

How To Run a Refuge Recovery Business Meeting

Refuge Recovery meetings are held by Refuge Recovery groups. It is the responsibility of each Refuge Recovery meeting to establish a group and hold a group business meeting as soon as possible after the meeting is established. Individual RR groups who hold RR meetings are the foundation of our recovery society.

Each RR group holds a group business meeting. The group business meeting is where we first find the day-to-day business of RR being taken care of. We have rent to pay, books to order, and a meeting space to be kept clean. We have a time schedule to follow, announcements to be made, and many other things to be done for the maintenance of the group. The group must stay in contact with other groups in their local area so they can find out about activities, learn of new groups, join with other groups to plan activities, and find out what is happening in RR overall. This is also the first point at which RR funds are handled, and the correct use of this money is essential for the preservation of the group. RR groups are supported by a democratic service structure and a dedicated non-profit service organization, Refuge Recovery World Services.

In most groups, the chairperson or another officer calls the business meeting, which ordinarily is held on a

monthly or quarterly basis. The order of business may include: electing new officers; scheduling meetings; receiving and discussing the treasurer's periodic financial reports; hearing progress reports from the group service representative and other group officers; and taking care of the business of paying rent, buying books and sending donations in excess of group costs to our world service organization.

Before a vote is taken, it is essential that the members be given all facts relevant to the subject at hand. In many cases, a few members may be asked to look into the pros and cons of the issue by forming a committee and presenting the issue at a later meeting. Arriving at an informed decision in matters large or small is a process that may take some time. It is important that minority, or dissenting, views be heard along with those of the majority. Business meetings generally are scheduled before or after the group's regular meeting. Some groups have tried observing Robert's Rules of Order, a parliamentary procedure for running smooth meetings, only to find that many members are inexperienced in the procedures and feel too intimidated to speak up. We offer this simplified version to help all meetings get started immediately with vital group business. The following ideas have been used throughout Refuge Recovery and reflect our common practice.

- We gather in a spirit of cooperation to discover our group democratic voice. We need never fear the voice of the group.
- For each discussion, each voting member should have the chance to speak once before any other voting member may speak a second time.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times.
- Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- The members discuss only one thing at a time.
- Members must meet the group voting criteria to be eligible to vote in the group business meeting.
- General Refuge Recovery business meetings have operated on the principle of group unanimity in our voting. This typically requires 65-70% of the quorum to be in favor of a motion for that motion to pass. This does not mean 100% consensus. This does not mean one person can block any vote. It means that a larger majority than 51% is required to pass motions. This voting method, combined with pre-motion discussion by all voting members present, is the most balanced approach we have for accomplishing necessary group business while promoting group unity. These methods were presented at the second RR Conference in 2016, and have been practiced successfully in group business meetings, Inter-Sangha and the Refuge Recovery service board.

Minimum Group Service Positions

The Chairperson

The Chair performs an invaluable service by running the business meeting according to simple rules of order. In general, no one should speak without first being recognized by the Chair, and if people start speaking out of turn, the chair will call for order. The Chair has the responsibility to end discussion when all voting members have had the opportunity to speak.

The Secretary

The Secretary takes notes so that they can prepare the official written record of the meeting, called the “minutes.” Clear, accurate minutes are very important – they will be used to keep track of the group’s conscience, as well as unfinished business from previous business meetings.

The Secretary need not record everything that is said; the minutes are not a transcript. But they should include:

- Officer’s reports, if any were made during the meeting.
- The exact wording of any motions introduced, and their fate (passed, defeated, referred to committee, or postponed).
- If motions were referred to a committee, make sure the group specifies the duties of the committee and when their report should be delivered to the full business meeting.

If at any time the Secretary is unclear about something, he/she should ask for clarification immediately. The Secretary can vote, introduce motions, and participate in discussion.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer of an RR group is responsible for the funds which come into the group from the collection and for the distribution of these funds. The money collected in our meetings must be carefully budgeted. The Treasurer keeps an accurate record of all the group's financial transactions, and distributes monies to pay the rent, purchase books, buy supplies, and cover the costs of any miscellaneous expenses the group incurs.

Standard RR Business Meeting Format

Most RR business meetings can be run according to the following format:

1. Minutes of the previous business meeting should be read by the Secretary. After they are read, if there are no objections to the content, a motion to accept the minutes should be passed.
2. Officers' Reports. If necessary, trusted volunteers (at minimum the Treasurer) report to the group.

3. Old Business.

- a. If there are any reports due from committees, they should be delivered during this phase of the meeting.
- b. If there are any motions pending from a previous business meeting, they should be taken off the table for consideration at this time.

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

Motions

A main motion is the topic under discussion. After recognition by the chair, any voting member can introduce a main motion when no other motion is on the table. A main motion requires a second to be considered.

A note about main motions: in adversarial assemblies, nothing is discussed without a motion, but in Refuge Recovery, cooperation is assumed, and it is often counterproductive to introduce a main motion before there has been some discussion of its subject matter. After every voting member has had a chance to offer input, the intent of the group is usually clearer, and the chair can be of service by ending discussion and

attempting to coalesce what he or she has heard into a coherent motion, and ask if anyone will introduce the motion.

A main motion must be disposed of (passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely) before a new main motion may be considered.

Our hope as the World Service Board is that this document is sufficient to give Refuge Recovery groups a place to start. The group is the place where we begin to take responsibility for creating and maintaining Refuge Recovery. The group is the foundation of our entire program and the most important service we can do to ensure that all those suffering from addiction have stable and attractive Refuge Recovery meetings to attend.