

AUM

SHREE PRETORIA HINDU SEVA SAMAJ

(Established in 1932)

264 13th Avenue
P O Box 1811
Laudium, Pretoria, 0037
PRETORIA, 0001

e-mail: ramesh.chhagan@exxaro.com

PBO Ref. No.: 930004205

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE SHREE PRETORIA HINDU SEVA SAMAJ

Held at: The Boardroom, Shree Pretoria Hindu Seva Samaj
Date : 30 August 2010
Time : 7:40 pm

1.

WELCOME AND PRAYER

The meeting commenced at 7:40 with a prayer and welcome to all present.

2. ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Apology** – None; **Absent** – Sanjaybhai Govind; Himalbhai Ramjee & Tershiabhen Calien.
- 2.2 In Attendance:** Prakashbhai Hira, Rameshbhai Chhagan, Jagdishbhai Makan, Kishorbhai Naran, Pranaybhai Devchand, Pravinbhai Daya, Jyotibhen Joshi and Rakeshbhai Ravjee.
- 2.3** The meeting was declared duly constituted by the Secretary-General as the requisite quorum as required by clause 12 of the constitution had been met by the members present.

3.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of 17 August 2010, was adopted, on the motion of Rakeshbhai Ravjee, seconded by Pranaybhai Devchand.

Amendment

- 3.1 Clause 5.6 should read that Executive committee members were to assist in finding volunteers for the Raksha Bandan collection drive, and not that they should specifically approach their team members.

4.

MATTERS ARISING

4.1 *Keys for Samaj Office*

Kishorbhai reported that additional keys had been made and that a set is now in the possession of the Secretary, caretaker and himself

4.2 *Preparations for 80th Anniversary Celebrations*

It was agreed that as Sanjaybhai was absent, this matter should be put in abeyance for the time being.

4.3 *Renovation of Premises & Flats*

See 7.2 below

4.4 *Community Social Support Policy*

Rameshbhai reported that he had converted the social support document submitted to him by the Health, Welfare & Gender committee into a policy document. This had been circulated to all members for comments. Jyotibhen requested that her team be given until end September to submit their comments.

4.5 *Academic Financial Support Programme (AFSP)*

This policy document was circulated for comment and all inputs have been captured. Pranaybhai undertook to have this policy document finalised by mid September in consultation with his team. After some debate, members felt that the financial disclosure provisions should be excluded, provided that a proper selection matrix was developed that ensured a fair and transparent process was followed.

4.6 *Development of a Family Tree*

Rameshbhai was asked to send out an email requesting volunteers to run this project and Pranaybhai to approach Maganbhai Dheda.

4.7 *Samaj Website*

Rameshbhai had earlier circulated a quotation from a website service provider, Search Networkx, to design, develop and maintain a website for Samaj. The cost for this service was R6000. After one year, a maintenance fee of R100 per month would be charged. After some discussion, the committee granted approval to Rameshbhai to enter into an agreement with the service provider, subject to ensuring that this service would be compatible with and allow for each official receiving individualized emails.

4.8 *New Samaj/Navyug Directory*

Rakeshbhai reported that he and his team are currently finalising their plans for the updating of the directory. Various officials offered to assist should their help be needed but it was emphasised that unnecessary delays should be avoided. In reply to a question, it was clarified that the directory should only cover the areas that fall within the Greater Tshwane Metropolitan district. Prakashbhai shared his vision that once this project was completed, it could form the basis of introducing a membership system whereby the Samaj could negotiate purchase discounts at shops for members; ensure

members are recognised for educational achievements, place member details on the Samaj website, etc.

4.9 Obtain PBO Registration with SARS

Prakashbhai reported that he has approached an ex-employee of SARS, Kishorbhai Ramharak, to assist the Samaj with regaining its public benefit organisation (PBO) status.

4.10 Aircon & Vacuum Cleaner

Kishorbhai presented two quotations for air conditioners for Mandir. He was granted permission to purchase two air conditioners from Aircon & Refrigeration Services at a total cost of R22 000. Kishorbhai informed members that Jasminbhen Govind contacted him and offered the donation of a vacuum cleaner in memory of the late Manoobhen Chiba. This offer was gratefully accepted and Rameshbhai was asked to write a letter of thanks.

4.11 Employment Contracts & Tenancy Agreements with Mukeshbhai & Premeebhen

Prakashbhai recommended that the employment contract include the use of a flat as part of the benefits that the two affected individuals would enjoy. Jagdishbhai and Kishorbhai agreed to send information to Prakashbhai that he could use to conclude a contract by the end of September.

4.12 Astroturf

This matter was put in abeyance

4.13 Appointment of a Permanent Administrator

Rameshbhai informed members that he had received three applications for the advertised position. It was agreed that Prakashbhai, Pranaybhai and Pravinbhai would interview the candidates on or before Saturday 4 September and make the appointment.

4.14 Governance & Limits of Authority

Prakashbhai undertook to produce a draft by the next meeting

4.15 Samaj Shirts

It was decided to cancel this idea

4.16 Auditor's & Forensic Report

The external auditor's findings and recommendations would be addressed by Prakashbhai before the AGM. Prakashbhai mentioned that both he and Pankajbhai have been receiving calls from members of the public on the outcome of the forensic report. The president had received an indication from Tayfin that the report would be finalised within 6 weeks. It was further resolved that after tabling it at an executive meeting, a public meeting will be held shortly thereafter to discuss the findings.

4.17 Security for Diabetes Day

No longer necessary, however, Kishorbhai to ask Bharatbhai to liaise with traffic department for their participation.

4.18 Teacher Remuneration & Contract Concerns

Prakashbhai reported that he and Rameshbhai had met with some of the teachers from the Gujarati School and Balmandir immediately after the resignation of the education committee to address the management of the school, any outstanding issues and concerns the teachers might have. In the discussions, they highlighted the following grievances:

- Employment contracts and changes of salary benefits were not discussed with them prior to them being requested to sign an employment contract;
- They were particularly unhappy with the unilateral decision not to pay them during school holidays which they described as inhumane and unreasonable as they still needed to feed their families during holidays;
- They felt they were not treated with respect and that certain members of the education committee were arrogant;
- changes made to their working times without taking personal circumstances into account;
- their non-representation on the education committee to ensure their voices were heard; and finally
- they were of the view that the contracts were too complicated and legalistic and infringed on their personal rights, citing the medical report requirements.

After consultation, new simple contracts that addressed their concerns and that suited all the parties were drawn up and these were signed by the educators present on the 29 August 2010. Issues still to be sorted out are:

- contract of outstanding Gujarati teacher;
- contracts of part-time teachers
- Letter of complaint by Nalinibhen Bhagattjee, who claimed that the previous education committee had terminated her services without consulting her or even informing her that she had been fired.

Prakashbhai proposed that a new governing body be formed that would ensure the participation of all stakeholders. A guideline on the formation and functioning of this new School Governing Body was discussed with the teachers. They supported the proposal that a committee made up of two (2) teachers, two (2) parents, two (2) executive members and one (1) independent community member be formed to manage the day to day affairs of the Balmandir and Gujarati School.

The executive committee approved the School Governing Body guideline and gave Pranaybhai the mandate to have it established as quickly as possible.

4.19 ***Sponsored Bursary plan***

Pranaybhai undertook to draw up guidelines on how the Samaj should administer a bursary system by end September. This was in response to a request by a community member for the Samaj to manage such a fund on his behalf.

4.20 ***Letter of Thanks to Quality Spice for donation of Rakhis for Rakshabandan***

Rameshbhai reported that a letter has been written.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

5.1 ***In***

- 5.1.1 Received a letter from RC Naik requesting a meeting in October with Samaj officials to discuss formation of Hindu Funeral Council of Gauteng. Members expressed support for this proposal and decided that Kishorbhai, Bharatbhai and Rameshbhai would represent the Samaj at the proposed meeting.

5.2 **Out**

- 5.2.1 Rameshbhai reported that he had written a testimonial for Bhikubhai J. Gordon at his request. Bhikubhai is applying to become a Commissioner of Oaths.

6. **FINANCIAL REPORT**

No report presented. Due to the withdrawal of participation by Himalbhai and to ensure the smooth functioning of financial matters related to payments, it was unanimously approved on the motions of Prakashbhai Hira and Pranaybhai Devchand that Kishorbhai Dajee, in addition to his current portfolio, be appointed to act as interim treasurer with immediate effect.

7. **PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

7.1 ***Health, Welfare & Gender Portfolio***

Jyotibhen reported on the progress made for the Diabetes Day Programme scheduled to take place on 19 September. Stalls offering various goods will be on offer; a wide range of health professionals would be in attendance to provide free medical services to the community. Sponsorships from various organisations have also been secured. Issues needing attention included:

- safety certificate signed by an engineer for the marquee;
- finalisation of wording for posters and newspaper advert;
- producing of pamphlets for distribution
- article for publication
- the exco suggested to Jyotibhen to omit the Samaj as promoter of this venture from posters and pamphlets in order to attract all religious groups of the community

7.2 ***Facilities management portfolio***

Kishorbhai reported that he has arranged for a meeting with an architect, Avishbhai Mistry, to draw up renovation plans. These would be submitted to two builders for quotations. In the meantime, he was granted approval by the committee to commence with the painting of the mandir and outside murthis so as to have it completed before Navratri, provided the cost did not exceed R10 000. Mukeshbhai and Jagdishbhai are to assist him in the choice of colours for the murthis. The architectural drawings must be submitted before end September or soon thereafter. As far as the flats of Mukeshbhai & Premeeben were concerned, Kishorbhai was asked to ascertain what needed to be fixed urgently and to submit an estimated cost for approval at the next meeting.

7.3 ***Youth / Navyug Mandal Portfolio***

Rakeshbhai reported that the charity drive and visit to the Aids orphanage in Klipgat was a tremendous success. He was asked to prepare a detailed report for the committee as well as to place an article in the Laudium Sun. Rameshbhai asked to distribute this to the community. Arrangements for the soccer tournament of all youth

bodies scheduled for 26 September at the Laudium Stadium was proceeding smoothly. Major project remained the drive to update the calendar for Gujarati families in greater Tshwane

7.4 Religion & Culture Portfolio

Jagdishbhai reported that Shraavan Bhajans are progressing well. His committee is busy with arrangements for Ganesha Chaturthi celebrations which the Samaj will organize for the very first time in its history. Murthis must be collected on 10 September. Ganesh Yagna will take place in the mini-hall on Saturday 11 September, followed by the immersion of over 50 clay Ganesha murthis on Saturday 18 September at 4 pm. He appealed to young and old to attend.

Krishna Jayanti Bhajans will commence in our Mandir at 9.30pm after the school concert and will end at 12.00 midnight with Krishna Aarti.

Planning has also commenced for Navratri celebrations. Rakeshbhai agreed to ask the youth to man the tuckshop over this period. Fine Arts printer has been commissioned to produce a Gujarati calendar and the first proof is being awaited.

7.5 Education & Academic Support Portfolio

Pranaybhai reported that the school's Krishna Jayanti celebration preparation was well on track and that a programme had been finalised. Prakashbhai requested members for inputs for his address to the community. Jagdishbhai requested that the participation of youth in religious activities should be particularly emphasised.

Pranaybhai also thanked all those officials and volunteers that had, at short notice, rallied for the Raksha Bandan drive. He indicated that while the list has not been finalised all indications are that a sum exceeding R48, 000 had been collected, which breaks all previous records. In thanking everyone for their effort, the president also requested that receipts be given out next year, as per the executive's commitment towards good governance. Pranaybhai expressed concern that there would still be homes that had been inadvertently left out mainly as a result of the records not been up to date. He placed on record his sincere apology to all those who had not been visited.

As far as the Gujarati School and Balmandir was concerned, there were still issues to be sorted out.

The second phase of the granting of loans to applicants for student support was also receiving attention.

7.6 Secretarial Report

Meeting with Ex-Education Committee Members

Rameshbhai reported that a letter of resignation was received from the entire education committee, namely Bandish Gokal, Padmini Mistry, Chetan Jeeva, Vikash Kalayan, Atish Mistry, Manisha Kalyan, Sheetal Valjee, Madhurika Kanjee, Nisha Jeeva & Preeti Goolab. On receiving this letter, the President telephonically contacted the Deputy Chairman of the Education Committee to express his concern at this

sudden resignation as he had not been informed by them of any grievances they had subsequent to the resignation of Harshabhen Dayal. He invited them to a meeting on 10 August which they declined. On 15 August, an email was received from the ex-members that stated that they had made up their mind to resign but that they would meet with us merely to explain further their reasons "in case something wasn't clear to us".

Despite this unhelpful and confrontational stance, and in the interest of the school and its learners, the President took the decision to nevertheless meet the ex-members as a last resort to convince them to retract their resignation. The President could not attend the meeting on the day called by them but as this matter was considered important and urgent, the executive committee mandated the Secretary-General, Rameshbhai Chhagan, and Pranaybhai Devchand to meet with them.

In their report back to the Executive, Rameshbhai & Pranaybhai reported that in their opening address they had explained to these members that they had been mandated by the executive to achieve three objectives: (1) to understand what their grievances were as there had been no previous communication from them that they had grievances or concerns; (2) to give assurances, if necessary, that any legitimate grievances they have would be addressed; (3) to request that they retract their resignation. The ex-education committee members responded, in a somewhat agitated and aggressive manner, that they had resigned because no one had communicated with them after Harshabhen had resigned. They consequently felt ignored, unappreciated and unacknowledged and also interpreted the executive committee's lack of response as a sign of no confidence in them. It was explained to them that there was no intention on the part of the executive to ignore the committee, but that during the time Harshabhen had resigned the executive committee was experiencing internal conflicts and also the world soccer cup was taking place and that both these events had probably led to the delay in communicating with them. It was pointed out to them that immediately after Harshabhen's resignation was tabled and Pranaybhai was appointed to act as education head, he (Pranaybhai) had immediately tried to communicate with them, but that this attempt had been rebuffed by them. Rameshbhai also apologised several times on behalf of the executive for the oversight in not communicating with them and both he and Pranaybhai undertook to ensure that their grievances were met. Despite the apologies and assurances given, including a request from Pranaybhai to them to work with him for a few months so that they could experience that matters had changed to their satisfaction, they refused to reconsider their decision to resign. Instead, they continued making derogatory allegations against the executive, insulted the Secretary and the President and their leadership and remained confrontational. When it became evident that they were determined to spurn any attempt at reconciliation, Rameshbhai thanked them for having agreed to meet with the delegation and ended the meeting with a prayer.

The President felt that the attitude of the Education Committee was strange particularly after the executive had apologised for not addressing their issues appropriately and after it became apparent that their concerns were capable of being fully resolved if they had the will and heart to do so in the interest of the learners and the school.

He expressed the view that since Bandish Gokul and some of the other members of the Education Committee had a vested interest in Rajkranti Investments, their hostile

attitude and unwillingness to be flexible created the impression that they were still aggrieved with the decision of the Trustees and Executive Committee for not sanctioning the Whisky Tasting Fund Raising Dinner under the name of the Samaj. It therefore appeared that their resignation was a vendetta against the current Executive to make the Samaj ungovernable and a deliberate attempt to destabilise the Raksha Bandan and Hanuman Jayanti Celebrations particularly after Sanjay Govind, Himal Ramjee and Tershia Calien had also given notice to withdraw their participation prior to the resignation of the Education Committee.

He regretted that they were unwilling to work with the Executive Committee and requested that we accept and table their resignations accordingly

8. **GENERAL**

8.1 Rameshbhai reported that Jivanbhai had cancelled the meeting he had called for but had informed him that he would contact him to reschedule.

8.2 Pranaybhai asked Rameshbhai to write a letter of thanks to Pramodbhai Kassin for the design and printing of Raksha Bandan handbills.

9. **NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on Monday 6 September 2010.

10 **PRAYER AND CLOSURE**

The meeting ended with a prayer at 11:00pm.



RAMESHBHAI CHHAGAN
SECRETARY GENERAL: SPHSS