Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery ('Sitavana')
Annual General Meeting – October 25, 2026, 3:00 pm PDT

MINUTES – AGM 2026

1. WELCOME, MEETING PROCEDURES AND ATTENDANCE

At Birken: Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Donald Sperry (Ajahn Jotipalo), Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Brent Styra, Rachel Telesmanick, Lake McTigue, Jacob Perepolkin, Luke Serwin, Sarah Haverstock **By Phone:** Joseph Aiello

2. MINUTES OF LAST YEAR'S AGM (OCTOBER 26, 2025)

That the minutes of last year's AGM be approved without reading.

Moved by Naruemon Teneralli, seconded by Joseph Aiello. Motion carried: 10 approval votes.

3. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising.

4. BOARD RESOLUTIONS APPROVED PRIOR TO AGM:

Two resolutions came up for board consideration since the last AGM. Board resolutions require an approval vote by at least four board members; the record of voting is shown below. A copy of the approved Board Resolutions are attached to this report:

a) **Board Resolution: Appointment of Salaried Program Manager**
Approved: Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Donald Sperry (Ajahn Jotipalo), Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Brent Styra, Joseph Aiello (Rachel Telesmanick declared a conflict of interest and did not vote or participate in discussion) – RESOLUTION APPROVED

b) Board Resolution: Retention of Estate Lawyer for Bequest of Real Property
Approved: Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), Donald Sperry (Ajahn Jotipalo), Rachel Telesmanick, Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Brent Styra, Joseph Aiello – RESOLUTION APPROVED (Unanimous)

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

a. Resident Monastics

Ajahn Sona continues in his leadership role as Abbot and President of Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery. He turned 72 years old in April 2026, and tomorrow he completes his 38th vassa (rains retreat).

We were delighted to welcome in-person guests to the monastery in the past year, including overnight guests, day visitors and in-person dana meals. Ajahn Sona continues to offer Dhamma to people around

the world through Dhamma Talks, Livestreams, and Zoom Q&A's. At the end of our 2025/2026 fiscal year our online library of YouTube Dhamma talks and Livestream Q&As totaled 410, while our subscribers reached 37,500, an increase of nearly 4,000 new subscribers At the time of this AGM, the number of YouTube subscribers is now over 38,000.

After a summer break in 2025, the Q&A's returned to Ajahn Sona's YouTube Channel with a mixture of live and pre-recorded premieres. In late fall and winter, a number of pre-recorded Dhamma Talks were added weekly, including talks from the Pacific Hermitage Retreat in 2025, as well as Zoom talks with Portland Friends of the Dhamma and Ottawa Buddhist Society. Weekly Livestreams resumed in May 2026.

From May 1-10 and from May 15-24, 2026 Ajahn Sona led two ten-day retreats at Birken for meditators affiliated with Pacific Hermitage in White Salmon, Washington. During the retreats, 16 Dhamma talks were recorded on the subject of Dependent Origination. Eight videos of those Dhamma talks will be uploaded in the coming months.

Sister Mon continues in her role as Senior Buddhist Nun. She travelled to Thailand between January and March 2026 for a visit with family and friends.

b. Monastic Visitors

Ajahn Jotipalo continues his stay at Birken on his Canadian work permit. In May 2026, he officially filed for Canadian Permanent Residency. The process is expected to take many years to unfold. Because of his application, he has kept his travels closer to Birken, visiting the Yukon in May 2026 and the Canadian Rockies in July. He has offered teachings to groups in Kamloops and continues his Dhamma outreach on his YouTube channel "Sauntering Into Silence."

Tan Jotimanto, a seven vassa monastic from Abhayagiri Monastery in California, USA, concluded his one-year stay in October 2025.

Tan Candasaro, a nine vassa monk from Chithurst Monastery visited Birken in December 2025.

Ajahn Sudanto, from Pacific Hermitage in White Salmon, Washington joined us between May 1-24, 2026, along with Tan Jotimanto, for the annual Pacific Hermitage retreat.

Ajahn Pavaro, from Tisarana Monastery in Ontario, visited in June 2026.

Ajahn Cunda, a senior monk from Abhayagiri Monastery, USA, arrived at Birken in July 2026 for a one-year retreat.

c. Retreats and events held online

We give sincere thanks to the many Birken volunteers and supporters who helped us to organise our many online and in-person retreats and events this past year (August 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026):

November 2025 & May -July 2026	Live from Birken: Weekly Dhamma Livestream Q&A broadcasts on Ajahn Sona's YouTube Channel
September – December 2025	Premieres of Weekly Dhamma Q&A (pre-recorded)
October 19, 2025	Broadcast of The Central Issues of our Time – Media, Algorithms & Your Mind - Zoom Dhamma Talk/Q&A with Portland Friends of the Dhamma
November 2, 2025	"Ajahn Sona & the Forbidden Library" with Ajahn Kovilo & Ajahn Nisabho (re-broadcast on Ajahn Sona's channel)
December 14, 2025	Broadcast of "Take it Easy, Especially Now": Zoom Dhamma talk and Q&A for the Ottawa Buddhist Society
December 20, 2025	A Holiday Message from Ajahn Sona
January – April 2026	Broadcast of "Cool Head Warm Heart" Pacific Hermitage Retreat from 2025
May 1-10 and May 15-24, 2026	Pacific Hermitage two ten-day retreats at Birken, led by Ajahn Sona: "Dependent Origination"
June 5, 2026	"Dependent Origination": Zoom Dhamma talk and Q&A for the Ottawa Buddhist Society
July 3-5 2026	Vernon, BC Group weekend retreat at Birken, led by Ajahn Sona
July 25, 2026	"The Foundation of Freedom – Understanding the Power of Virtue": Zoom Dhamma talk and Q&A for the Polish Early Buddhism Society

d. Dānā meals and guest totals

In addition to hosting in-person meditators this year at Birken, we also welcomed a number of day visitors and those wishing to offer in-person dānā meals. We continue to be blessed with online generosity through our Virtual Dānā Meal Fund (please see our Support page for more information). Between August 1, 2025 and July 31, 2026, we received approximately 189 Virtual Dānā Meals (a 170% increase from last year), welcomed 200 overnight guests, 127 day-visitors, and 26 in-person dana meals to the monastery, which included hundreds of visitors to the monastery to offer food. The monastery has fully recovered from the pandemic closure, and has seen the return to fully booked guest visits.

e. Renovations and construction projects

Through a generous donation, Ajahn Jotipalo and several volunteers completed a 16-foot-tall viewing tower near the marsh. This crown jewel provides breathtaking views and a peaceful meditation space for visitors to the monastery. Because our fire insurance policy was cancelled last year due to ever increasing costs, we continued the fire remediation from the previous two years by installing fire resistant decking and aluminum roll-up doors in our wooden walkway. We have begun a project to expand our solar system with the eventual goal of weaning off of the diesel generator in the winter months, generating close to 100% of electrical power via solar panels. This will also reduce our dependence on propane by allowing for electric heating during shoulder seasons. We expect this project to be complete in spring 2027.

Viewing Tower, Fireproofing and Solar



Viewing platform looking towards the marsh



Close up of viewing platform



Fireproof roll-up doors and fire-resistant decking



Site of future solar array



Solar panels waiting for installation

f. Other news and concluding observations

Ajahn Sona continues to pull back from the running of the monastery, focusing more on his own meditation, online outreach and Q&A for in-person guests at the monastery. Sister Mon continues her increased teaching role, through offering countless interviews and teatime Q&A during retreats. Ajahn Jotipalo continues his teaching role in-person and online.

In December 2025, the Society was notified of the passing of two long-time supporters on Cortes Island in British Columbia. Their wills contained an inheritance of a portion of their property. Because of the complexity of the timing of their passing, multiple wills, and specific registrations on the title, the law firm of Cook Roberts was retained to help the board realize the generous gift in the wills. The probate process is not complete at present, and the process is still ongoing.

After departing for the US in August 2025, Mettā (Rachel Telesmanick) returned to Birken on a new work permit in April 2026 as Birken's first salaried Program Manager. She previously served at the monastery from 2018 until her departure as the main point of contact for guest visits, as well as video outreach. This new position has begun to relieve Ajahn Sona and Sister Mon of the considerable duties of administration of the monastery. The position will help to grow online programming, guest visits and volunteer opportunities.

As major construction is expected to conclude by spring 2027, all of us look forward to settling into a future of more meditation, more introspection, and more time devoted to practice for all of Birken's monastics and resident stewards. 2026 represents the beginning of our third decade as a monastery to not only those who visit us in person, but also to the burgeoning garden of worldwide practitioners.

Our expansive global outreach is thanks in large part to Ajahn Sona's livestream broadcasts, recorded talks and Upasika Program. This year's in-person guest program was again fully booked with many people waitlisted throughout the summer months. Onsite visits also extended to day visitors and dozens of generous dana meal offerings from people across the region.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

Our 2025/2026 fiscal year was one of more stability, with less building projects and more generous one-time contributions than in the past. The increased number of in-person guests provided an uptick in onsite donations and monthly CanadaHelps donations continued to increase offering us a level of financial security we haven't experienced before.

REVENUE

Total income for the year came to $1,142,561, up from the previous fiscal year when it reached $458,790. The increase was through a handful of very generous donors, an increase in monthly donors, plus more income from on-site guest visits. The Endowment Fund finished off the 2025/2026 fiscal year at $1,104,107 up from $1,043,261 at the conclusion of our 2024/2025 fiscal year. The fund balance as of October 22, 2026 stood at $1,104,897.

As more guests continue to return to Birken, onsite donations are also continuing to flow into the monastery. In addition to in-person cash and cheques, electronic and wire transfers also provide us with sustainable and reliable income. The majority of our monetary gifts come through the online donation website CanadaHelps. At the end of this fiscal year, our monthly CanadaHelps donors totalled 270, with monthly and one-time donations on this platform reaching $520,815 for the year, up from $233,857 last year. This important revenue stream alone represents nearly 50% of our total income.

DEBT/CAPITAL ASSETS

We completed the fiscal year with no long-term debt, a major accomplishment for any charity in this modern age.

As mentioned earlier in this report, 2025/26 saw a decrease in major projects and more spontaneous large donations. Total Assets, including cash and capital improvements, as well as depreciation of property, plant and equipment assets over the years, came to $2,716,426, up from $1,906,694 last year.

EXPENSES

Inflation still plays a part in our day-to-day expenses, as does the increase in overnight guests and day visitors to the monastery. Food and Household expenses continue to be one of our largest line item expense categories. This year those costs totalled $86,889, which is up from $76,816 last year. While food prices are up, so are in-person and Virtual Dana Meal offerings.

The other major cost centre is Building Materials, Maintenance and Tools, which is the cost centre for our construction and fire remediation projects. By the end of July 2026, these construction costs as well as landscaping expenditures, totalled $65,998, down from $72,214 in expenses the previous year. There is a new expense for our employee, which totaled $20,341 for May-July.

Total expenses for 2025/2026 came to $325,763, a decrease over last year's total of $349,802.

NET INCOME
Due to a number of generous donations, and a decrease in major construction from years past, net income for the year was in the positive range, totalling $816,797 vs $108,988 last year. Please see the attached financial statements for more information.

SUMMARY
As we've mentioned over the years, Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery continues to operate thanks solely to the generous and sustaining support of hundreds of benefactors from around the globe. Every donation, whether it's $5 or $500,000, contributes to the benefit of our resident monastics and stewards, as well as the entire Birken community to whom it is dedicated.

Even as the building projects conclude, the need for donations to keep the monastery doors open has not waned. Day-to-day expenditures, further development of our virtual monastery, maintaining our existing buildings and off-grid energy systems require sustainable monetary support.

There was no need to draw from Birken's Endowment Fund in 2025-26. We see this fund as a safeguard should future emergencies arise; however, that fund alone cannot support Birken's daily requisites of food, medicine, clothing, and housing. The monastery has only continued to operate these many years through the benevolence of extraordinary donations, those of $5,000 or more. Without such sizable gifts, Birken will not survive. These large donations, as well as our lifeline of monthly gifts through CanadaHelps, must continue to grow to ensure the preservation of the monastery for its lay community, and thereby enable Birken's monastic sangha to live and share the Dhamma with us all for many years to come.

7. MOTIONS:

- That the Financial Statements be approved as circulated and presented.

  Moved by Brent Styra, seconded by Thomas West. Motion carried: approval 10 votes.

- That David Roth Bookkeeping be reappointed our accounting firm for the next fiscal year.

  Moved by Naruemon Teneralli seconded by Donald Sperry. Motion carried: approval 10 votes.

- That the 2026 AGM be held at Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery on Sunday, October 24, 2027 at 3:00 PDT

  Moved by Thomas West, seconded by Joseph Aiello. Motion carried: approval 10 votes.

- That this year's AGM now be adjourned.

  Moved by Thomas West, seconded by Naruemon Teneralli.

BIRKEN FOREST BUDDHIST MONASTERY ('Sītavana')

A Registered Canadian Charitable Society: BN 89263 5483 RR0001

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BOARD RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BIRKEN FOREST BUDDHIST MONASTERY

The Board of Directors of Birken Forest Buddhist Monastery (the "Society"), a registered Canadian charity, considered the operational needs of the monastery, including expanding its religious programming for the lay community and the need to reduce the administrative burden placed on the monastic community.

Resolved,

- The Board authorizes the creation of the position **Manager of Religious Community Programs**, responsible for coordinating the monastery's religious retreats, online programs, and outreach activities in support of the Society's charitable and religious mission.
- The Board approves the appointment of Rachel Telesmanick to this position.
- The position is authorized as a **full-time salaried role**, with an annual salary of **$70,000**, plus payroll taxes and statutory employer obligations as required by law.
- The employment term is approved for **April 1, 2026-April 1, 2029**, subject to applicable employment laws and policies of the Society.
- The officers of the Society are authorized to execute any documents necessary to implement this resolution and to support immigration and employment processes required for the position.
- Rachel Telesmanick has declared a conflict of interest with respect to this motion and did not participate in discussion or voting.

Dated this 5th day of February 2026:

Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), President

Donald Andrew Calvin Sperry (Ajahn Jotipalo), Vice President

Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Treasurer

Giuseppe (Joseph) Aiello, Director at Large

Brent Styra, Director at Large

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BOARD RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BIRKEN FOREST BUDDHIST MONASTERY

Resolved,

that we hereby agree to authorize the Secretary (Rachel Telesmanick) to consult with an Estate Lawyer to protect the Organization's interests as a residuary beneficiary of the John Shook and Kristen Scholfield-Sweet estates, for a professional assessment and preliminary review.

Dated this 5th day of February 2026:

Thomas West (Ajahn Sona), President

Donald Andrew Calvin Sperry (Ajahn Jotipalo), Vice President

Naruemon Teneralli (Sister Mon), Treasurer

Rachel Telesmanick, Secretary

Giuseppe (Joseph) Aiello, Director at Large

Brent Styra, Director at Large