

INDIA ASSOCIATION OF TALLAHASSEE

FEBRUARY 12, 2018

<http://www.iatlh.org>

We would like to take a moment to applaud the local Indian community for creating a 'home away from home' atmosphere in Tallahassee. The care, share and love we show to one another, while celebrating the diversity of India (cultures, religions, festivals, and traditions), is commendable. Whether it is Pongal, Diwali, Holi, Dusshera, Ugadi, Garbha, Lohri, Ganesh Chaturthi, Eid, Christmas, Onam, Easter, Vishu, or New Year, Tallahassee Indians enjoy it all. Our efforts to stay diverse and united would not be possible without the contributions from many regional groups like Gujarati Samaj, Muktangan, Tallahassee Telugu Samithi – Samskruthi, Tamil Sangam, Malayalam Association of Tallahassee, Kannada Group, Marathi Group, Shirdi Sai Sathsang Group, and Hindu Temple of Tallahassee.

IATLH is a secular and diverse organization committed to serving all Tallahassee Indians. We are proud to have members from all over Indian-subcontinent irrespective of their religion, culture, or the region they may have come from. IATLH represents India in local schools, communities, and government. From time-to-time, IATLH also co-hosts charitable events to facilitate fund-raising efforts for disaster relief to help people from India, the United States and beyond. IATLH's annual membership fee of \$50 per year is lowest in the state of Florida and benefits of the membership are un-parallel.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) – JANUARY 28, 2018

This year's AGM attendance was highest. AGM started with the election process details and then, after the brief presentation from candidates, was adjourned for polling. Over 75% of our members casted their ballots to pick the joint secretary candidate of their choice. Thanks to our election committee who conducted the polling in a smooth and fair manner.

Executive Committee presented the annual report of IATLH activities, initiatives, expenses, and revenues to the packed meeting room. After the question answer session, George Itty was announced as the winner of elections, the new executive committee (2018-2019) and new trustees were introduced to the members. As many of the questions were directed towards the proposed India Center, the details (need, objective, timeline, and work done so far) are provided below the questions and suggestions section.

MEMBER SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Question: For members interested in Lifetime Membership, what steps are taken by IATLH.

Discussion: IATLH committee discussed the option of lifetime membership and postponed the decision until the fundraiser for India Center. During the discussion, it was pointed out that introduction of lifetime membership might also lead to the reduction of the yearly revenue and an analysis of the proposed impact needed to be considered. The EC will look into pros and cons of the introduction of the lifetime membership.

Question: Most membership renewals are still happening around Glimpses. IATLH should remind the people to renew at the start of calendar year.

Discussion: IATLH has been insisting on and verifying membership to participate in various events, starting with art competitions, sports day, utsav, and glimpses. Still, EC agrees that most renewals are happening around the glimpses. We will continue to request our members to renew their membership.

Question: I have been a member for last 15 years. Why this is the first time I am hearing about the India Center?

Discussion: During the past 4 AGMs as well as during Glimpses 2016 (to entire community), we have shared our ideas for the center and the steps we are taking towards building the India center. Please refer to the India Center section below for detailed answer to this question.

Question: IATLH should start sending a newsletter to the members with community news, activities, and important information.

Discussion: Early on into our tenures, we did briefly discuss newsletters in our meetings and even had few proposals to involve kids etc. for writing articles, but we felt starting a newsletter is easy but maintaining a quality product on a schedule and delivering it regularly is difficult. As such we have almost an activity every month and even if it is offloaded to a subcommittee, it will be very difficult for EC to have oversight on the content of the newsletter, as ultimately EC will be held responsible for the content. Having said that, we did not dismiss the idea outright, but wanted to be more cautious and felt more discussions were needed before starting it. 2016-17 EC couldn't quite complete that task. Maybe the current committee will have a different take on it and continue the conversation and implement certain aspects of it.

Question: IATLH has placed a contract on the land for India Center. Members are surprised to hear about this there was not information provided to them.

Discussion: Per the by-laws, EC with the approval of the Board of Trustees has placed a due-diligence contract for the land. For more details - See India Center related discussion below.

Question: Hindu Temple of Tallahassee has plans to build a community center. Why can't IATLH and HTT build a community center together?

Discussion: See India Center related discussion below.

Question: If there is enough interest in the community, I would like to volunteer to initiate music class for kids.

Discussion: IATLH will look for opportunities to introduce such effort and will contact the volunteer. Regular volunteer commitment and space availability is the key.

Question: I am happy with the Zumba and yoga classes started by IATH. I have a kids in high school senior and have interest in SAT Classes.

Discussion: IATLH will look for opportunities to introduce such effort and will contact the volunteer. Regular volunteer commitment and space availability is the key.

INDIA CENTER

Several of the past executive committees, based on the growing activities and member feedback, outlined a vision for IATLH to have its own INDIA CENTER. To promote cultural, social, educational and sports activities among the local Indian Community; and represent India with the local Tallahassee Community following needs were identified for INDIA CENTER by IATLH:

- Dance practices for Kids and Adults
- Music practices for Kids and Adults
- Art Lessons/Contests for Kids and Adults
- Indoor sports facility to play Badminton, Table Tennis, Volleyball, for Kids and Adults
- Physical exercise routines, like Yoga, Zumba etc.
- Educational Activities for Kids
- Meeting room to conduct Seminars, Discourses, and Conferences
- India Cultural room to display Indian Artefacts, Books, Presentations, Videos for local Tallahassee Community and school children
- Daytime activity center for Seniors
- Host regional functions and festivals for small gatherings.

IATLH Calendar stays busy throughout the year. Some of the programs/activities we conduct are:

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| • Art Contest | • Holi Pot-Luck Lunch |
| • Republic Day | • Melodies |
| • Independence Day | • Yoga Classes (Every Week) |
| • Sports Day | • Zumba Classes (Every Week) |
| • Cultural Glimpses of India | • Math Classes (Every Week) |
| • Member Appreciation Dinner | • Badminton (currently on hold) |

To conduct and practice for IATLH events, IATLH or its members must constantly find venues. With the growing participation, it is becoming harder to find suitable venues. As an example, we were at the full capacity utilization with two library rooms during the Art Contest last week. For our many sports enthusiasts, we are unable to find an indoor facility to play badminton, table tennis and volleyball for past several months.

A. INDIA CENTER - BRIEF HISTORY AND INITIATIVES

- 2012-13
 - Need for India Center was recognized and identified by the Executive Committee of 2012-2013.
- 2014-2015
 - Objective and future for India Center were outlined and presented in the Annual General Meeting of 2015.
 - A meeting with IATLH Sponsors and past executive committee members was held in September 2015. All attendees whole heartedly supported the idea and their feedback was collected through online submission.
 - In October/November 2015, a land purchase option for a 2-acre lot on Midyette Rd (near Koger Center) was considered by the Executive Committee, Trustees, and past IATLH Leadership. The decision was delayed to evaluate a lease versus build option otherwise the lot was ideally suited for INDIA CENTER and was centrally located in Tallahassee.
- 2016-2017
 - During the January 2016 Annual General Meeting, India Center sub-committee was appointed with the following tasks:
 - Evaluate lease options

- Cost of leasing
 - Requirements for India Center
- During Glimpses 2016, the proposed India Center plan was presented to all the members and local Indian community.
- India Center sub-committee submitted several available lease options to IATLH in September 2016. Each of the lease options were evaluated in terms of cost, number of activities which can be carried out, and the time/space utilization.
- Executive Committee found the following drawback with the lease options:
 - Many suggested places were found to be small or did not have high ceilings needed for Sports Activity.
 - For the places which were found suitable, the lease expenses were around \$30,000 per year. A minimum lease of 3 years would result in \$90,000 in the loss of equity.
 - Many lease places would need to be configured to meet our need and hence, would incur additional expenses.
 - The cost of the lease could not be justified in terms of the return on the investment.
 - Short term weekend rentals were found to be very cost-effective as compared to the full term lease option; however, they could not be relied upon to sustain long term operations (We could not retain the badminton facility for longer term).
- After evaluating the lease options, IATLH Executive Committee and Trustees concluded that building India Center with the help of our members is the only viable option. The decision was conveyed to the India Center sub-committee.
- By this time, IATLH had already lost the opportunity to buy the 2-acre lot near Koger Center (in the middle of city), which got sold for a mere \$30,000.
- As land procurement in a time consuming and negotiation based process, the executive committee and trustees board approved \$110,000 for purchase of suitable land meeting India Center requirements.

B. INDIA CENTER – LAND AND BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

Following initial requirements were laid out by the Executive Committee, IATLH to build the India Center:

- An enclosed space of approximately 5000-6000 sq. ft. is necessary to allow for indoor sports, 2-3 meeting/activity rooms, one small kitchen and restrooms.
- Minimum 1-acre lot size is recommended to accommodate the building and parking spots.
- To facilitate different sports activities, the ceiling height of 25-30 ft. is needed for some portion of the building.
- Many of the activities could occur early in the morning, and late in the night. It is important that the location of the India Center to be secure, safe, within the driving distance of most members, and be accessible from major roads.

- The location is recommended to have nearby restaurants and shopping places so that members can run errands as they drop their kids for various activities.
- With a busy year around calendar, all weekend and evenings will be reserved exclusively for IATLH Members and their activities.
- The operation cost and expenses of running the India Center should be within the reach of IATLH, without the need to generate additional revenues.

C. INDIA CENTER – REVIEWED LAND SITES

Search for suitable commercial land with the criteria laid out in the vision of India Center started in the second half of 2015. The tasks to find such a site, within the limited budget of \$100k, has been a very difficult one. Numerous times, the underpriced available lots are either bank owned, in a flood zone, or on a short sale. It takes multiple attempts and follow-ups to negotiate the price for a suitable land within IATLH budget. Following sites were reviewed by the executive committee:

- 2036 Midyette Rd, 1.5-acre size (October 2015)



- Eliza Rd near Weems Plantation, 1-acre size (May 2017)



- Dennis St off Capital Circle NE, across Lowes, 1-acre size (September 2017)



- Esplanade Way, inside Southwood, 0.93-acre lot



- Gainesborough Lane, off Blairstone Rd, across Publix, near Capital Circle SW, 1.375-acre size



D. INDIA CENTER – CURRENT STATUS

IATLH had contract, in past, on some of the lots listed above. The contracts were needed to conduct the site feasibility study and determine its suitability to build India Center at those locations. As of now, IATLH do not have an active contract on any parcel, and we are looking for suitable land meeting the criteria laid out in Section B. Please email president.iatlh@gmail.com if you come across any suitable parcels.

E. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is your timeline to build India Center?

We are actively looking to procure a suitable land. Once the land is purchased, we will work on the design, cost estimates. There is no specific timeline, but we would love to build the India Center soon.

2. What is your budget to build the India Center?

Our budget to build the India Center is approximately \$400k-\$500k.

3. Who will pay for the India Center?

IATLH will purchase the land from the savings (thanks to our sponsors). Once the land is procured, we will do the fundraise to construct India Center.

4. Is India Center a community center?

The India Center will be primarily used for IATLH and its member activities, such as dance, music, art, education, seminars, yoga, Zumba, art contest, badminton, volleyball, table tennis, seminars

etc. India Center will also showcase Indian art and culture to the local Tallahassee Community and school children.

5. How different is India Center from another organization's community center?

IATLH has laid out its vision, objective and need for India Center clearly in this document. The purpose of India Center is not to generate rental income to carry out other operations, but to promote Indian culture and fulfill the activity requirements of our members. Limited rental income may be generated for sustainability of the center. IATLH has never used the term "Community Center" to define its India Center. Not all existing or proposed community centers are the same, and they serve to the needs of each Organization's goals and objectives.

6. Can the India Center be used by another organizations in Tallahassee?

The primary focus of India Center is to facilitate activities for IATLH members. Depending on the schedule and availability, India Center can be made available to other organizations.

7. Can IATLH build India Center in partnership with other organizations?

IATLH is a secular and diverse organization committed to serving all Tallahassee Indians. The need for India Center is based on the IATLH's mission to promote the activities of our members. Partnership with other organizations would involve cost sharing as well as sharing of the facilities among the partners. Our busy calendar would not permit the India Center to be shared with any other organization without making significant compromises to our own planned objectives.

8. Would IATLH consider building India Center near the land acquired by Hindu Temple of Tallahassee (HTT)?

As mentioned earlier, IATLH has been actively looking for "city/county approved independent parcels" of 1-2 acre size to build India Center. No such lots are available near the land acquired by HTT. If such lots were to be made available, they will be evaluated based on the same site selection criteria as we have applied to other parcels.