

KOA BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

From: Anupam Wali, Secretary, KOA

Date: Held on Sunday, October 21, 2001, 11/20/01

KOA Board Meeting Minutes January 26, 2003 (12:00 Noon E.S.T.)

1. Welcome & Introduction:

The 1st KOA board meeting for year 2003 was called to order By Shri Sanjay Kaul, president, KOA at 12:00 Noon East Coast Time, and a roll call was made. Present or absent at the meeting were the members as shown below.

Executive Committee Members

President Sanjay Kaul Present

Vice President. Sidharth Ganju Present

Secretary Anupam Wali Present

Treasurer Prana Kaul Present

Cultural Secretary Arti Kaul Present

Media Secretary Vijay Parimoo Present

Immediate Past-President Lalit Wanchoo Present

CURRENT BOARD Members:

Zone Director:

1 Nirja Khashu Absent

2 Salochna Tickoo Present

4 Sujata Qusba Present

5 Anita Kaul Absent

6 Sidharth Ganju Present

7 Sanjay Bhat Present

8 Hari Koul Present

9 Vijay Chowdhury Present

10 Anjali Bhat Present

Youth Representatives

* Dhiraj Bakaya Present

* Janni Kaul Present

Invited:

* Arun Koul Present

2. Vote of Thanks:

The President took the opportunity to thank all the outgoing board members from Zone 1, Vijay Kaul (NY); Zone 3: Sarla Warikoo (NJ); Zone 4, Hira Lal Nakhasi (MD); and Zone 8: Hira Lal Koul (MI). He thanked them for their leadership, time and effort they

put in for the organization and community work. and said “I have enjoyed working with them and appreciate their cooperation, and look forward to their continued involvement in our community affairs. Thanks for a job well done. He also took this opportunity to express his sincere thanks to the election committee comprising of Shri Suman Hukku (Chair), Shri Chaman Bhan (Member) and Sunita Kaul (Member), for conducting the election in just and fair manner, and in doing so have glorified the organization.”

Sanjay Kaul proposed a motion to thank outgoing board members. It was seconded by Siddharth Ganju. All present favored the motion. The motion was passed.

3. Welcome to New Board Members:

The President welcomed the newly elected Zonal Directors to the KOA Board, which include: Zone 1: Nirja Khashu (NY); Zone 3: Sandeep Kaul (NJ); Zone 4: Sujata Qasba (MD); Zone 6: Sidharth Ganju (GA) re-elected; Zone 8: Hari Koul (MI); and Zone 9: Vijay Chowdhury (CA). Vijay Chowdhury replaces Ravi Mirakhur for the unexpired part of his term. He said “I am looking forward to your active involvement and close cooperation with me in implementing KOA’s programs. Welcome!”

4. Appointment of New Executive Committee:

Since this was the first meeting of Calendar year 2003 and also beginning of second term for Sanjay Kaul as President of KOA, he presented a new slate of Executive Committee to the Board.

a) He said, “I will continue with my current committee members which includes:

- Sidharth Ganju as the V.P.
- Anupam Wali as the Secretary
- Prana Kaul as the Treasurer
- Arti Kaul as the Cultural Secretary
- Vijay Parimoo as the Media Secretary
- Lalit Wanchoo as the Ex-President

b) In addition, for this term, I am expanding the E.C. by appointing Arun Koul (MA) as the “Community Liaison/Official Spokes Person of KOA.” He welcomed all E.C. members and thanked Arun Koul for joining us for the first time.

5. Financial Report from the Treasurer (Prana Koul):

Prana Koul said, “KOA has been very prompt with our tax filings. In 2002, we promptly filed tax returns for 2001 with IRS and also filed 2002 Personal Property Return with the State of Maryland where KOA is registered. She provided the information from KOA’s bank account for major categories for year 2002. Here is the information about amount received and cashed from KOA’s Bank Account during year 2002:

	Income	Expenses
Membership	\$20,500	
Koshur Calendar	\$5,400	
Kasheer Magazine	\$300	
Fund Raised for CD	\$1,600	
Udhampur School	\$1,400	
Kashmir Institute	\$2,200	
General Donation	\$14,772	
For Programs		
S-A-C	\$28,156	\$25,137
EF	\$40,568	\$36,921
Help to needy	\$7,256	\$4,250
General	\$43,576	
Total	\$122,152	\$109,884

Sanjay Kaul thanked Prana Kaul for the Treasurer's report.

6. Status of Projects in India:

The Education Fund Program: In 2001, we raised about \$48,000 and supported 186 students. For the school year 2002/2003 we have raised \$44,000 from our sponsors. With this amount we were able to support 170 students for the current academic year. We received 160 new applications, and currently have sufficient funds to support only 70 of them, rest are the ones continued from last year.

Sponsor-A-Child Program: In the year 2002, approximately \$28,000 was raised for this program. Currently, about 200 children are covered under this program, 146 sponsors support this program. With regards to both these programs, Sanjay Kaul emphasized that there are many more refugee children who need help. We have been adding new sponsors but there is a huge unmet demand. All board members were asked to actively support these programs and help signup new sponsors. He further said that, "In past, suggestions were made by members to see how we can track the beneficiaries of these programs and have them give back to the community so that more children will be benefited, and we are working on it."

Udhampur School: The school at Udhampur, caters to children up to 8th Grade. It provides both educational and employment opportunities to the camp residents. The school has an operating expense of Rs.3 Lac/year. In past KOA board had approved supporting this school by providing assistance for up to Rs.2 Lac towards operating cost

only (which amounts to approximately \$4000/yr). KOA has received their financial statement for 2002. In year 2002, two checks of \$1500 and \$2000 were sent to Shri Bhat Memorial Trust for running this school.

Sanjay Kaul proposed to take a vote to pledge our continued support for this school for next two years. He proposed a motion to pledge \$4,000/year for next two years for Rishi Memorial School at Udhampur. It was seconded by "Hari Koul." With all members in favor, the motion was passed.

Financial Help for Medical & Social Conditions: Every year KOA gets hundreds of letters from KP's, mostly from Jammu, seeking financial help for their loved ones undergoing serious medical conditions and for other financial troubles due to mishaps etc. People in refugee camps are suffering numerous ailments. Last year, a committee was set up to start a coordinated effort for fund collection and to develop criteria for selection of applicants and the disbursement of funds. In 2002, we raised about \$7,256 for this cause and which we have already distributed and/or pledged to people needing that help. A committee has been set up headed by Maharaj Kaul of NY. Any appeal for help that you may receive should be sent to this committee.

7. Status of Projects in the United States and Accomplishments:

Sanjay Kaul informed the board members that we send Newsletters (quarterly), Kasheer Magazine (bi-annual), Koshur Calendar (yearly) and Member Directory (once in 2 years) to our members.

New Years Greeting Card: Since last year (2001) we have regularly sent a New Year greeting card to our members with an appeal for donation. The appeal has been well received by members resulting in sizable donations. This year we included membership bill with the card and as a result we are seeing a very good response to our membership renewal.

Koshur Calendar: In 2002, we produced Koshur Calendar and mailed it before Navreh time to all members on KOA's mailing list. To defray the costs of printing and mailing, we raised \$5,400 by way of donations from members. Last year. It was decided that calendar will be sent to all paid and unpaid members. This year also it would be sent to all members on our mail list. In order to defray the costs of printing, Sanjay Kaul asked every zone to sponsor at least one month with contributions from members. Sponsoring each month will cost \$500. Four families at \$125 each could sponsor a month.

Newsletter: In 2002, four issues of newsletters (quarterly) have been published and mailed to all Kashmiri Pandits who are on KOA mailing list. We will continue to bring out newsletters every quarter.

Directory: As you know, last edition of KOA directory was produced and mailed in 2001. Since it is promised that we will produce it every two years, next edition is planned for this year. Your help in updating member information is sought.

Magazine: We produced a new magazine titled, "Kasheer" in December of 2002. It is based on articles from members here in this country, mostly pertaining to issues faced by our community. It will be produced twice a year. Sanjay Kaul sought active support of

board members to a) get articles from members and b) get advertisements to defray the cost of production.

Kashmir Institute: Since 2001, we have been offering to our youth, a Kashmiri Language course once every year. In June 2002, a youth camp was organized on the West Coast. In August 2002, we held a seven-day language course at American University in Maryland. This year we offered a 4-day language course at the Brown University at RI from January 17 to 20, 2003. Sanjay Kaul thanked Prof. Ashok Koul of Brown University (RI) for offering the course, last year and this year. He also thanked the community members for supporting these activities in Washington area and Boston-Providence area, and last but not the least the guest speakers who came from various parts of the country to teach our youth.

Sanjay Kaul said, “We have offered these classes at Washington, D.C. and Providence, RI, if we get enough interest from our youth in West Coast or Mid West, we could hold a course there during the fall of this year. Last year from our members we raised \$2,200 for this institute and KOA had pledged \$2,000. I would like KOA to continue supporting this program under our Kashmir Institute. Therefore, the board was requested to appropriate \$2000 for these language courses. President proposed a motion to pledge \$2000 for this purpose. It was seconded by “Sandeep Kaul.” With all in favor, the motion was passed.

National Camp: To be held from July 3rd (Thursday) to July 6th (Sunday) 2003. As the KOA Annual General Body Meeting is held at the National Camp, every year, it is requested that all the Board members make an effort to come to the camp. Also, promote participation to the National camp in their respective zones.

Local/Regional Camps: KOA encourages regional camps and this year, Texas community has arranged a Camp in the month of March. Last year, Northern California Community organized a camp during the 4th of July weekend and Southern California organized a camp in August.

Sanjay Kaul said, “I am asking all the Zone Directors to explore possibility of having local camps in their own zones, at least once a year, so that the community can come together. He also recommend that few Zone Directors should jointly work to arrange a Regional Camp. He asked all the Directors to take initiative to make it happen and KOA would help in all possible ways to organize these camps.”

Cultural Exchange Program: In year 2001, we got Shri Virender Quazi (Shaivism expert), in 2002 we got Neerja Pandit from Mumbai and she performed at 9 places in the US. KOA is sponsoring this cultural activity and Mrs. Arti Kaul is coordinating this activity. This year we are working with Kailash Mehra and Vijay Malla to bring them here. In order to continue support cultural exchange program we need to apportion \$3000 for bringing an artist from India. The president proposed a motion that KOA pledge \$3000 for this purpose. It was seconded by “Vijay Chowdhary.” With all in favor, the motion was passed.

Membership: President said, “Our membership drive last year has been very encouraging, membership has steadily been increasing. Our paid membership for 2002 was 57%. Can we do better than this; Yes. Your Zone Membership list has been provided

to you. Appoint a membership coordinator. We need to work the phones and call our members to renew their membership. One suggestion is to ask our young school and college going kids to help in membership drive. KOA would give them certificates for their community work that could help them when they are applying for college admissions and also pay them. Please see to it that each member is called personally, it makes a big difference. “

Bhajan CD: KOA in collaboration with Kailash Mehra has produced a CD of Bhajans, it is called POOZAI POSH. As a promotion, we will give out this CD to those who pay their 2003 membership by March 30.

Funds for Zone Activity: Based on membership revenues generated, KOA sends portion of it back to zones to defray costs of local cultural activities. Sanjay Kaul promised to continue to do so. As in the past, we will soon send out contributions to each zone. These funds are to be used for purchasing assets that could be used for current and future zone activities. An audio system is one of the most commonly purchased asset in this category. The funds are not to be used to subsidize hall rentals or food costs.

Promote Smaller Chapters: As the population of Kashmiri Pandits in this country is increasing, there is a need for having smaller chapters in all zones. Any state within a zone with 10 to 15 or more KP families should have a chapter of their own. Please help structure smaller chapters. For all practical purposes, this will create cohesiveness among the local members and their involvement in community affairs as responsible office bearers at Chapter level.

Scholarship Fund: Last year, Hiralal Koul (MI) proposed to establish a scholarship fund for children in US. KOA board unanimously voted on making a one-time achievement award to college bound Kashmiri Pandit students living in United States. Initially it is planned to make up to 4 such awards in the amount of \$500 each. A committee of 3 people has been appointed for a term of 2-years. The candidates should apply by January 31, 2003 and awards will be announced by the end of March 2003. Scholarship fund was established last year, and awards will be made beginning March this year.

KOA Interactive Website: KOA has developed a new interactive website, which is more dynamic and interactive in nature with tremendous flexibility for future expansion of the site and content. Members can go to this site and update their information while as maintaining their privacy. This website was launched in July of 2002. Many new features are constantly being added and the website is regularly updated.

Welcome package: Shri Ashok Raina has put a Welcome brochure for newcomers to USA. This brochure was shared with all board members last year, and now their feed back is sought. After finalizing, the brochure would be put in the welcome package.

Program Brochure: Sanjay Kaul proposed to produce a brochure for our membership drive which would list various programs and accomplishments of the KOA run programs. He asked the board members for ideas in this regard.

8. Role of Director/Chapter President:

Written information in this regard had already been circulated to allboard members. The

intention of defining these roles is to minimize conflicts and improve coordination. Sanjay Kaul asked board members for their comments and emphasized the following:

- a) All of our activities need to be self sustaining. Therefore, help raise funds for the association, initiate and promote fund-raisers.
- b) Work harder to increase paid membership to generate revenue.
- c) Organize at least three or four functions in every Zone/Chapter, every year, which should be Shivratri/Navreh, Picnic, Local Camp, Diwali etc. Develop a calendar, fix dates for all these functions in advance for the coming year. Involve children, youth and senior citizens in local activities.
- d) Promptly send articles for Newsletter describing activities in your zone. If you are busy, assign this responsibility to someone else from your zone. As directors, you have special privileges for posting on our website. Please keep the events section on the website up-to-date. e) Please find ways to promote the website among members.

9. E-group moderators and their role and suggested guidelines for use of KOA e-groups:

All our zones have e-groups to facilitate communication. All Zone Directors have moderator rights to these e-groups. You can add and invite new members. Maintain and update the member list and as a moderator see to it that these e-groups are not misused or abused by any member. There is a set of guidelines, which will be e-mailed to you this week. Please use these e-groups as means of communication.

10. Youth Issues:

Two youth representatives: Dhiraj Bakaya and Jaani Kaul present at the meeting informed the board about the youth issues.

Summary of what Youth Representatives asked for:

- a) Zone Directors to actively support youth issues and promote youth cause among community members in their respective zones
- b) Get names of few younger children from major metropolitan areas who would then closely work with the youth group.
- c) KOA allow low cost membership for children: \$5 for 12-18 age group, \$10 for 18-22 age group.
- d) Help produce Youth Directory and e) Promote and facilitate youth language classes.

Sanjay Kaul thanked Dhiraj and Jaani for their efforts.

11. Should we register KOA in every state:

Currently, KOA is registered in the state of Maryland only. We file "Personal Property Return" every year with the state of MD. Lalit Wanchoo spoke on this topic and informed the board about various options.

12. Establish a committee to raise funds for the association:

We need to aggressively raise funds for the organization to effectively run our programs. Let us set up a committee, which will provide ideas about what and how we can accomplish this. Do I have any volunteers or you can simply propose name of a member from your zone who has fund raising experience and later confirm with them.

Hari Koul volunteered to lead fundraiser committee with Siddharth Ganju, Lalit Wanchoo and Arun Koul.

13. Liaison Person In India:

The President said, “We have always wanted to have a direct liaison person in India, who could gather information for us, monitor our programs there and serve as a contact person with students. I am asking an authorization to appoint a liaison person in India. I have already spoken with a few people in this regard with whom KOA has worked in the past. A salary of Rupees 3,000/month and traveling expense of up to Rupees 2,000/month will be sufficient for this purpose.”

He proposed a motion to authorize him to appoint a person in India as our liaison. Rough estimate of expenses is about \$1200 for year 2003. It was Seconded by “Siddharth Ganju.” With all in favor, the motion was passed.

14. Merchant Account on our web site:

As a new initiative for the convenience of KOA members, Sanjay Kaul informed the board that, “We were working on establishing a Merchant Account which would allow members to pay their annual dues and make donations on our web site.” The estimated yearly operating cost of providing this service would be approximately \$500. He proposed a motion that the board approve establishment of a Merchant Account on our website. It was seconded by “Sandeep Kaul.” With all in favor, the motion was passed.

15. Establish an Open Discussion Forum for our worldwide community:

KOA had started the first ever-open discussion form for our worldwide KP community. Until year 2000 we owned and managed that forum. In year 2001, it was given to an independent body. We currently have no way of enforcing rules and regulations and making sure that it is a productive tool for our community. At this time, strong need is felt by our members to re initiate this service for our members under KOA’s banner. Our sister organizations in Canada, Europe, Middle East, South East Asia and Australia have insisted that we start this service and then manage and operate it. We have the capability to do so. Arun Koul briefed the board as to how this service will be managed and operated. After discussion, the proposal was put to vote.

Sanjay Kaul, proposed a motion that “the board approve establishing an open discussion forum for our worldwide community. It was seconded by Hari Koul. With all in favor, the motion was passed.

16. Liability Insurance for KOA Office Bearers:

Issue of liability insurance for our office bearers was brought up by Siddharth Ganju. He was concerned that if there was a liability claim against the directors and office bearers,

KOA should indemnify the directors and officers of KOA. The issue was discussed and the board felt that we should look into what would be the cost of such insurance. Anupam Wali was going to look into the cost of getting such insurance coverage.

17. Who can be a member (define minimum qualifications):

The President said, “Until now, we have never had a problem in this regard. All our members are KP’s. Some instances where one member is non KP are because of marriage to a KP. But in our “rules and regulations” we need to define it to avoid any possible future conflict. If we don’t come to a conclusion in this meeting, we will continue this discussion through e-mail.” The board members were asked for their comments and ideas.

18. Should there be a cutoff date to be an eligible voter:

The President said, “Until now, as a practice we have allowed members to mail in their membership dues with their ballot. This has helped raise lot of revenue for the organization as elections generate lot of interest in the community for the organization. Recently there have been discussions regarding the disadvantages of this practice. Therefore, I am bringing up to you for discussion. If we don’t come to a conclusion in this meeting, we will continue this discussion through e-mail.” The board members were asked for their comments and ideas.

20. What should be KOA’s Action Plan:

When a community member breaks the rules and guidelines of the association, misinforms/misrepresents information about the association, and slanders the association and/or its members and office bearers, What should be KOA’s action?. Such instances have occurred in past. Without naming any names or specific instances, we need to have an action plan to counter such an incident. We need to identify what a member cannot do. If we don’t come to a conclusion in this meeting, we will continue this discussion through e-mail.” The board members were asked for their comments and ideas.

21. Any New Business:

There was a discussion about, “How can we make our community better here in the USA. Sanjay Bhat brought up the issue of current economy and job situation for our community members. He was concerned as to how can we develop a network where some one seeking job can be helped.

Lalit Wanchoo thanked Sanjay Kaul and his team for a job well done for last two years. A motion of thanks was proposed by him which was seconded by Sidharth Ganju. It was passed with all in favor.

Sanjay Kaul thanked all the board members for their participation and the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM East coast time.

Sincerely
Anupam Wali
Secretary