

Bito Doshi Kai
P.O. Box 283148
Honolulu, HI 96828

July 22, 2008

Dear Bito Club Members,

We need your review and approval of several important proposals. I'll describe them and then present our proposed solutions. Please check off your choices on the enclosed postcard and drop the postcard in the mail to us as soon as possible. If you do not respond, it will be counted as a "no" vote, so it is important that everyone respond.

Revision of Bito Doshi-Kai By-Laws

In order for our club to come under the non-profit organization of HUOA, we needed to make some changes to our club by-laws to be consistent with the HUOA by-laws and to conform with the non-profit organization defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service regulations. For example, our by-laws provided for koden for funerals and congratulatory gifts for graduates. Gifts to members from a non-profit organization's treasury are prohibited by the IRS. I also clarified, revised and reorganized other sections of the by-laws, taking some hints from the HUOA by-laws.

I've attached both the original by-laws and the revised draft. The revisions are marked on the draft so it will be easier to see the changes. The revised by-laws must be approved by a majority of the membership to take effect. If there are parts that you feel should be changed, please mark up the revised draft and return it to me, along with your voting postcard.

Ending the cooperative relationship with Hawaii Sashiki-Chinen Doshi Kai

On July 21st, I received the attached letter from Raymond Tamashiro, President of Hawaii Sashiki-Chinen Doshi Kai. They propose to end the cooperative relationship we have had with them for many years. They feel that we have not been maintaining our share of the joint relationship and that they cannot continue if this does not improve.

Let me give you some background. I had been involved mainly as a participant and volunteer with the joint activities that have been going on with Sashiki-Chinen before I became club president about four years ago. Since then, I've learned how difficult it is to organize our club's participation in activities we did jointly with Sashiki-Chinen, including the Shinnen-Enkai, summer picnic, and Okinawan Festival.

As our elder members have gotten older and as we have lost many founding members of the club, it has become more and more difficult to organize the manpower that is necessary for us to participate in those joint activities. We lost Wally Chinen, Choriki Shimabuku, Edwin Nakasone, Reynold Shimabukuro, Brian Yoshimoto, and many others who were the backbone of our club in its formative and most active years. As a relatively small club, our ability to pull together enough volunteers to do the Festival and to help with the Shinnen-Enkai and summer picnic has been stretched to the limit. We really appreciate all those who have come out to help, especially at the Festival.

Our club has benefited greatly from our association with Sashiki-Chinen. As a larger club, they have often done most of the work necessary to plan and implement the Shinnen-Enkai, summer picnic, and chicken booth at the Okinawan Festival. Over the last several years, I have perceived a feeling of discontent coming from some of the Sashiki-Chinen members over our lack of fair participation in these events. Perhaps that is partly my fault, as I didn't initially realize how much they did to put these things together, and didn't address the apparent lack in communication with the Sashiki-Chinen leadership. I think there was a closer relationship with the Sashiki-Chinen leadership in the old days, because of close personal friendships. As a relative newcomer to the club leadership, I didn't realize at first how our two clubs worked together.

Over the last several years, it has been suggested to me that our club would benefit from going on our own. For example, our club tends to be overshadowed by the larger presence of Sashiki-Chinen at our joint gatherings, and because we shared time with them, it was difficult for us to assert our own needs and identity at these activities. We had been considering holding our own Shinnen-Enkai so that we could make it both a celebration and a general membership meeting. That would be difficult to do as a joint activity with another club. I favor holding at least one general membership meeting every year to conduct club business.

Also, the participation of our member families at the annual summer picnic has decreased. It has probably become more of a physical hardship, especially for our older members, to come out to Ala Moana Park at the hottest time of the year. Perhaps we should consider holding some other kind of activity that is more comfortable and convenient for our membership instead of a picnic.

While our club could forge a stronger identity and plan different activities if we went on our own, it would also require more work and a larger investment of funds to accomplish these things alone. We would have to be realistic about what we could do. It is also important to recognize how much our association with Sashiki-Chinen has helped us and to maintain good relations with them.

One alternative we may consider in the future is to merge with a larger club that is associated with our home area of Okinawa, for example, we could discuss this possibility with Okinawa City – Goeku Son. The mayor of Okinawa City in fact suggested such a merger at the last Worldwide Unchinanchu Festival in Okinawa.

I propose that we go on our own starting next year, 2009, and if we have difficulty in continuing on our own, begin exploring a merger with another club.

Where we go and how we get there will depend on you and your families. Please let us know what you think.

Need to elect a new President, Treasurer, and Secretary

On reviewing the original club by-laws, I found out that club officers are supposed to serve only three years, although that term could be indefinitely extended if replacement officers are not elected and installed. I've been president since 2004(?), which will make it five years at the end of this year. I plan to resign as president at the end of this year.

Eunice Dela Cruz has been serving as treasurer for the last two years and has often fulfilled the duties of secretary as well. She would prefer to serve as secretary and therefore we need to find a new treasurer, preferably someone who has some experience with financial record keeping.

We are seeking volunteers or nominations for the offices of President, Treasurer, and Secretary, and hope to have a slate of new officers for you to vote on before the end of this year. Please let me know if you're interested or know someone who would be a good candidate.

As always, my door is open to Bito Club members. Please call or email me if you have any concerns, suggestions, or information. I need to hear from you.

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