

Guidelines for Residential Practice at Blue Heron Zen Community March 2023

The Blue Heron Zen Community welcomes and supports Sangha members who wish to take up residency in the Blue Heron building. Our building can accommodate five residential practitioners. These guidelines describe the benefits of residential practice and expectations of residents.

Residential practice is for the purpose of increasing one's focus on Zen training beyond what might be possible in other settings. Attention to Zen training is supported in a residential setting through 1) the resident's decision to devote time and energy to Zen practice; 2) the commitment of Blue Heron teachers to offer teaching and guidance to residents, 3) mutual support for Zen practice among residents and community members; and 4) the practice-centered building environment, including the large meditation room and space to accommodate community members who attend in-person practice sessions.

An important prerequisite for residents is the decision to undertake Zen training. This does not mean residents set aside other matters in their lives and devote themselves entirely to Zen but rather that - for the time that they remain a resident - they dedicate some portion of their time and attention to Zen study and practice, and support the practice energy within the building. The taking on of this practice should not be viewed as burdensome or onerous, but rather as a positive step toward understanding one's life and contributing more fully to one's community. The Zen way is very simple but our lives often seem complex; Zen practice helps us to gradually see what is most important and to act for the good of ourselves and others.

Zen teaching at Blue Heron is provided by Zen Master Jeong Ji (Guiding Teacher), Eric Nord, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, and other teachers within the community. Jeong Ji Soen Sa and Eric Poep Sa Nim offer teaching to all members of the community and to others who attend practice at the Zen Center, including Zen Center residents. As part of Zen study and practice, it is *essential* that residents engage with Zen Center teachers. In Zen practice, one does not subordinate oneself to a teacher but rather engages in a co-learning process with them. The teacher offers the best teaching that they can, and the student maintains an open and inquiring mind. In this way teachers and students work together to become clear.

Residents participate in scheduled Zen practice sessions and should make an effort to attend sessions regularly. Attendance at Sunday morning practice is especially encouraged, as is attendance at retreats held throughout the year.

The Guiding Teacher and Ji Do Poep Sa Nim offer one-on-one Dharma Dialogues to students, and residents should take advantage of Dharma Dialogues to ask questions and to engage in formal kong-an practice with the teachers.

After three to six months of residency, new residents meet with Guiding Teacher Jeong Ji Soen Sa and Abbot Paul Gulick to discuss how things are going for them in terms of residency and practice. Also, the Abbot and Guiding Teacher will schedule occasional House Meetings with residents during which all of us come together to support what's going well and discuss any concerns.

Blue Heron requires residents to pay a monthly training fee. The training fee is determined by the Blue Heron Board of Trustees and is intentionally kept at an affordable rate. This fee is subject to change, but increases are likely to be infrequent (no more than annually) and relatively small.

Length of residency is flexible but also time-limited. Candidates should consider whether they can commit to 1-2 years of residency. If a candidate anticipates residency of less than one year this should be discussed with the Abbot and Guiding Teacher. In all cases, residency will not continue beyond 4 years.

The Zen center building is the physical home of the community. It is at once a practice space for the community, a meeting place for conducting community-related business, and a home for residents. During scheduled group practice time, it is a supervised public space. As a place of meeting for community-related business, or when maintenance is being done in or around the building, authorized members of the community may use common areas of the building and property. Individual Sangha members may, with the approval of the Guiding Teacher, a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim, or the Abbot, use the Dharma room for independent Zen practice; in such cases residents will be notified that a Sangha member will be in the building. At all other times the building is a home for residents and is not open to the public.

Resident rooms are private, with a few exceptions. Access to rooms is occasionally required for the purpose of building maintenance and safety. As an example, smoke detectors must be checked by Building Maintenance Advisor semiannually. As much as possible, access to resident rooms will be pre-arranged with residents. In the event of an emergency, access may occur without notice. Also, residents may at times be required to stay out of their rooms for short periods during scheduled practice periods. This includes the west room on the main floor, which conjoins the interview room. This room must be temporarily vacated when teachers are using the interview room to meet with students. And, if the four other rooms in the building are occupied, then another resident might be asked to temporarily remain out of their room so that it can be used for Dharma Dialogues.

Residents have a role as ambassadors of the community and should therefore take care to be welcoming of those who come to the building during scheduled practice times.

As in any shared living space, it's important for residents of the Zen center to be respectful of each other and to address any disagreements that might arise in a compassionate and collaborative manner. The Abbot and / or Guiding Teacher are available to assist as needed to resolve any concerns among residents.

Please be mindful of any activities that might negatively affect other residents, such as loud music, use of certain media in common areas (for example televisions and

other video devices), and the cooking of meat. These activities should not take place when the building is open to the public, and cooking of meat should not occur near the start of public practice times.

Residents must practice together-action to maintain cleanliness and tidiness within the building. Residents are responsible for their personal space and the shared living space, and for setting out and collecting the trash, recycle, and yard waste bins at the appropriate times. Residents may participate in maintaining the condition of the yard, and are encouraged to do so to the extent that they wish, but they are not required to do so. When helpful, a chore list will be created as an aid for dividing necessary maintenance tasks among residents. Ideas for major changes to the interior or exterior of the property (painting, redecorating, landscaping) must be discussed with and approved by the Abbot before any action is taken.

Most entrances to the Blue Heron building are controlled with electronic locks that require a 4-digit code. Residents should not share their personal code *with anyone*, including among each other. If in the event of an emergency it becomes necessary to disclose your code to another resident or to another member of the Sangha, please notify the Abbot and the Building Maintenance Advisor as soon as possible afterward so that your code can be updated. Any keys to the building provided to residents may not be copied or shared.

Building security is a priority concern. Residents must ensure that the building remains securely locked when external doorways are unattended. Any windows that could be accessed from outside the building should also be locked when nearby interior spaces are unattended. Periodically checking the exterior door to the Dharma Dialogue room will add to building security.

In our tradition we uphold the precept of abstaining from use of intoxicants for the purpose of inducing heedlessness. Any use of alcohol in the building is discouraged, and in all cases should be done in the privacy of one's room and not in shared spaces, and should never occur near times when the building will be open to the public. Use of cannabis or cannabis products other than for legitimate medical purposes is not allowed in the building or on the property; getting high is not in keeping with Zen training. Smoking of any kind is not allowed inside or near the building. Noticeable intoxication when on the premises would be a significant concern, to be addressed by the Abbot and Guiding teacher. Illegal drugs are not allowed on the property, including in vehicles parked on the property. Illegal behavior of any sort may not take place on the property, including any illegal online behavior. Firearms are not allowed on the property. Please have no open flames in resident rooms. Blue Heron does not allow pets in the building.

Residents will kindly remit their training fee to the Blue Heron Treasurer in a timely way each month. Any difficulty with remitting fees should be discussed with the Abbot. Effort will be made to accommodate any temporary financial hardship experienced by residents as it may pertain to the training fee.

Any serious concerns about a resident will be addressed promptly by the Abbot and/or Guiding Teacher, and effort will be made to resolve any matter that would otherwise jeopardize continued residency. In the unlikely event of a finding that a

resident must discontinue residency prior to the allowed time limit for residency, all parties - community leadership and the affected resident - will strive to carry out the transition respectfully, and to protect the privacy of those involved as much as possible.

These guidelines cannot account for unforeseen contingencies and do not speak to all matters pertaining to residency, and so cannot be considered comprehensive. Questions associated with residency may be directed to the Abbot and / or the Guiding Teacher.

Starting in March 2023 prospective residents will be asked to sign a copy of these guidelines to indicate their understanding of and agreement with them.

Thank you for your interest in residency at Blue Heron.
Zen Master Jeong Ji
Abbot Paul Gulick