



Date: 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Distribution: All Life and Ordinary Members

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING OF GURDWARA SAHIB YISHUN (YISHUN SIKH TEMPLE) HELD ON 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Assistant Secretary, Sardar Piara Singh, called the meeting to order at 12.00 noon and informed members present, that as there were sufficient members to form a quorum, the meeting could commence as scheduled. (Note: A total of 56 members had signed in for the meeting)
- 1.2 He thanked all the members present for attending the Extra-ordinary General Meeting and continued with the proceedings.
- 1.3 Ardaas was performed by Giani Satnam Singh Ji followed by the Hukumnama prior to the commencement of the EOGM.
- 1.4 The Assistant Secretary briefed all the members on the agenda for the meeting, as per the letter notification with regards to the EOGM, which had been sent to all members. He then invited the President, Sardar Mejar Singh Gill, to continue with the rest of the proceedings in accordance with the agenda.

**2. Update on the Renewal of Lease**

- 2.1 The President thanked all the members present. However, he expressed his disappointment that some members, in particular those from the previous Management Committee, including the past President, chose not to be present, especially so given that critical issues were being discussed less than 4 months of the new MC taking over, and they could shed some light on related matters being discussed. He explained that the incoming MC had encountered several problems in executing a proper handing/taking over but given the urgency of resolving the

lease extension, he would rather leave that matter for discussion to a later date, and deal with the lease extension matter accordingly.

- 2.2 He informed all members that the original lease period was from 1<sup>st</sup> December 1992 with the expiry date set at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. However, after submission of our application for renewal of the lease, the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) has come up with an offer for the lease extension from May / June 2021 onwards for the next 30 years.
- 2.3 He elaborated on the SLA's terms and conditions related to the lease extension, in particular the payment of \$910,640.00, which included the lease renewal premium, GST and fee for issuance of Certificate of Title. The payment excludes any other fee for additional gross plot ratio or floor area currently in use, such as the lift area and the sheltered washing area, if so decided by SLA. Payment for other related charges such as survey fees, stamp duty, compliance with statutory requirements etc. would also be additionally payable.
- 2.4 He explained that the final amount payable would thus be more than that of the amount of \$910,640.00 and that we would also be losing approximately 18 months of the current lease, which is originally supposed to expire on 30 Nov 2022. He further added that if we so decide to continue to use the remaining 18 months of the current lease and apply for renewal only at the expiry date, then there is the possibility that the amount payable could be revised upwards by SLA as opposed to the premium being offered for the reduced period of current lease and the possibility of other terms and conditions, which may or may not be favourable to us.
- 2.5 He informed members that the MC had discussed the matter with the Trustees, who were also in favour of executing the lease extension as offered by SLA. He together with the VP Sardar Jaspreet Singh Chhabra, accompanied by our MP Carrie Tan had also met up with Minister Shanmugam in his office. He explained that given our financial positio., he had requested Minister Shanmugam for Gurdwara Sahib Yishun to be allowed to pay by October by way of one final partial instalment. This is because we needed a few months to raise funds for renovation, which may be difficult to sell to public if the lease was already settled. Minister Shanmugam understood our financial position and the difficult circumstances of raising the additional funds for renovation etc and has promised to look into matter favourably.
- 2.6 The President then elaborated on the financial situation. He explained that the temple's financial position currently stands at about S\$1 million with an additional approx. \$300,000 as a fixed deposit amount. He further added that when the temple was originally built we had over \$300,000 in cash and now 25 years later we are facing an uphill task of paying not just for the lease renewal but also having to deal with numerous other renovation and refurbishment requirements given the age of our building, as would be dealt with separately under the next resolution.
- 2.7 The President summed up by stating that given the circumstances that we are in, we have not much of a choice but to take up the latest SLA offer with the new lease starting in May / June 2021, and hopefully delay the final payment till Oct as elaborated earlier.

- 2.8 He then sought the views of members present on the matter. Sardar Balveer Singh Maliana asked if we wait till next year will there be an increase due to GST hike. The President replied that it is inevitable that the price will increase due to various factors and that the GST increase, if any, which may be effected anywhere between 2022 and 2025 as attributed to Finance Minister's statements in media, is only one such factor. Sardar Balveer Singh responded that we should, in this case, go ahead with the lease extension.
- 2.9 Sardar Charanjit Singh explained that our application for the lease renewal had to be done earlier, as the rules state that applications for lease renewal need to be done 3 years prior to the expiry date, and that rates would probably go up if we continue to wait. He also agreed that we should proceed with the lease renewal as per the offer given.
- 2.10 When this was put to vote, all members present agreed with a show of hands approval to go ahead with the lease renewal in accordance with the terms and conditions of SLA.

**3. To decide and approve that the MC be authorised to undertake the proposed renovation/refurbishment and other related works solely through fund raising efforts/donations**

- 3.1 The President then briefed members of the state of affairs in terms of maintenance of the temple building. He mentioned that it was rather sad that that no thought or attention had been given to this matter with most infrastructure items having exceeded their life spans and hence warranting urgent action. It is apparent that no funds had been provisioned for such matters other than for extension of lease and such neglect would be at the expense of the temple building. He explained that there are several areas warranting urgent attention, such as lift upgrade, air-conditioning, carpet and kitchen upgrades as well as roof waterproofing and repainting etc to name a few. Other temples built at the same time as us, namely Silat Road and Dharmak Sabha, have spent substantial amounts for necessary refurbishments and upgrades but we have not given any thought to the matter of raising funds for the purpose. He reiterated that, in short, over the last 25 years all that we have been able to add is about a million dollars and brought the amount up to \$1.3 million. So after paying up about \$1 mil or even more, if gross floor area is revised, we would be left with \$300,000 or less. This is barely enough to be kept aside to deal with any contingencies let alone handle the urgently required renovation and refurbishment works.
- 3.2 In summary, he highlighted the following that warrant attention (not listed in any order of priority):
- a. The lift was installed in 2007 and has been breaking down so often. Under normal norms, it needs to be upgraded/overhauled after about 12 to 15 years. Ours is an old generation lift and already 15 years old. New Gen lifts can go for 20 to 25 years.
  - b. The toilets and Kitchen were last renovated in 2012 and in dire need of improvements. The Kitchen may need to be in compliance with latest fire safety regulations.

c. The air-conditioners were installed around 2006 and again as per normal norms need upgrade etc. Life expectancy is about 15 years as is our case. In fact, 2 of the units are already having problems with compressors

d. The roof water proofing was last done in 2004 and is way beyond normal wear and tear. In fact, due to gaps in certain places of the waterproofing, plants have taken root and causing much damage.

e. The carpet was last changed in 2008/2009, about 13/14 years ago, and despite regular cleaning can be considered a health hazard given the heavy human traffic.

f. The exterior painting was last done in 2008, about 13/14 years ago.

g. The CCTV System is badly installed, outdated and more for show, with DVR not working at all. The whole wiring is bad with additional "add on" cameras plugged on to existing wires rather than directly to the DVR.

h. The sound system is unsatisfactory due to "add-ons" during the years rather than a complete overhaul.

i. Need for canopy shelter all-round the temple, including at the front entrance foyer area; and construction of feet washing points/Jorah Garh outside the temple instead of at toilets as is the case now.

j. Consider provision for Kirtan live streaming, website etc as is done at all other Gurdwaras.

k. Consider possibility of creating another room over the foyer area.

3.3 The President explained that there is a broad list and there is no way that all the items can be handled at the same time, and neither would it be proper to do so from the financial and maintenance expenditure point of view. For proper planning there is a need to stagger the maintenance/replacement projects to ensure that expenditure is also properly planned for rather than all items dealt with at same time and resulting in a similar problem in the future.

3.4 The President explained that given such areas warranting attention, fund raising is critical. But it was rather sad and disheartening, as brought to his attention by members and outsiders, including leaders of other Sikh Institutions that one or two of our own members have gone round telling members of other Sikh institutions that they see no reason why is there such an aggressive drive by Gurdwara Sahib Yishun for fund collection when there are enough funds available in Gurdwara, completely contrary to the state of funds as highlighted earlier, ie that while we do have funds for lease renewal we do not have funds for the urgent renovation/refurbishments. Such individuals have their own agenda and do not wish to see progress at our Gurdwara.

3.5 The President then went on to highlight another episode brought to his attention, where the main contractor doing the walkway shelter throughout the Constituency area, including in

front of our Gurdwara, had, when approached by a member of our Gurdwara, agreed to cover the short open space between our Gurdwara and the main shelter free of charge. But just because it had been the initiative of an ordinary member, the MC was not prepared to take the offer, preferring to let it remain uncovered, albeit at the expense of the Sangat, as is the situation now. Such parochial and narrow minded individuals managing the Gurdwara can only do harm than any good.

- 3.6 The President explained that the current Management Committee has undertaken a commitment that the proposed renovation/refurbishment works, to be executed on a need to do basis, will be undertaken only with funds collected through the ongoing fund raising drive which had commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. He emphasised that the existing funds will not be touched at all as they are barely able to meet the lease payment with enough left for any contingencies.
- 3.7 He elaborated that the current fixed deposit amount will not be used but constitute the starting amount of the "sinking fund" for the next lease renewal, which based on current estimates/computations could be in the region of \$2.5 Million or more in the next 30 years. He further emphasised that given the circumstances of the past 25 years, we may need to institutionalise new arrangements where future Management Committees, should be required to put aside between \$7,000 to \$8,000 per month such that at the end of the 30 years there will be sufficient amount for payment of the upcoming lease. The mechanism of this sinking fund will need to be discussed and agreed upon at future AGMs so as to avoid the situation that we are in.
- 3.8 The President informed members that the new Management Committee had started the fund raising drive with a target of reaching at least \$400,000 to undertake some of the proposed renovation works, and to date had collected about \$170,000 in cash with pledges for more. He appealed to all present to pass the word round that funds are definitely required by Gurdwara Sahib Yishun. He emphasised that the renovation / upgrading works will only be carried out on a priority "need to do basis" and all works will be carried out under proper and strict procurement guidelines with regards to tenders and quotes based on proper specifications and evaluation process.
- 3.9 He then opened up to the floor for members to express their views. Sardar Charanjit Singh highlighted that proposal of a room at the open area above the foyer may not be allowed due to the floor loading restrictions and that it may also entail design / engineering cost. Sardar Charanjit Singh also added that the outdoor washing area would also run into problems with getting approval from the relevant authority as that area was erected without any official approval.
- 3.10 The President noted Sardar Charanjit Singh's observation and reiterated that all works proposed, in particular the proposed room over the foyer, will only be carried out if permissible within regulatory guidelines and requirements. Also there is the need to consider GFA restrictions, especially where additional costs may have to be borne. What is proposed is

a "wish list" which will be done on a "need to do" and priority basis as well as other related considerations. Most importantly, the cost consideration will be paramount as already we are hampered by insufficient funds. As for the matter of the "unauthorised" outdoor washing area, it is unfortunate that it had not be regularised with the relevant agencies, and hence it will have to be handled subject to whatever objections the authorities may have.

- 3.11 As there were no further questions / issues raised by the members, it was unanimously agreed by all present that the proposed works be carried out on a "priority" and "need to do basis" as so decided by the MC.

#### **4 Other Matters**

- 4.1 The President then briefed members present on some issues relating to COVID-related measure that were put in place in our temple, including the "Q stands/barriers" that were placed in the Darbar Hall to mark out zones as specified by the authorities. He highlighted that one member of the congregation had complained that the Q stands were a safety hazard and that a person could trip when moving backwards after paying respect to Gurujji. Despite the President explaining why the measures had been taken, the member wrote to MCCYS to complain against the MC regarding this matter.
- 4.2 Subsequently, the President was contacted by MCCYS regarding the complaint. When the matter was explained to MCCY, the authorities were satisfied with the explanation and agreed that the Gurdwara should continue to operate as was being done. The President commented that it was all unnecessary and unwarranted for the member to complain despite being informed of reasons why it was being done, not just at our Gurdwara but also all other religious institutions in Singapore as required by the authorities. Also it does not bode well for the good name of the Gurdwara.
- 4.3 On another issue, the President informed members that the MC had demarcated a small area in the Langgar Hall for members of Sangat, who were doing Sewa, to have their refreshment or food there in manageable groups. The MC could have easily adopted the option of closing the Langgar hall altogether as was done by the previous MC but decided to provide such "convenience". Yet, there was the instance of a member of the Sangat defying the arrangement by having his tea outside the demarcated area and not masking up as required. Such incidents can easily be avoided if the necessary rules are complied with as it affects all members of the Sangat and the good name of the Gurdwara. He therefore appealed to all members to cooperate in complying with whatever rules that need to be implemented during these difficult and challenging COVID times.

#### **5 Conclusion**

- 5.1 As there were no other matters, the President informed all members present that the fund raising drive will continue as planned and requested one and all to support this noble cause and relay this request to all members in our community as well as the larger Sikh Community.

- 5.2 He added that any excess amount after completion of our proposed works will go towards the "sinking fund" of the next lease renewal fund.
- 5.3 The President closed the meeting by stating that we will go ahead with the lease renewal as per the terms and conditions proposed by the SLA. He will pursue our request for payment in partial instalment mode as already taken up with Minister Shanmugam.
- 5.4 The meeting ended at 12.40 pm after which Ardas was done by Giaini Satnā Singh Ji.

Recorded by:



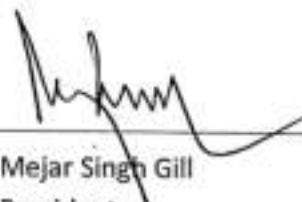
Manminder Singh  
Co-Opted Committee  
Member

Vetted by:



Piara Singh  
Assistant Secretary

Approved by:



Mejar Singh Gill  
President