



Report of the Governing Board-TDC Meeting April 5, 2013

GB members: Dr Karan Singh, Ms Ameeta Mehra, Dr Aster Patel, Mr Murthy

Foundation: Mr Bala Baskar, Mr Srinivas Murthy

TDC: Sauro, Gilles G., Jacqueline, Nicole, Cristo, Jean Francois, Abha P.

Technical team: Suhasini, Bankim, Manu G., Gilles B., Tency, Deoyani, Ojas (visuals)

Advisory Committee representative: Toine

Karan Singh, chairman of Governing Board, expressed his disappointment about the general functioning of TDC team. He wondered if we were a house divided. Showing his interest in a variety of issues affecting Auroville at present, his main question at the beginning was about **securing of land**.

Sauro, on behalf of TDC, gave a brief introduction about the new TDC and the Technical team that has been in place since November 2012. Recent TDC activities were shown in slide format.

Dr Karan Singh made a note of some topics, and then asked about the **current controversy** regarding the **Crown Road**. Sauro described the community's reservations about increase in unwanted traffic, and the laying of infrastructure cable along the road. The blockage at Aurodam/Centrefield was conveyed to the GB members. Efforts by TDC to involve the affected residents in a community collaborative forum were discussed briefly.

Dr Karan Singh enquired about the **Solar City project** and the **Farewell Facility** which were described to him.

The Master Plan was the next point of discussion. The GB members wanted to know if there was a **controversy surrounding the Auroville Master Plan**. If the plan would be changed, who would have the power to change it? Ameeta Mehra asked if there were 2 theories of the

Master Plan, and if someone could explain the dichotomy. The Governing Board, she felt, could help in resolving this dichotomy and bring about a unified MP.

Suhasini gave a brief explanation on this issue – how the MP is viewed as a fixed entity by some but that it needs to be seen as a guiding principle that allows for mutation and adaptability.

Bankim expressed the difficulties of working with the current MP which was last revised in 2001. He also explained other difficulties regarding community consensus on development needs.

Ms Ameeta Mehra reiterated the need for developing the **5 year Development Plan** and making it ready by the next GB meeting in September 2013.

Gilles G. reminded the GB of the nature of Auroville's collective which is based on ideals. Development only is not enough. Attention needs to be given to value-based planning and the need to attract certain kind of people who can work towards our collective facilities and create progress in our educational programmes, etc.

Karan Singh agreed that there is a broader framework within which development plans have to exist; inspiring ideas such as KT Ravindran's (AV becoming the green belt rather than AV being surrounded by a green belt) could take development forward in keeping with Auroville's growth. He felt, however, that Auroville was losing its spiritual impetus, even the energy towards its ideals and unity was petering out. AV came together for the cyclone; it needs to come together again for participatory planning.

Toine felt that development and social ideals are not mutually exclusive areas. The Advisory team, he stated, is underutilized and should be interacted with more often to find solutions to problems.

At this point the visuals highlighted **Affordable Housing** project in Aurodam, and Manu gave a short presentation. The Aurodam project is an example of a mission project which will help to bring back AV's pioneering spirit and participatory energy which was evident during the construction of Matrimandir in the early days. The power point on the low cost, low rise, high density housing with its solar energy, rainwater harvesting, and terraced farming was very well-received by the Governing Board. The GB members felt that community projects like these need to be funded by GOI. A member of the GB commented that an initial sum of thirty lakhs could be considered for one cluster of pro-bono houses. But it was also remarked that priorities for this financial year have already been given and that there are large projects which are time bound and have to be completed first. It was also noted that such a project can be fundraised easily also from other sources. The affordable aspect of this housing project drew positive reactions from the GB.

The discussion continued on other aspects such as **communication links** with the community which need to be strengthened. The technical team's efforts in this direction were noted. Dr Aster Patel felt that a technical office under L'Avenir needs to have regular Open House for the community residents to get answers and clarity on issues related to development. She strongly emphasized that blockages faced by TDC need to be conveyed to the Governing Board. Ameeta Mehra also made a point about inviting experts who could be asked to

participate in an organized way by TDC to help resolve these blockages, as did Prof. KT Ravindran recently.

The meeting ended on a hopeful and forward looking note.

On Monday, April 8th, two Governing Board members – Ms Ameeta Mehra and Ms Mallika Sarabhai met with the TDC team to share more information. It was also communicated that Ms Mallika Sarabhai has been appointed by the GB as new member of the Advisory Committee of the TDC. The information was welcomed by all the TDC members that were present. During the meeting some problems were discussed, for example, the administrative process in relation to construction. It was highlighted that now a public tender process has been applied even for projects which are not funded by the Government of India. In some cases for projects that are using specifically made Auroville technology this system could provide any contractor fulfilling the requirement. There is a need to find a formula suitable for the specific Auroville conditions. Gilles mentioned that with this system he would never have been able to build the Visitor Center or the Solar Kitchen. The Visitor Center was financed by HUDCO on the basis that it was an experimental building. Ameeta Mehra responded that according to her there should be a distinction between public projects and projects where private individuals must provide funding (as in the case of housing) where a more rigorous process must be followed. The CAG has become more vigilant than in the past so the Foundation Office has to lay down rules. But it should not be a blanket procedure as Auroville is a place where different architectural and other technologies are being used. Mallika Sarabhai felt that perhaps the best way to go beyond excessive bureaucratic restrictions was to make sure that each building project in AV is innovative and experimental and that this character is recognized.

Commenting on the slow pace of planning within TDC, Ameeta Mehra requested the group to make wider use of its mentors and meet with the Advisory Board at least once every quarter. She asked that TDC focus on making the 5 year Development Plan a priority. TDC responded on the difficulties of planning long-term when we do not know who will be the type of people who will join AV in the meantime and we don't know the financial resources that are actually available for achieving the social and physical targets of the plan. Housing is a constraint but it is not the only one. Supporting the Aurovilian and providing income generation activities for Auroville is a major point to consider. The city at the moment can support and provide maintenance to only a part of its population. A large number of Aurovilians are self-supporting. The type of values that are shared by the society need to be reflected in the development plan.

This led to a discussion on how the Galaxy Plan can be interpreted and how the Lines of Force can be manifested in today's ecologically conscious world. Another point of discussion was the density of the future city. How to live in a more compact residential environment and the challenges it brings. It was mentioned that this is also a major factor in debates and sometimes blockages in Auroville.

It was highlighted that in a country of 1.2 billion people, Auroville should set an example of conscious use of space and land. The GB members mentioned that even with a population of 50,000 Auroville could still have a green surface of 50 % .

Compiled by Abha P. for L' Avenir Communication, April 9, 2013