

NORTH AMERICAN MOBEDS COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING

Location: ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York), 106 Pomona Road, Suffern, NY 10901, USA

Date: June 8th and 9th, 2019

NAMC EXEC 2018-2019 Present:

Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee	California (President)
Tehemton Mirza	Ontario (Vice President)
Kurush Dastur	Maryland (Secretary)
Xerxes Madan	Ontario (Treasurer)
Mehbad Dastur	Ontario (Executive officer)

Two Proxies were registered.

Members were welcomed by ZAGNY President Astad Clubwala.

Meeting was called to order by NAMC President Ervad Arda-e-viraf Minocherhomjee after a short prayer.

- 1) Read and adopt the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.
 - a. Minutes were read, Adil Minocherhomjee proposed, Soli Dastoor seconded and the minutes were adopted.
- 2) Discuss any matters arising from the minutes.
 - a. Recommendation was made that NAMC record-several points of views-of older mobeds.
- 3) Read and adopt Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2018.
 - a. Treasurer Xerxes Madon presented the Financial Statements.
 - b. Question: \$61K restricted for what? Answer: Donor-restricted for young mobeds' education
 - c. Question: \$1,904 Donations Paid towards which activities?
Answer: \$500 – paid to ZAMWI for hosting the AGM in Washington
\$1000 - Gatha hymn project

\$404 – Gifts to Newly Ordained young mobeds

- d. How will we use the assets on balance sheet?

Answer: Most of the funds are restricted. We could use general funds for NAMC sponsored conferences. But member associations should sponsor Mobeds trips to AGM.

- e. Cawas proposed, seconded by Kobad and the Financial Statements were adopted

4) Read and adopt President's report.

- a. Arda presented his report.
- b. He thanked the executive board members as well as Soli Dastur & Kobad Zarolia for their continued assistance.
- c. If we want changes, we need to closely interact with our community and laity to see them implement our ideas. We have no control or direct influence over them, however.
- d. The President represented NAMC at the inauguration of the New Atash Kadeh built by the Zoroastrian Association of Houston
- e. The President also Represented NAMC at the FEZANA AGM held in Orlando and also participated in meetings with WZCC, and Global Working Group. Arda had the opportunity to convey NAMC's message in FEZANA Journal at the FEZANA AGM.
- f. Soli, Arda and Tehemton represented NAMC at WZYC in LA.
- g. NAMC is trying to sponsor Dr. Pervez Bajan for giving lectures in NA.

5) a. Current structure – Interaction of NAMC with FEZANA and other member Associations and how we foresee this relationship in the future

- i. Issue: Most associations do not see the need for funding NAMC. Only a handful of NA Associations donate annually to NAMC whereas all member associations pay a base amount plus \$3 per membership of their Association to FEZANA. This shows the apathy and lack of appreciation of the North American Zoroastrian community towards the services provided by NAMC and Mobeds.
- ii. Issue: Associations want seminars conducted by NAMC but do not produce a good turnout.
 - 1. It has been observed there is always a poor turnout at NAMC sponsored seminars at local level and most of the attendees are seniors 60yrs and over, not to mention that all travel costs are absorbed by NAMC. The Challenge is for local Associations to motivate their youth in attending such seminars. The executives of the Associations should spread the word by advertising the event in their newsletters.

2. NAMC needs to figure out a way to get funds for these and various other activities.

- b. NA Mobeds' future and the future of our Religion in NA will depend on knowledgeable young Mobeds and their interactions with the laity.

Future mobeds should deliver services to attract more laity. Laity needs to be educated on the significance of religious ceremonies, meaning of prayers and their importance.

6) Lectures

- a. Er. Tehemton Mirza: *Dynamism in Zoroastrian Rituals and Ceremonies*.
- i. Something to challenge us and make us think how we can preserve the religion and introduce activities that make young Zoroastrian kids better involved in religious activities.
 - ii. There is a statistical possibility that some of our children or grandchildren become NONES!
 - iii. Who are Nones? Atheists believe there is no god. Agnostics are not sure if there is no God but undecided. Theists believe there is a God. Incidentally, Nones are the world's fastest growing segment in NA and elsewhere.

- b. Discuss the Consecration of Atash Adaran treatise. Should we change any practices/ceremonies (or times performed) in NA? Why?
- A general observation was that Associations spend lot of money on building Atash Kadehs but have little or no funds/reserves for Mobeds to take care of these institutions. In coming decades who will look after the Atash Kadehs? Will the young generation of mobeds take responsibility to maintain the Atash Kadeh by providing voluntary service or perhaps for some reasonable compensation?

A comprehensive discussion ensued about how to set up the Atash Kadeh in NA including the various sources of fires --Athornan, Rathestaran, Vastrioshan and Hutokshan.

- c. Charges for Baj, Barasnum and other associated ceremonies for Navar/ Maratab.
- i. \$100 for a Baj
 - ii. Kurush, Tehemton, Soli, Adi, Cawas and Kobad will form a committee to decide charges for Barasnum ceremony and will present their recommendation(s) at the 2020 AGM.
- d. Full time Mobedi in NA? Requirements/Job Description/ Remuneration? Should the larger associations have a full-time Mobed(s)? Governance —who pays, Mobeds report to whom (NAMC or Associations)?

If an Adaran is set up in NA than it is important to recruit a full time mobed to look after the Adaran/Fire. NAMC will help the Associations get a full time mobed as well as provide guidance for governance, job duties, and remuneration for the full-time Mobeds.

- e. Who is eligible to become Navar, Maratab in NA.? What are the minimum requirements/qualifications? Where should NAMC /Associations focus its resources? The following resolution was tabled by Tehemton
 - i. **Resolution--** 1) A male who 2) has a navjote or sudreh pushi ceremony performed by a Mobed 3) has a Zoroastrian parent, and 4) meets all the qualifying requirements of NAMC (as amended from time to time) will be eligible to become a Navar in North America.
 - ii. Proposed by Cawas Desai and second by Kobad Zarolia.
 - iii. The Resolution was passed with the supermajority- 20 members voting YES, 3 NAYS and 1 Abstention.

- 7) What should kids/adults who do not wear Sudreh/Kusti pray? If we cannot convince them to wear these items, how do they practice our religion? Would just the practice of Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds suffice? Is righteousness a goal or strategy or both? How to achieve that goal?

Our religion is very simple but philosophical and it takes time and effort to understand the teachings and practises. In order to get kids involved in religious ceremonies /lectures NAMC should come up with different ways of communicating the teachings/texts so as to make religion more relevant in our daily lives—e.g. how to lead a happy life (Gatha 2 para 1)

Sadly, today the young generation seems to be distancing themselves away from religion. Mobeds at every opportunity should emphasize the power of the prayers and the importance of wearing sudreh/kusti. This could be done through religious classes. NAMC could play a significant role by providing educational material to Mobeds/laity.

- 8) How do we practice/ live our religion in NA? Values/beliefs (10+) all Zarthustris must know to lead a productive and happy life.

NAMC recommends that our laity understand these 10 values/beliefs

- i. Fire-significance in Zoroastrianism. Good/Evil (Angels, Heaven/Hell).
- ii. Righteousness
- iii. Charity
- iv. Happiness (how to achieve).

- v. Wealth
- vi. Wisdom
- vii. Humility.
- viii. Good Mind
- ix. Truth
- x. Fravashi, /Soul. Purpose of living a good, productive life (steps 1—9).
Responsibility for your actions & free will

- 9) Jashan Ceremony prayers—Congregations sometimes complain that the ceremonies are too long. Which prayers- Afargans and Afrins, if any, are optional when humdins want a shorter Jashan ceremony? How can they participate?
- a. Atash Nyash, three Afargans, and first two afrins are required.
 - b. NAMC strongly recommends a short explanation of the ceremony/prayers after completion of each ceremony. Laity participation at jashans under the guidance of officiating mobed is also recommended.

- 10) Should NAMC recommend a *core curriculum* for Associations' education classes? Larger Associations have different curricula but smaller ones do not always have access to these resources. Should we put the information/curriculum for various age cohorts on our web site?

NAMC could recommend a book/curriculum—Tehemtom and Kobad will make the recommendation(s) at the 2020 AGM.

- 11) Should NAMC get registered in USA as well? Could that help to increase contributions from the US? If US people wants to donate directly than we can create a US entity.

We would need a separate registered entity in the US. And, there would be increased accounting/reporting requirements. We do not have the manpower due to lack of funds/resources. The consensus was that at the present time based on the sources of donations from the US (mostly non-taxable organizations) there is no urgent need to establish a separate US entity.

- 12) Why are most associations not contributing to NAMC? What should local Mobeds do? Need to understand the psyche of the board members, where is their focus?

Several points of views were discussed but the general belief is that Associations have become used to Mobeds providing volunteer/free services and their main focus is on cultural activities. And, to change that *attitude* will unfortunately take a long time.

13) Behram Panthaky enlightened us with his talk on GAHAMBARS and the Relevance of Shenshai Calender in the North America?

14) Soli Dastur enlightened us with his talk on: Significance of striking a bell during boi ceremony.

15) Should Mobeds use **LORD of Wisdom** to describe **Ahura Mazda**? (In Zoroastrianism Lord is not considered *like* human vs Christianity?)

Several points of views were discussed. The general consensus was to use the phrase “Creator of Wisdom” for describing Ahura Mazda since the word Ahu means Creator. So, one can say Creator of Wisdom or simply Wisdom-- as it’s a virtue. However, no actual reference is found in religious texts.

16) What's the future for NAMC? Why are only few young mobeds attending these meetings?

There are several reasons for young Mobeds not attending AGMs including schooling, careers (west coast Mobeds have to miss Friday work) and importantly financial for everyone--cost of airfare etc.

NAMC believes that the Associations should encourage and sponsor their Mobeds (young and old) to attend the AGMs.

17) Is Maratab required for performing some/all ceremonies in NA? In India, we have certain prayer ceremonies conducted by mobeds who are both Navar and Martab.

ONLY inner liturgical ceremonies (i.e Baj, Yajeshni, Vandidad, Nirang Din) require a Mobed who has gone through the rituals of both Navar and Maratab --
The rest of the ceremonies could be performed by any Mobed.

18) New technology Implementation. We are very slow in implementing any new technologies and have talked about it at the AGMs but then nothing has happened. Why not have a monthly Mobeds telephone or video conference for all NAMC members to join in and discuss on how we all can be a part of NAMC together no matter the distance between us.

It was decided that future meeting will be held through video conference as well. Jamshed and Mehbad were appointed to implement this in the future if there is need for video-conferencing.

19) What title is most suitable for Zoroastrian clergy in North America? --Mobed, Ervad, Athravan etc?

- a. Any person who has undergone a navar ceremony is an Ervad / Erbud (title).
(Same title for Navar/Maratab)
- b. A practicing Ervad, is referred to as a Mobed (profession).
- c. A very accomplished Mobed, could be referred to as a Dastur (NAMC presently does not have any Dastur title.)

20) Is it ok to take the names of non-Zoroastrians in our prayers?

Yes, you can recite the names of non-Zoroastrians by using the prefix/ title Ashuan.

21) Is it ok for NAMC mobeds to perform Navjote ceremony where only one parent is a Zoroastrian? Is it ok to perform a Zoroastrian wedding ceremony where only one partner is Zoroastrian? Is it ok if the non-Zoroastrian partner does not have a nahn? Is ok to perform a Zoroastrian wedding ceremony of a gay couple?

It is entirely up to the Mobed to decide which ceremony (whole or part) to perform when a non-Zoroastrian spouse is involved.

The meeting adjourned with a vote of thanks to the President and other executive members.