken down shack near the Birkenhead River just north of Whistler, BC. During the past quarter century, we have been continually moved by the generosity and support the monastery has received from people of all walks of life. As Ajahn Sona's teachings are now reaching people in all parts of the world through his YouTube Dhamma talks and podcasts, we look forward to the next quarter century and the untold ways the Dhamma may touch more beings on this beautiful and tender planet.

7. FINANCIAL REPORT

Construction and electric vehicle donations and related expenses were predominant in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Continued support for construction projects from the friends of Birken resulted in a net income of \$51,248.00 for this fiscal year. Extraordinary donations (>\$5000.00), continued to assist with final building costs related to the new Abbot's Kuti, a major infrastructure project that was completed by the end of 2018. This fiscal's donation income, including extraordinary donations, is 152.8% above the trailing 15-year average.

Fiscal Year	Year less Extraordinary Donations	Extraordinary Donations	Year with Extraordinary Donations
2003-04	140,244.18	50,000.00	190,244.18
2004-05	124,010.70	0.00	124,010.70
2005-06	146,243.20	36,335.40	182,578.60
2006-07	121,863.14	60,800.00	182,663.14
2007-08	135,118.63	0.00	135,118.63
2008-09	138,494.98	33,000.00	171,494.98
2009-10	123,893.13	35,860.91	159,754.04
2010-11	133,272.30	15,412.00	148,684.30
2011-12	124,163.51	22,995.75	147,159.26
2012-13	102,017.67	26,500.00	128,517.67
2013-14	76,002.50	15,000.00	91,002.50
2014-15	129,238.05	20,000.00	149,238.05
2015-16	142,510.09	25,000.00	167,510.09
2016-17	138,722.95	25,000.00	163,722.95
2017-18	145,927.43	124,000.00	269,927.43
Sum	1,921,722.46	489,904.06	2,411,626.52
Average	128,114.83	32,660.27	160,775.10
2018-19	158,124.61	89,564.80,	247,688.61

One new debt was incurred in this fiscal: a loan from Mitsubishi Motors Financial Services for the purchase of new plug-in hybrid electric vehicle. Completion of the Abbot's Kuti and the beginning of its related landscaping, Nimitta House and Vihara (main building) upgrades, and a solar battery upgrade were the monastery's other capital expenses in this fiscal, increasing the value of tangible capital assets held by Birken to \$826,799.00.

Liquid assets declined from \$248,551.00 in 2017-18 to \$208,140.00 in the 2018-19 fiscal year. {PLEASE NOTE: the sentence previously submitted to the AGM Report in this location has been removed at the request of the Treasurer as it related to last year's AGM report. It has been struck and its removal duly noted in these minutes of the 2019 AGM.}

Externally driven costs related to the operation of the monastery such as insurance, accounting and legal fees, automotive maintenance, office supplies, freight, utilities and fuels increased significantly

overall from the prior fiscal. Internally monitored costs such as grocery and household expenses, increased as well with the rising cost of goods. Please see the attached financial statements for more information.

While Extraordinary Donations in this fiscal exceeded the 15-year trailing average, they declined both in number and dollar value from the fiscal prior. It should be noted that increasing costs for the maintenance and expansion of the monastery buildings and infrastructure, as well as the increasing costs of occupancy by both monastic and lay communities, resulted in a reduction of cash reserves.

Uniquely, Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery is intentionally dedicated to provide lay practitioners with both a sanctuary from a frenetic world pace and the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Dhamma. It is expected that the Buddha's teachings will disappear with time. However, it is feasible that the teachings won't be lost so quickly if Sitavana is supported and sustained by generous benefactors for the benefit of the lay community to whom it is dedicated. This will only occur if extraordinary donations increase, as opposed to decline, in future years.

8. MOTIONS:

- That Tombe Herrington Chartered Professional Accountants LLP be appointed our accounting firm for the next fiscal year.

Moved by Hazel Plumbley, seconded by Thomas West (Ajahn Sona). Carried unanimously.

- That the Proposed Board of Directors (no changes from previous term) be re-elected:
Thomas West (Ajahn Sona) – President (*continuation*)
Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon) – Vice President (*continuation*)
Teresa Wixted – Secretary (*continuation*)
Hazel Plumbley – Treasurer (*continuation*)
Brent Styra – Member at Large (*continuation*)
Leslie Hanrahan – Member at Large (*continuation*)

Moved by Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), seconded by Teresa Wixted. Carried unanimously.

- That the 2020 AGM be held at Birken Forest Monastery on **Sunday, October 25, 2020.**

Moved by Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), seconded by Brent Styra. Thomas West (Ajahn Sona)

Meeting Adjourned.

Moved by Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), seconded by Teresa Wixted. Carried unanimously.