Minutes

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**Meeting date:** December 15, 2018

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## Attendees

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Present:** | Jayati Bera, Abhijit Dasgupta, Lina Chakraborty, Arunima Ghosh, Chiranjib Sanyal, Swapan Sinha, Nabanita Nag |
| **Absent:** | Sanjoy Bose, Soumyadeep Dey |

## 

## Puja Schedule

The proposed schedule for Saraswati Puja was circulated:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Day | Event | Time |
| Friday | Decoration & kitchen setup | 8:00 - 11:00 AM |
|  |  |  |
| Saturday | Puja Prep | 10:00 AM |
|  | Puja/Hate-khodi | 11:00AM – 1:00 PM |
|  | Prasad & Lunch | 1:00 to 2:30 PM |
|  | Recitation & Drawing competition | 1:00 to 4:00 PM |
|  | Cultural Program | 4:00 to 8:00 PM |
|  | Dinner | 8:00 to 9:30 PM |
|  | Clean-up | till 11:00 PM |

It was felt that starting setup at 8pm on Friday was too late for a winter evening, and that we needed to start lunch earlier to accommodate an early start to the children’s competitions, which in turn would allow an earlier start to the cultural program. The following modifications were proposed and approved by the board:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Event | Modified Time |
| Friday set-up | 7:00 - 11:00 pm |
| Lunch | 12:30 - 2:30 pm |
| Kid’s program | 1:00 - 3:00 pm |
| Cultural program | 3:00 - 8:00 pm |

Ms. Ghosh informed the Board that the audio engineer had requested 90 minutes for setup before the first program. There was concern that there was insufficient buffer time at the beginning to allow proper audio setup, so it was proposed that we rent the auditorium an hour earlier to ensure a timely start to the cultural program at 3:00 pm.

#### Action items

1. The **President** will request Montgomery County (Ms. King) to extend the rental so we have access to the cafeteria and kitchen at 7 pm on Friday, February 8 and the auditorium at 1:00 PM on Saturday, February 9.
2. The Board will prepare the first announcement for Saraswati Puja, to be distributed December 26. This will also announce the opening of online registration.
3. Mr. Dasgupta will prepare the online registration system reflecting the rates decided (see below)
4. Mr. Dasgupta will post the Saraswati Puja “Save the date” and will follow up with the announcement on December 26.

## Puja

Ms. Bera informed us that Mr. Bandy was very resistant to continuing his service as the main priest for Puja in 2019, stating concerns about his advancing age and having to drive at night. She proposed several potential alternatives, including Somesh Chattopadhay, Bidhan Chakraborty, Biswajit Chatterjee and Nilotpal Kundagrami. There was also an option to have one of the above perform Puja while Mrs Aloka Chakravarty recited the *shlokas*, since there was positive feedback from Durga Puja 2018 about her pronounciation and abilities. Given the short time remaining till Saraswati Puja, it was decided that Ms. Bera would call Mr. Bandy again to request that he perform Saraswati Puja for this year, allowing us to decide on replacement(s) for Durga Puja, buying us a bit of time for this important role.

The issue of saris used during Puja and their distribution was raised. Ms. Bera reminded us that in the past, saris offered for puja were kept and given as prizes during the year, for example, during the picnic. This year, saris were distributed by Mr. Bandy to the ladies present and helping during Puja, but not to all the helpers or in any systematic manner, leading to some discontent. She also reminded us that in the past, Sanskriti had provided good quality saris for puja, and also given sweaters to Mr. Bandy and his helper(s) as a token of appreciation. She proposed that we authorize Mr. Manik Ghosh, who will be visiting Kolkata this winter, to purchase 2 saris for Puja, with a budget of Rs. 2500 for each sari, to ensure a reasonable quality is purchased. This translates to a budget item of $100 for sari purchase.

#### Action items

1. The President will call Mr. Bandy again to request he perform priest duties this Saraswati Puja. She will inform the Board of the results of this conversation.

## Food

Mr. Sanyal reassured the Board that he is willing and available to continue leading the food efforts during Puja this year. Mr. Sinha will be assisting him in this area.

Mr. Sinha proposed that we might want to have some extra trays of food on hand since members liked to take home any available extra food *(this was my understanding)*

The menu for Saraswati Puja was decided, mainly in line with the 2018 menu.

**Friday**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Adults | Kids |
| Chanachur | Cheese Pizza |
| Muri |  |
| Bonde |  |

**Saturday**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Meal | Adults | Kids |
| Lunch | Khichuri | Pizza |
|  | Labra | Juice |
|  | Veg cutlet | Chips |
|  | Beguni/aloo bhaja | Cupcake |
|  |  |  |
| Snack | Muri | Chicken nuggets |
|  | Chanachur | Juice |
|  | Singara |  |
|  |  |  |
| Dinner | Peas pulao | Chicken noodles |
|  | Chholar daal | Grilled chicken piece |
|  | Goat curry | Brownie bites |
|  | Cabbage with peas |  |
|  | Dhokar dalna / malai kofta |  |
|  | (missing dessert) |  |

It was decided that this contract would go to Spice Grill given their excellent performance in 2018. Singara may be procured from Ritu Sharma.

## Decoration

Mr. Haripada Sarker will continue to lead the decoration efforts. Mr. Dasgupta will work with Mr. Sarker to recruit young volunteers to help him.

Mr. Anutosh Saha, who has kindly stored all puja decorations in his home for several years, intimated to Mr. Ghosh (past-president) that he would like the decorations moved so he could carry out some home renovations. It was felt that despite the increased costs, it would be best to obtain a larger storage to store all of Sanskriti’s materials, and that well-wishers may possibly offset the increased cost. However, since it would be difficult to get a storage in this short time, Ms. Bera would request Mr. Saha to let us store the materials till Durga Puja. At that point, a new storage facility will be rented and all the materials, which will be used at Durga Puja anyway, could be stored in the new location after Puja.

#### Action items

1. Ms Bera, and Mssrs. Dasgupta and Sanyal will create a list of potential storage locations and call them to find out about prices. Mr. Dasgupta will contact the current storage facility to find out about the size of the current storage.
2. Ms. Bera will call Mr. Saha to discuss this arrangement and whether he is amenable to it. She will report back to the Board.

## Cultural Program

Ms. Bera reminded us of the rules and principles to be followed in deciding upon acts who will perform at Saraswati Puja:

* Support new groups who have not performed recently
* Large groups get priority
* All participants must register for Puja

She also stated that the final acts as decided by the cultural secretary be discussed in board.

Ms. Ghosh informed the Board that the deadline for applications was midnight on the 15th, so applications were still coming in. Thus far, 3 dance groups, 2 drama troupes (Cultural Creation and Anubrata Chakraborty) and several music acts had applied. From local artists, there would be 3 dance performances, one each by elementary, middle school and high school kids, directed by Ms. Priyanka Das, Ms. Arpita Sabud and Ms. Swati Choudhury, respectively. Both drama applications were highly regarded as well. There was an application for an opening musical act featuring Shardul Ghosh on sitar and Abjini Chattopadhyay on piano. Both are talented young artists. In terms of paid guest artists, there were three contenders:

1. Shekhar Das, playing Electric Guitar (30 mins, $300)
2. Diptanu Das accompanied by a male lead and a small band, singing Bangla + Hindi songs ($1000)
3. Biplab, also a singing act

After a robust discussion of the composition of the portfolio of acts performing at Saraswati Puja and listening to recordings of the potential guest artists, it was decided that both Mr. Shekhar Das and Ms. Diptanu Das would be approached to perform, and that their charges would be negotiated, with a starting position of $250 for Mr. Shekhar Das and $700 for Ms. Diptanu Das.

The timings for the cultural program will be as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Time | Event |
| 3:00-5:30 | Program |
| 5:30 - 6:30 | Break (sound test for guest artiste) |
| 6:30 - 6:45 | Prize distribution for children |
| 6:30 - 8:00 | Program |

**Kid’s competitions**

Mr. Sinha will lead the kid’s competitions like last year. Both the drawing and recitation competitions will be held in 3 age groups: 6-8, 9-11, 12-14. The drawing competition will be held first in the interests of time, since many participating children will also be in the cultural programs in the evening. Mr. Sinha solicited suggestions for poems and drawing topics from the Board.

#### Action items

1. Ms. Ghosh and Ms. Bera will negotiate with Mr. Shekhar Das and Ms. Diptanu Das regarding renumeration for performing at Saraswati Puja, and will report back to the Board
2. Mr. Sinha will circulate drawing topics and poems to the Board, and these will be finalized by December 26, when the first Saraswati Puja newsletter will be distributed
3. Mr. Sinha will work on finding judges for the various competitions as well as a senior member of the community who will distribute prizes. He solicited the Board’s help in this.

## Subscription

It was decided to keep the same subscription rates as last year, with the modification that the family rate would include 2 children aged 6-18 years.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Member | Early bird special (12/26-1/19) | Online (1/20-2/3) | At the gate |
| Individual | $35 | $40 | $45 |
| Couple | $65 | $75 | $85 |
| Student | $20 | $25 | $30 |
| Child/Dependent Parent | $20 | $25 | $25 |
| Family (2 adults + 2 children 6-18 years | $105 | $120 | $130 |
| Child (5 and below) | Free | Free | Free |

Vendors will be charged $150 and we will entertain a maximum of 10 vendors

## Rental agreement

The rental agreement was received, along with a receipt of payment.

#### Action items

1. Ms. Bera will request additional rentals of 1 hour for the cafeteria on Friday and the auditorium on Saturday. Ms. Chakraborty will pay the additional fee when the invoice is received.
2. Ms. Bera, and Mssrs. Dasgupta and Bose will take the Facility Training.

## Newsletter

It was decided to revive the annual newsletter. Mssrs. Dasgupta and Bose will lead this. The dates for the Sanskriti events for 2019 were tentatively fixed:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Event | Date | Location |
| Baisakhi | April 20, 2019 | County middle school |
| Picnic | Sept 7, 2019 | County park |
| Durga Puja | October 4-6, 2019 | Preferably Gaithersburg HS or Northwest HS |

## Transfers from BOD 18

#### Action items

1. Ms. Bera will receive the storage key from Mr. Ghosh via Ms. Nag
2. Mr. Dasgupta will update all e-mail accounts to reflect new membership
3. Mr. Dasgupta will work with the new members in the onboarding process
4. Mr. Dasgupta will add Ms. Bera to both the [president@sanskriti-dc.org](mailto:president@sanskriti-dc.org) and [culsec@sanskriti-dc.org](mailto:culsec@sanskriti-dc.org) accounts