

## Mar 23, 2024 | 📅 DD Community Board Meeting + Potluck

Attendees: Kristin Barker, Sharon Cooperstein, Vince Lampone, Nick Menzies, Nate Pelz, Jackie Powell, Ana Maria Rocha-Goldberg, Kavya Sekar, Alex Snider, Mark Stone, Audrey Voorhees

**This was the inaugural meeting of the new Downtown Dharma Community Board. It's an outgrowth of a series of recent sangha gatherings, resulting in the development of a new mission statement that affirms that our sangha is "community-driven and volunteer led." Nick graciously served as facilitator for this meeting.**

Topic #1:	Creating New Posters with Our Mission Statement
Context	We will be printing 2-3 large posters with Downtown Dharma's new mission statement, to display at Downtown Dharma on Sunday evenings. Audrey and Vince mocked up a few potential designs in Canva before the meeting, and shared them with attendees for feedback.
<b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The purpose of these posters is to socialize our new mission statement, particularly in service to new community members who don't yet know what our sangha is all about. These posters will be large, so that folks can read the mission statement from where they're sitting in the studio, as well as seek the signs out for QR codes (linking to Downtown Dharma's website and Venmo account).</li><li>• In order to make the mission statement easy to read, attendees suggested:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Marking key phrases in the mission in <b>bold</b></li><li>◦ Using a large font size</li><li>◦ Breaking the mission statement up into three parts</li><li>◦ Avoiding ALL-CAPS</li><li>◦ Featuring a strong heading and subhead for the poster</li></ul></li><li>• In terms of visual design, attendees valued simplicity. They responded positively to a mock-up with clear text in a white box, on top of an attractive background image with relatively muted colors.</li></ul>	
<b>Action items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Vince and Audrey will develop 1-2 versions of a final poster design, incorporating attendees' feedback. This will be shared for a final once-over before going to the printer.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Once the design is finalized Audrey will work with a printer to produce the posters. They will be paid for with funds from the sangha's Venmo account.</li></ul>	

<b>Topic #2:</b>	<b>Greeting Community Members on Sunday Nights</b>
<b>Context</b>	At our last sangha gathering, we agreed to recruit a small group of new volunteers who will greet community members when they arrive at Yoga District on Sundays. For the past month we have had a volunteer serving in this role each week, supporting Bella (our Yoga District intern) and the volunteer who sets up the technology. Nick, Ana Maria, Suzanne, Andy and Jennifer have all raised their hands to be Greeters.
<b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nick, in his role as Lead Greeter, suggested taking a few minutes to reflect on how this new role is going, and if any changes need to be made to this function.</li> <li>• Ana Maria shared her experience from a recent Sunday. Overall, community members seem to value the attention and friendliness, though some people are more responsive than others. She finds that the role benefits from her “reading the room” and adjusting her energy levels and approach to match the non-verbal signals of each person who arrives.</li> <li>• It was recommended that we clarify the goals and objectives of the Greeter role, and perhaps share some simple talking points and expectations to help volunteers feel comfortable in this role.</li> </ul>	
<b>Action items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Based on greeter experience to date, Nick will put together a brief Google Doc with goals, expectations, and/or potential talking points, and share this with volunteer Greeters.</b></li> </ul>	

<b>Topic #3:</b>	<b>Weekend Residential Retreat in September 2024</b>
<b>Context</b>	IMCW recently purchased Seven Oaks Retreat Center in Madison, VA. It's 90 minutes to 2 hours from DC (depending on traffic), and has a capacity of 50-60 retreatants. We have the opportunity to benefit from our affiliation with IMCW and make use of the center.
<b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kristin recently approached IMCW administrators to ask if it is possible to reserve a weekend in Fall 2024 for a residential retreat for Downtown Dharma. They offered us September 20-22, 2024, which she's penciled in for a retreat for our community.</li> <li>• Attendees shared enthusiastic support for the idea of planning and sitting a retreat together. Nate and Ana Maria raised their hands to work together with Kristin to help organize the retreat in partnership with IMCW. Numerous other attendees (including Jackie, Vince and Sharon) said that they are happy to contribute ideas and/or volunteer as needed to support this event.</li> </ul>	

**Action items:**

- ☐ Kristin and Ana Maria will confirm the dates and complete the necessary paperwork with IMCW for a two-night retreat (Sep 20-22).
- ☐ Kristin will work with Nate and Ana Maria to figure out next steps, which include: (1) identifying a theme, format and teaching schedule for this retreat; and (2) tackling administrative and logistical tasks.
  - ☐ If others are interested in volunteering for the team helping to organize this sangha retreat, they should reach out with [Kristin](#), [Ana Maria](#) or [Nate](#).
- ☐ Interested community members should mark their calendars & plan to come 😊

Topic #4:	<b>How the Community Board Should Operate</b>
<b>Context</b>	At our last sangha gathering, volunteers proposed forming a Community Volunteer Board to keep the momentum from the mission development process going. If decisions are going to be made “by the community, for the community”, there needs to be a mechanism for this to actually happen. Kavya took the lead in organizing this first meeting and sketching out ideas for how we might move forward organizationally.
<b>Notes:</b> <i>Name of the Group</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We had a spirited discussion about the name and purpose of this group. In the end, we decided the word “Board” properly conveys the importance of the group, as it will be making decisions on behalf of the sangha. That said, since meetings are happily open to everyone in the community—volunteers, teachers/facilitators, and non-volunteers—we agreed to drop the word “Volunteer” from the name of the group (in favor of “Downtown Dharma Community Board”).</li> </ul> <i>Facilitation, Cadence &amp; Purpose of Meetings</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitation will be shared among members of the community, with a different person taking the baton each time. Nate graciously volunteered to lead organizing of the meeting next quarter (most likely in June) and identify a facilitator and note taker.</li> <li>We agreed to meet quarterly, in-person, at the DC Writer’s Salon. Meetings will generally take place Saturday evenings, since the salon tends to be available at that time. Kavya will coordinate with the organizer, and with Ali (the gracious owner of the salon), to confirm a date and book the venue.</li> <li>At Board meetings, volunteer subgroups (e.g. Tech Volunteers, Greeters, etc.) will share updates and discuss ways to improve their service. In addition, attendees will have an opportunity to brainstorm and identify new programming opportunities for our sangha (e.g. Contemplative Haiku Hike).</li> <li>Jackie recommended we carve out time in the next meeting to discuss the Sunday night schedule—currently a combination of teacher-led evenings, Sit &amp; Dines, and Insight Dialogue practice sessions. Is this mix of programming working well for folks? Are there ways we can improve or optimize what’s offered?</li> </ul> <i>Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities</i>	

- We also had a brief discussion about DD volunteer roles generally. Attendees weren't clear on all the specific volunteer roles that currently exist, and which of these (if any) are currently vacant. Given enthusiasm and energy in the sangha, it's likely that we can find people to fill open roles — but we'll benefit from being clear when communicating what's needed (including responsibilities and expectations), so that folks completely understand what they're signing up for.
- During the meeting, someone shared that we'll likely need to find a new volunteer to manage the DD website and weekly teaching schedule. Audrey kindly agreed to reach out with Josh Malina to learn about how the website is currently managed.

**Action items:**

- ☐ **Nate will coordinate with Kavya to identify and confirm a date for our next Community Board meeting and share this date with the community.**
- ☐ **Audrey will connect with Josh Malina to learn how the DD website is currently managed and updated, so that we can transfer ownership of this responsibility to a new volunteer as needed.**
- ☐ **Kavya and Vince will work together (and the group) to clarify existing volunteer roles and responsibilities, and identify new roles that might be needed.**

<b>Topic #5:</b>	<b>Our Partnership with Yoga District</b>
<b>Context</b>	Yoga District generously donates space to Downtown Dharma for Sunday gatherings.
<p><b>Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vince randomly met Jasmine, YD studio owner, after doing a yoga class together. Jasmine mentioned that she's excited about the growth of Downtown Dharma, and happy to continue supporting our community. Jasmine also said she'd consider adding new meditation classes to the Yoga District schedule (in-person or via Zoom), if members of our community were interested in facilitating or supporting them.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Action items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>No immediate action needed—but if any members of our community are keen to hold space for a weekly meditation sit (particularly those who are already Yoga District teachers or volunteers), they can reach out with Vince or contact Jasmine directly.</b></li> </ul>	

<b>Topic #6:</b>	<b>Scripts/Rituals for Sunday Teachers &amp; Volunteers</b>
<b>Context</b>	Currently, the tech volunteer typically handles announcements at the end of our gatherings on Sundays (e.g. sharing our website address, Venmo handle, etc.). While there's a brief script in our Google Doc for tech volunteers, folks typically make it up on the fly.

**Notes:**

- We briefly discussed the desire to standardize how sangha-related announcements are shared on Sundays. Also, Kristin suggested that it'd be good to expand our lens to encompass any include rituals or practices that we want teachers and facilitators to make space for each week (for example, reading our mission statement aloud; carving out a minute or two for sangha members to meet someone new before we sit, etc.).
- We didn't have time to brainstorm extensively on this topic.

**Action items:**

- ☐ **Mark and Audrey will develop recommendations for volunteer scripts and teacher-led rituals to bring greater consistency and coherence to the experience on Sunday nights (and include Amy G. if she's interested in joining this discussion).**

<b>Topic #7:</b>	<b>Our Discord Server</b>
<b>Context</b>	About six months ago, Downtown Dharma created a new Discord server to support community-building and communication among sangha members beyond Sunday evenings. However, there has not been much traction on DD's server to date.
<b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all community members use Discord, or are keen to download a new app.</li> <li>• There was some confusion among attendees about the purpose of DD's server.</li> <li>• Kavya noted that, prior to Discord, reading group logistics were organized via a dedicated WhatsApp group. While imperfect, this system seemed to be more effective than Discord in that there was wide participation by folks in this group, and everyone promptly received related messages/updates about gatherings.</li> <li>• WhatsApp Community was proposed as an alternative to Discord. Most community members already have WhatsApp installed on their phones, which would be an advantage over Discord.</li> <li>• Alex recently created a WhatsApp community for his Sunday morning mindfulness community. He shared that it's been easy to set up and use so far. Folks can add themselves to the community without manual action from an administrator. And they can add themselves to specific groups within the community that interest them (e.g. Book Club, Volunteers, etc.).</li> </ul>	
<b>Action items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>After the meeting, Alex created a new Downtown Dharma WhatsApp community, and invited volunteers from the existing "Downtown Dharma Volunteers" WhatsApp group to join the community.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>As a pilot, we will transition all volunteer-related communication to this new WhatsApp Community. If it works well, the Community Board will consider transitioning the whole sangha from Discord to the new community.</b></li> </ul>	