

## **Ann Arbor Sangha Council Meeting, Sept. 18, 2005 Minutes**

### **1. Welcome, Introduction, and Program Agenda, Geoff Lutz**

Geoff Lutz welcomed all Sangha members and explained the main purpose of this meeting: To introduce and discuss the new Jewel Heart Sangha Council Guidelines as they apply to the Ann Arbor Chapter. Gehlek Rinpoche has requested that we implement and follow these guidelines in all JH chapters starting September 01, 2005 through August 31, 2006. After that period of time we will have sufficient information and experience to make adjustments and improvements where considered necessary. Note: It will be helpful to read the complete document JH "Sangha Council Guidelines" if you have not yet had the opportunity. The following meeting minutes will refer to this document when needed. To view the document, go to:  
[http://www.jewelheart.org/chapters/Sangha\\_Council\\_Guidelines/Sangha\\_Council\\_Guidelines\\_a\\_s\\_of\\_Sept\\_1\\_2005.pdf](http://www.jewelheart.org/chapters/Sangha_Council_Guidelines/Sangha_Council_Guidelines_a_s_of_Sept_1_2005.pdf)

### **2. Introduce Sangha Council Executive Committee (SCEC), Gehlek Rinpoche**

Rinpoche presented the positions that make up the new Sangha Council and introduced briefly the persons he appointed to hold those positions. All Sangha Council officers are appointed for a [2-year serving period](#). Individual positions have been appointed at different times and new persons will be appointed when the respective time period is completed:

President, Geoff Lutz  
Associate President, Nancy Beachum  
Associate President, Jeff Belanger  
Secretary, Carolyn Hastings  
Associate Secretary, Birgit Roller  
Treasurer, Beth Locke

Rinpoche also introduced Committees and Chairpersons:

Fund Raising, Gloria Boyajian  
Registration, Nancy O'Boyle  
Sacred Space, Beth Locke  
IT, Louis Daher  
A/V, Jonas Berzanskis  
[Volunteer Coordination, Louis Daher](#)

These positions are rotating assignments. Rinpoche asks the individual chairpersons to make a commitment of one year.

Rinpoche also took the time to give us a review of how the JH Sangha Council was originally conceived and how it developed over the years. Here is a brief summary of Rinpoche's review. (Any mistakes are due to ignorance of the author of this document.)

- JH was founded with the purpose to create an organization that would allow Gehlek Rimpoché to teach and live in the United States. Towards that goal a small organization of 30 persons was formed, a first board was assembled and money raised to create a teaching space (The famous garage on Cherry Street.) This first Jewel Heart ‘prototype’ was mainly modeled after Trungpa Rimpoché’s organization at the time. This meant what Rimpoché called a “Vajrayana Style” organization, a “*labrung*” surrounding a teacher.
- It was clear though from the very beginning that Jewel Heart should go on after Rimpoché’s time. The earliest idea of forming a Sangha Council was introduced by Allan Ginsberg. Over the past years two decades this very small organization grew into the Jewel Heart we see today.
- Especially in the last years, a lot of effort has gone into forming an organization that will be able to make decisions and carry on after Rimpoché retires from the day-to-day involvement. Rimpoché has extended the Governing Board to 20 persons. This group is to oversee legal action and ensure JH’s financial survival, as well as transparent finances and accounting. The board is to be rotating in the future. (Details to be determined by Gehlek Rimpoché.)
- Rimpoché acknowledged the strong dedication of the staff that both forms “Jewel Heart Central”, but is also involved in the many activities of the Ann Arbor Chapter.
- Rimpoché made some remarks in regards to the development of the JH Programming: “For many years I *was* the program.” The chapters which did not have a regular teaching scheduled (Like NY and AA) naturally worked first on creating classes. The Cleveland chapter was very active in that respect. Over the last years, Rimpoché has selected senior students to begin teaching, and “JH Programming “has worked diligently in cooperation with Rimpoché to create a study program as we see it today. In the last year Rimpoché has reviewed and named a list of JH Instructors and JH Facilitators. Both, the development of study programs and education of JH Facilitators and Instructors are an ongoing effort.
- Finally, Rimpoché stressed again how much work and how many hours went into creating the new JH Sangha Council Guidelines”. It is his expressed wish that these guidelines will be implemented and explored for the period of one year. At that time we can make further adjustments. He reminded us that this effort has only one goal: To create an environment in which we can develop spiritually.

Introduction of the Dharma Coordinators: Steve Kronenberg and Supa Corner.

The Dharma coordinators are responsible for all Dharma related questions within the Ann Arbor Chapter. They are members of the SCEC and also work closely with the JH Central Programming Department. As we are a small organization with limited resources it is important for all chapters not to duplicate efforts and to make best use of the knowledge and class structure already developed. All Dharma coordinators will coordinate their efforts with JH Central Programming.

Introduction of the Volunteer Coordinator: Louis Daher (effective January 2006)

The position of Volunteer Coordinator and the actual coordination of volunteers at JH are under development. Louis has agreed to make an effort in this direction. He will be assisted by Mathew Kirchbaum in this endeavor. JH will seek the expertise of some outside organizations

to learn more about working with volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator will be a member of the SCEC. Louis' appointment will be confirmed in January '06. Contact Louis if you have ideas and knowledge about working with volunteers.

Coordinators for the following positions are to be determined:

Jewel Heart Newsletter

Special event Coordinator

### 3. Individual responsibilities within the new Sangha Council Structure:

- Steve Kronenberg gave a brief overview of the Dharma coordinators' job.

(For all not present at the meeting, you missed Rimpoche's recollection of memorable events involving Steve K. So sorry.)

What distinguishes a JH Center? It is our goal to disseminate the large body of teachings Gehlek Rimpoche has given over the years. This is a big task and it will require a lot of support. Our goal is to create and coordinate a JH Program that can be taught at all JH Chapters with the same content and the same level of quality.

It is also our goal to develop a group of Dharma Instructors and facilitators who can teach this JH Program at all JH Chapters. Rimpoche has developed guidelines for the characteristics and qualities of Dharma instructors/facilitators, and the requirements for practice retreats, mantra retreats etc. an instructor or facilitator should have. It was stressed that in order to teach accurately, future instructor must attend the classes.

When Dharma questions arise, the following will be the recommended route to go: Talk to the instructor or facilitator of a respective course, or any instructor/facilitator available. If they do not feel they have the appropriate information, they will bring the question up with the Dharma Coordinators. Should they not be able to give an answer, they will surface the question with Gehlek Rimpoche. You may also contact the Dharma Coordinators directly (E-mail addresses will be published on JH Website, Ann Arbor Chapter).

(In answer to a question – if you feel a response is not timely, it is probably because a difficult question has been taken to Rimpoche.)

- Louis Daher spoke about the Volunteer Coordinator position and about volunteering for Jewel Heart. Louis reminded us of the benefit of service to a dharma organization like Jewel Heart. Giving and taking are one and the same; more so, what we get depends to a large degree on what we give. Our contributions will make the center stronger. He also stressed the fact that many things can be done off-site. There will be opportunities for JH members who can not help with tasks at the center due to their schedules to contribute. More information will come in the following months.
- Programming Director, Kathleen Ivanoff. Kathleen introduced the current programming committee (Hartmut Sagolla Aura Glaser, Sandy Finkel and herself) and briefly reviewed the three-year process to develop the current JH curriculum. This curriculum has been developed under Gehlek Rimpoche's advice and will be the pre-requisite for Vajrayana

Initiations.

Outlines for classes continue to be developed. It is our goal to offer classes for students with a general interest in Dharma topics, as well as students identifying themselves as Buddhist practitioners.

- SCEC Member, Jeff Belanger. Jeff pointed out that the Sangha Council Guidelines are an instrument for us to develop and strengthen both the spiritual and the material aspects of our organization. In order to involve as many people as possible in this process, it will be very important to constantly improve on our communication abilities. It will be one of the SCEC's efforts to include all suggestions, questions, comments and feedback from Sangha members. Note: See Sangha Council Guidelines, page 3, Point 7 for detail.  
Short version: You can get in touch with the SCEC by either sending an email to [AnnArbor@Jewelheart.org](mailto:AnnArbor@Jewelheart.org) (To come on the website) or using the new Suggestion Box (To be installed in the JH Lobby area). You are welcome to talk to any of the SCEC members directly about questions. Questions, suggestions etc. will be discussed in the bi-weekly SCEC meeting, the meeting minutes will be published on the website the following week. Any questions the SCEC finds they can not answer or do not have the authority to decide will be brought to the JH Central's attention and if required discussed with Rimpoche. It is important for the SCEC to stay in touch with all Sangha members.

#### 4. **General Questions and Answers, Comments**

Moderators: Geoff Lutz, Nancy Beachum, and Jeff Belanger

(Some of the questions listed here were asked earlier, during the meeting.)

Q: How are dharma courses reviewed and improved?

A: (Rimpoche) We are developing a comprehensive method to review classes.

Q: What is the current process to develop classes?

A: The process is currently informal. Ideas need to be brought up to the Programming Committee or Dharma Coordinators. The plan is to have an outline of the content of each course so it can be taught by other instructors and replicated. This will be further discussed.

Q: Do all chapters have the same curriculum?

A: It is the goal for all chapters to have the same curriculum. All chapters are working with JH Central to achieve that goal. There is space for additional special programs depending on the chapters needs. The Sunday Talks in Ann Arbor are one example. Programming will interact with chapters about additional workshops and classes, which are not part of the core curriculum. At this time Gehlek Rimpoche makes these decisions. Also, there will be classes taught by teachers invited by Gehlek Rimpoche.

Q: Is this the same for JH Holland?

A: JH Holland is a sister organization, not a JH chapter. They have their own board and an existing curriculum.

Q. We were encouraged to have an on-line chat room forum for those who do not live near by.

Q: JH was urged to be involved in the Community. Jewel Heart as an organization should have more focus on Public Relations.

A: That can/should be one of the positions where we will need to find a chair person to support that effort.

Q: Can you specify which tasks will be the responsibility of the local chapter and which tasks will be the responsibility of the national part of the organization? Suggestion that a clear distinction –especially regarding fiscal and accountability issues would be helpful.

A: (Rimpoche) A budget for JH is under development. Right now each chapter reports its revenues and expenses to the Central office. The goal is to have a annual budget finalized by 2007. This is a work in progress. We are studying the way other Buddhist Centers operate. Board members support the process.

Q: Is it a long term goal for the respective chapters to be financially independent?

A: (Rimpoche) That is not yet decided. We are looking at different models. One example is the FPMT. If an individual FPMT center does fundraising, the money is split between the central organization (60%) and the center (40%). JH needs a few more years of experience with this topic.

Q: How will vacant positions on the SCEC be filled?

A: Positions are currently filled by appointment through Gehlek Rimpoche. The Sangha will be notified by email. The goal is to fill these positions by elections after Rimpoche's retirement.

Q: Who can write checks at JH / on the SCEC?

A: (Rimpoche) Everybody can write checks to Jewel Heart! The SCEC does currently not have financial responsibility. If money for projects is required, it is brought up to JH Central. We use a Purchase Order system. Purchases can be approved as follows: Up to \$300 – Kathleen Ivanoff; up to \$500 – Debbie Burr; above \$500 the board approves purchases.

Q: Do other chapters have the same guidelines? Are Chair Persons encouraged to interact with people heading the same efforts in other chapters?

A: Yes to both parts of the question!

Q. Will minutes from all chapters be on the web site?

A. Yes. Names of chapter officers and chairpersons will be on the web site.

## 5. **Conclusion, Nancy Beachum**

We are doing this to strengthen the organization – it is important for all to be involved. We have this treasure of refined gold and we want you to be part of it!