

BRIEF SUMMARY of the TOWN HALL MEETING held on 21st May 2024

Attendees : Board Members-12; OGBs-38

1. Ongoing GO Projects - the refurbishments of the Gym; the Jarvie Hall; Ahava Guest House are due for completion.
2. Future – recommencing the Cottage renovations, starting with Heathland
3. The 10th Anniversary of the Global OGB Association will be celebrated in Kalimpong on **23rd September 2024**. All OGBs and Friends are invited. Program will be available closer to the date. Watch this space.
4. The 2024 GO Committee elections will be held in September 2024. Expressions of Interest to nominate will open in early June 2024. The Committee is seeking individuals with the following skills to fill gaps and enhance the overall skills strength within the Team:
 - i. Strong network of connections for introducing genuine people to sponsor children
 - ii. Ability to raise funds for various GO funds
 - iii. A legal background will be welcomedLooking for OGBs with the above skills to join the Committee.
5. To keep in connection with your Association and to avoid questions being sent to individual Committee Members, GO will be introducing a new process to address these queries. This standard operating procedure will be the official channel of communication for receiving and responding to questions that are sent to GO. Watch this space.

6. BOARD Q&A Session

Questions were received from several OGBs and presented to the Board at the Town Hall. The Board graciously responded to these inquiries, detailing the remedial steps being taken and the strategies implemented to improve the overall performance of Dr. Graham's Homes.

NOTE:

- i. The questions have been reproduced as received. The Board responses have been adapted to give context to the reader.
- ii. Where questions have been satisfactorily responded to, they have been 'closed' for this particular event.
- iii. Questions requiring follow-up will be addressed at an appropriate Town Hall meeting, with the Board in attendance.

Q	Question and Answer	Follow-up
1	<p>When is it anticipated that Shane Calvert will be stepping down and new chair being appointed? And who is the new chair?</p> <p>Answer (Shane Calvert): Clarified that in the MOA there is no fixed term for the Chairmanship. He suggested that the BOM should consider a fixed term. At the end of 2023, after having served for three years, he expressed a desire to step down. This having been accepted, Lance Fuller has been named to succeed as Chair. To enable a sooth transition, the changeover will occur over the next few months.</p>	Next Town Hall
2	<p>What is the financial health of the Homes?</p> <p>Answer (Yanki Tshering): The 2024-25 Budget has been approved. From the forecast budget, a small surplus is anticipated. The Board has introduced a Monthly Reporting process, that will allow them to track expenditure closely using Cost Center operations.</p>	Next Town Hall
3	<p>Every institutional management has a model in place that helps them survive internally when revenue takes a deep dive to say below 50%. A: Does DGH have such a model to guide itself in these situations? B: We have many potential assets on the campus that could be generating revenue. Has the BOM considered or looked into these sources to aid the school finances as supplemental income?</p> <p>Answer (Suchitra Guha): To deal with falling revenues and the utilization of campus assets for additional income, Suchitra clarified that DGH has now implemented strict financial controls and was creating a financial infrastructure to manage payments. The Budget is now operating on building up the corpus fund and most importantly, the Gratuity and Provident Funds are all up to date. The School took a loan to bring the School back from the brink of shutting down, caused by the fall out of the Covid pandemic. The School is working on making changes and savings, to enable the loan to be repaid. Answer to B: responded to in Question 6.</p>	Matter Closed
4	<p>Some people on the BOM and the administration must end the grand delusion that Daddy Graham embraced the idea of having unlimited day scholars. These same individuals seem to justify their irrational campaign of filling classrooms with day students at the cost of cottage assets crumbling, taking the easy path to sustenance. What Do you have to say about this and is there a plan by the BOM to reverse this trend?</p> <p>Answer (Shane Calvert / Suchitra Guha): The insinuation of a bias towards the day-scholar population was categorically refuted. The Board emphasized its awareness of the importance of maintaining the number of boarders at the school (both full-paying and supported) and acknowledged their crucial contribution to the sustainability of the school and cottages. Suchitra advised that children and parents now have better choices in the Cities and Plains. Therefore, until the school can improve and offer more attractive options, it will not appeal to new full-fee boarders.</p> <p>In addition, Anirban (GO Chair) announced that GO is launching a “Sponsor a Child” promotional campaign and invited OGBs to step forward as sponsors or to introduce others who might be interested.</p>	<p>- Matter Closed</p> <p>- “Sponsor a child” on next Town Hall</p>
5	<p>What is the status of the Elliott Road property in Kolkata? Is it being rented? Has it been sold?</p> <p>Answer (Denise Smith): The property is vacant and in the process of being sold. The Purchaser has already provided the deposit and it is anticipated that the full sale will be settled, after the Elections in India.</p>	Next Town Hall
6	<p>If desperate times calls for desperate measures, would it be worthwhile to consider putting up a tender to lease out one of the cottages to interested people (experienced in the hospitality industry) from town or the Anglo-Indian community or any interested OGB. They could make a profit as a business, but would still have to function like a normal cottage in participation and obligation?</p> <p>Answer (Shane Calvert): informed members that Nepal OGBs had shown interest in Holiday Home a few years ago and if this could be explored and commenced with, it could break ground and act as start point.</p>	Matter Closed

	Question and	Follow-up
7	<p>Can the board please share with us the total number of students who were expelled from DGH over the last year, and how many of these were sponsored children?</p> <p>Referencing Anirban’s video message to the DGH UK AGM, were any of these children given “A 2nd chance in life”?</p> <p>Pauline Singh In relation to the recent incident, which involved full-fee and supported children, two of the students were asked to leave DGH and four children were given different lengths of suspension from School.</p> <p>Pauline emphasized that the School has a zero-tolerance policy for the use of drugs/alcohol and bullying in any form. This particular case was the worse kind of bullying. It was further clarified that prior to a child being terminated from the School they are given multiple opportunities to correct their poor behavior.</p> <p>In every incidence of termination, the child is given their Transfer Certificate and provided with a character certificate, which is crucial for their future education and welfare.</p> <p>In relation to the other children, they are completing their suspension at home and a couple have already returned to School</p>	Matter Closed
8	<p>What new initiatives is the BOM taking to secure the assets of DGH in order to revive the school and cottages, especially in reference to the closed cottages?</p> <p>Shane Calvert: A new interactive website is currently being developed to attract potential new students.</p> <p>In the interim, the Board is working towards improving the Cottage infrastructure and hoping to upgrade two cottages to reopen them as ‘model cottages’.</p>	Matter Closed
9	<p>Do we really need to have a board member full-time on the school premise, because this undermines the responsibility of the principal and the other department heads. Why doesn’t the BOM empower the Principal, Headmaster and Bursar as the sole decision makers and hold them responsible for any mismanagement, poor governance, or lack of proper asset maintenance at the school and answerable to the BOM on these issues?</p> <p>Answer (Shane Calvert): When this Board took over in 2020, the School faced numerous crises and was on the verge of closing down. At this critical juncture, GO and OGBs came forward to upgrade the infrastructure, addressing the fall-out of the School being vacant for months, due to the Covid pandemic. Simultaneously, Pauline Singh was appointed by the Board, in an advisory capacity and to be the Secretary of the School Management Committee (SMC). The SMC is the primary advisory body of the Board, located in Kalimpong. The crucial role Pauline has played in the School’s recovery was emphasized. Her selfless dedication, including working without a salary and personally funding the renovation of Yule House to make it habitable, was highlighted.</p> <p>Anirban reminded the meeting that in the past OGBs have strongly advocated that the School be administered by OGBs. Pauline’s efforts was a testament to this commitment. Despite negative comments about the Management and Pauline’s role, the collective effort was unwavering and duly acknowledged.</p>	Matter Closed
10	<p>We hear that the school is overstaffed leading to unnecessary salary disbursements. What is the BOMs plan of action to tackle this financial constraint?</p> <p>Same question, different words: There are a huge number of extra employees at the school - which are bleeding into the finances - is downsizing a priority? If not, what are your thoughts or ideas about this?</p> <p>Answer (Shane Calvert): Agreed, the school has been overstaffed for decades. However, the Board has now introduced strategies to reduce staff numbers through natural attrition and by not filling positions, where possible.</p> <p>It was clarified that while the Teaching Faculty aligns with the number of students, the overstaffing predominantly affects the General Staff.</p> <p>Anirban added that due to poor past practices of continually transferring employment from father to son, even when there was no need for their services, it has been challenging to reduce staff numbers. However, the recent strategies introduced by the Board are likely to show improvements.</p>	Matter Closed