

REFUGE RECOVERY

A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction

HOW TO RUN A BUSINESS MEETING OF AN RR GROUP

Regular business meetings are vital to the democratic, peer-led operation of each Refuge Recovery group. They are the means by which groups elect members to service positions and determine group policies, always subject to the RR Guiding Principles and the Essential Elements of RR Meetings.

The procedures for business meetings are slightly different for the first business meeting of a group (when officers have not yet been elected, and when the number of members may be small), as compared to business meetings for groups already established. The procedures are also slightly different for online meetings, as compared to in-person meetings. This document covers all types of business meetings.

The guidelines for quorums and voting rights, outlined below, could be considered a “bill of rights” for all members of our RR worldwide sangha. Such guidelines protect against individual RR groups being dominated by particular personalities. They also protect our groups against people who might try to dominate them by simply showing up for business meetings without having any history of being members of the group. To safeguard the rights of RR members everywhere, these guidelines need to be followed, until and unless the Refuge Recovery world sangha as a whole decides to change them (at a Refuge Recovery world convention of democratically elected delegates – a convention that will happen as soon as we all get organized with elected Group Representatives to make it happen!).

Special Procedures for the First Business Meeting of an RR Group

Any one or more persons can start a Refuge Recovery meeting and serve as its Secretary or Co-Secretary, regardless of the type of meeting (whether online or in person). Within six months after the first meeting, a Secretary of the group needs to hold and run a business meeting to elect a Group Representative. If possible, other service positions should be filled

REFUGE RECOVERY

A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction

by election, if and when there are people available, such as Treasurer, new Secretary or Secretaries, Doorperson (for online groups), Greeter (for in-person groups), Minutes Recorder for business meetings, and any other service positions the group may want to establish.

At this first business meeting, and at all business meetings for already established in-person and online groups, any group members who have attended at least two meetings of the group have the right to vote. A “member” is anyone who has a desire to be free from addiction and says they are a member. For first business meetings, a quorum, which is the minimum number of voting members required to be in attendance in order for a valid vote to be held, is a Secretary of the meeting plus two other members who have attended at least two meetings of the group. It is the responsibility of the Secretary or Co-Secretaries to encourage the group to grow to the point where it has enough voting members to form a quorum.

Special Procedures for Ongoing (Not First) Business Meetings

Once RR groups have been established, with one or more officers elected, the elected Group Representative should run the group business meetings if possible. If the Group Representative is not available for a particular business meeting, then the Secretary or a Co-Secretary should run the business meeting. If no Secretary, Co-Secretary or Group Representative is available, then a person holding another service position should run the business meeting. If none of those persons are available, then the people attending the business meeting should elect someone on the spot to run the business meeting. The quorum needed to allow voting at ongoing business meetings is three eligible voting members of the group -- or in other words, three members who have attended at least two of the group's meetings.

Geographically Based Online Meetings

REFUGE RECOVERY

A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction

Some RR online meetings are based in a particular town, city, county, or state, for the purpose of supporting new members in that area, encouraging local service volunteers, and making decisions about the starting of local in-person meetings. Nevertheless, any member of those geographically based online groups who has attended at least two of the group's meetings is permitted to vote at business meetings of the group. Allowing such voting will not hinder any local members from recruiting new members from that area for in-person meetings, and from connecting with others from that area to set up such meetings and develop service opportunities for such meetings. However, whenever possible the service positions at geographically based online meetings should be held by members that live within the area so that if and or when these meetings transition back to in-person meetings locals will be able to do so.

Procedures Common to Business Meetings of All Groups

All Refuge Recovery Groups, regardless of type, have certain common principles and procedures applicable to all business meetings:

1. All RR groups follow a super-majority voting method, which requires that at least two-thirds of voting members present be in favor of a motion or candidate for election, in order for that motion or candidacy to succeed. This is a middle path between a simple majority (51% or more) and unanimity. The result of this middle path is that decisions and elections at business meetings will continue to have a strong consensus in favor of them. This path requires proponents of motions and candidates to reach out and use the power of persuasion to build that strong consensus.

2. In Refuge Recovery, cooperation is the norm, so it is counterproductive to introduce a motion before there has been discussion of its subject matter. After every voting member has had a chance to offer input, the intent of the group is usually clearer. That's when the business meeting leader, or anyone else, can be of service by attempting to

REFUGE RECOVERY

A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction

coalesce what they have heard into a coherent motion that is more likely to have a strong group consensus in favor of it.

3. For each discussion at business meetings, every voting member of the Group should have the chance to speak once, before anyone may speak a second time.

4. In order to better implement Refuge Recovery's principle of rotation among elected persons in service positions, and to further encourage greater numbers of RR members to serve, no one member in RR should be the Group Representative, Secretary, or Treasurer of more than one group. If anyone who is already a Group Representative, Secretary, or Treasurer wants to hold more than one service position in RR, they can volunteer and/or run for the positions of Greeter, Minutes Recorder, Doorperson, and/or other positions. Those roles might be seen by some as less prestigious, but they are important for the benefit of the sangha. It is fine for members to hold multiple positions in multiple meetings, but no one should be the Secretary, Group Rep, or Treasurer in more than one meeting. We obviously want to avoid a situation where one strong personality is dominating several groups.

Standard Business Meeting Format

RR Group business meetings are run according to the following format:

1. In situations where there has been at least one previous business meeting, the minutes of the previous meeting should be read by the Business Meeting Minutes Recorder, or another volunteer if there is no elected recorder available. After the minutes of the previous meeting are read, if there are no objections to their content, the minutes can be deemed approved. If there are objections, then a discussion should be allowed, and a vote should be held on any points of dispute.

REFUGE RECOVERY

A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction

2. If there is a Treasurer of the Group, the Treasurer should provide a financial report. If there is no Treasurer yet, or if the Treasurer is not available, another volunteer should give the report.

3. Old Business. If there are any motions pending from a previous business meeting, they should be taken up for consideration at this time. If there were items of business that needed to be researched for new information to be presented to the Group, this would be the time for a report on that.

4. New Business. If any voting member wishes to bring up a new topic for the consideration of the group, that should be done at this time.

Holding an emergency business meeting: In the event a business meeting needs to be called for an urgent issue which must to be addressed before the next scheduled business meeting, any voting member of the group may call an emergency business meeting during the announcement portion of the RR meeting as long as the request is supported by two other voting members.

An Explanatory Note on Terminology

In Refuge Recovery, we use the terms “meetings” and “groups.” Although many of us correctly think of meetings as events, and of groups as entities that hold meetings, this is a conceptual distinction without much practical difference. In Refuge Recovery, the two terms are essentially synonymous. There is no group without a meeting, and there is no meeting without a group. Groups hold meetings, and meetings form groups. A Group Representative is a representative of the group’s meeting, and a Meeting Secretary is a Secretary of the Group. In the Refuge Recovery program, there is very rarely any difference between the two terms in practice.