

## GUIDELINES FOR BUSINESS MEETINGS IN SCA RECOVERY GROUPS (v3.1)

### **1. What is an SCA business meeting?**

A business meeting is a time-limited, structured discussion to help a meeting form a group conscience regarding an issue raised by one or more of its members. The Traditions of SCA state that every SCA group ought to be fully self-supporting and that each group should be autonomous. Since 12-Step groups are unorganized, with no leaders (only trusted servants), business meetings allow members to decide matters affecting the group. A trusted servant (usually the Chair) conducts the business meeting, recognizing different members to speak on the issue.

The customary 7th Tradition Break is a brief business meeting to collect funds for expenses and report on group finances. It is distinct from the “sharing” portion of the meeting.

### **2. What is the purpose of an SCA business meeting?**

SCA business meetings allow the group to consider changes to the meeting structure in an organized fashion, continuing to be fully self-supporting and autonomous.

The SCA-NY “Intergroup Guidelines for Meetings” suggests periodic business meetings, particularly regarding any suggested changes to the format for the meeting.

*“It is suggested that groups hold periodic business meetings and that any group consciences during these meetings be recorded and retained for future reference. We further suggest that each meeting document its meeting format, specifying the literature to be read, the presence/absence of a break, timed shares, etc. We recommend that these elements form a written script, which would be passed from the outgoing meeting Chair(s) to incoming officers at the appropriate time. It could also be posted on the local SCA website so that members doing temporary service as meeting Chair could easily access the script as needed.”*

### **3. Why and when are business meetings scheduled?**

The basis for any business meeting is to form a group conscience about an issue/problem that no single trusted servant can resolve. Some meetings have regularly scheduled business meetings (e.g., the first meeting of the month, etc.) as part of their format.

Some groups may establish a time slot for a business meeting monthly. It is usually best to schedule the meeting for the month’s last or second to the last meeting. This practice helps to ensure enough time for elections for the new term, which generally takes place at the end of each completed term.

A member or several members have an issue that may warrant such a special business meeting. The most common issues are:

- a. The meeting format script: (addition/removal/modification of language; length of shares, allow/prohibit graphic language, etc.) and other proposals to amend it;
- b. Financial issues such as prudent reserve, rent payments, donations to Intergroup, literature purchases, etc.;
- c. Issues with the meeting conduct (e.g., safety in the meeting, cross-talk, graphic language, timekeeper misbehavior, lack of transparency in treasury)

It is unnecessary to conduct a business meeting to decide whether to open or close a window: a simple show of hands once the question arises is sufficient. The business meeting extends this concept for more complicated issues. During the announcement portion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition break, any member may request that the group schedule a formal business meeting, stating the issue(s) of concern. This member usually

motions to have a business meeting to discuss it at a particular date or during the next meeting regularly scheduled, if there is one. We suggest one (1) to two (2) weeks' notice to allow other members to consider the issue(s). As the impact on the group of any decision increases, such as changes to the meeting format, a formal business meeting allows for a more considered group conscience.

#### **4. How are SCA business meetings conducted?**

Some meetings designate a separate person to conduct the business meeting, especially if the issue concerns the conduct of the present trusted servants. If not, then the Chair or treasurer usually leads the business meeting. Regardless, the designated business meeting chair conducts the meeting and is responsible for ensuring an orderly process that respects individual differences, shares the time reasonably, and helps the meeting form a group conscience on the issue(s). The three (3) roles sometimes used to conduct business meetings are:

- **Business Chair** – This doesn't have to be that meeting's Chair, but a volunteer to chair the business meeting who has previous experience running such a meeting.
- **Secretary** – Having someone take notes of each business meeting is a best practice. Recording the discussions makes it easier to track topics that will continue at the next meeting. Some meetings take notes of each business meeting, while others do not: it is up to the group conscience of the meeting. However, we recommend it, particularly for critical issues with lasting effects.
- **Timekeeper** – Before starting the business meeting, the business chair will take a group conscience (as needed) of how long the business meeting will last and gently remind the group when the time is up. Often, a discussion may need more time at the end of the time limit set initially. At this point, the Business Chair can suggest tabling the discussion to the next business meeting or ask the group to vote on extending the time to finish the motion on the floor.

The business meeting chair asks if someone would like to make a motion regarding the issue. It is customary to have a second person affirm the motion – otherwise, the process continues until someone makes a seconded motion. In some meetings, the Chair alternately focuses the discussion in timed shares, either “IN FAVOR” of the motion or “OPPOSED.” Members are encouraged to refrain from repeating the points that others have already made.

The following discusses other possible parliamentary procedures:

- It is unnecessary to have an equal number of shares “IN FAVOR” or “OPPOSED.” Suppose the discussion drags on and debated with fervor. If so, the Chair may suggest that a committee (of those in favor and opposed) study the issue offline and table the topic until another scheduled meeting.
- If the discussion winds down and there are no other raised hands to voice an opinion, the Chair may ask for a vote. If the discussion becomes repetitious, the Chair has the prerogative of “Calling the Question,” an immediate show of hands in favor or opposed to ending the discussion, **not** deciding the issue. If the vote is approved, the discussion ends, and the issue under discussion gets an up or down vote. SCA does not endorse the use of any particular parliamentary system, but each meeting can adapt one to suit its needs.
- Most groups use a couple of parliamentary procedures during SCA business meetings. One of these is a “friendly amendment” to a seconded motion. If any member feels that the motion needs modification, either for clarity or to alter its focus, they are to raise their hand and propose the new language as a “friendly amendment.” The Chair will then ask the author of the original motion whether they accept the amendment. If not, the motion stands unless other amendments are proposed and accepted.

- Another frequently used procedure is a “Point of Information.” Any member may raise their hand and request a point of information about some aspect of the conduct of the business meeting. Where such a question relates to the meeting procedure, it is up to the Chair to answer the point and, where appropriate, take corrective measures.

If the Chair grants equal time to each member on either side of the issue, most members consider the meeting a fair process. The formation of a committee to further study the issue, while providing no immediate satisfaction, fosters unity, as emphasized in our Traditions.

## **5. Best Practices**

Meetings can set their requirements based on their specific needs regarding business meetings. The concept of “What is a business meeting?” should be discussed at meetings to understand what they are. (Perhaps initially during the 7th tradition break). Once members have the general concept of what is a business meeting and its purpose, they are more likely to understand why there is a need for them.

Because all meetings are autonomous, they are free to determine their business meeting parameters. Below we describe the typical norms that could be recommended and suggested.

- a. Meetings may choose to establish a regular monthly business meeting: for example, the month’s first or last meeting. If there are no pressing issues, the meeting members can decide to waive the meeting for that month via group conscience. But as long as the time is agreed upon and available, everyone knows there is a space to discuss the meeting agenda, format, rules, elections, and suggested changes. The business meeting is a tool to adjust and tailor meetings so that they can grow and change to meet the needs of its current attendees.
- b. We recommend that members receive at least one (1) to two (2) weeks’ notice of all business meetings, whether they be regularly scheduled meetings or those specially requested. If a member has a pressing or complicated issue, they should communicate the summary to the group so others will have time to think about the issue and formulate their thoughts. However, discussions and debates must wait for the scheduled business meeting.
- c. We recommend that each business meeting have a written agenda, as it helps keep the group focused. If members have other issues, they can announce them during the break to let the meeting know. This notice allows other members to consider the issue and add it to any agenda.
- d. A member may present an issue that is complex and difficult to address. In that case, the Chair may request volunteers to serve on a committee to study the issue(s) or can table the discussion for the next business meeting so that everyone has more time to think about the topic.
- e. Having someone take notes of each business meeting is a good idea. It helps record the discussions and makes it easier to track topics that will continue at the next meeting. Some meetings take notes of each business meeting, while others do not. It is again up to the group conscience of the meeting. However, it is recommended, especially for larger meetings.
- f. “Roberts Rules” is a set of parliamentary procedures helpful in running the meeting. However, the meeting can adjust and formulate the rules to meet their needs. It is up to each meeting to decide what rules work best for them. This choice may be a topic of discussion at the first business meeting.

## Sample Business Meeting Script

Chair: Now is the time for the meeting's [*regular monthly*][*specially scheduled*] business meeting. To begin, could someone volunteer to lead us in the Serenity Prayer?

{prayer}

[Instructions on procedure using Zoom™]

Chair: I am lowering all hands before any discussion/voting: please be aware that you will have to raise your hand again after the business meeting if you wish to share.

Chair: By group conscience, we observe some basic rules for the business meeting:

1. Please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Chair to speak;
2. Please keep your comments brief and to the point at hand;
3. Please respect any signal from the timekeeper;
4. Please recognize points that others have already made so as not to repeat them.
5. Please follow the order of the agenda for the business meeting.

Chair: Can someone volunteer to serve as a timekeeper for the business meeting? [*Wait for volunteer*]  
By group conscience, the business meeting will initially last [20][25] minutes, with shares by group members limited to [2][3] minutes. Please notify the group when five (5) minutes remain for the business meeting. If we are close to resolving the issue, we may take a group conscience to extend the meeting. Each member sharing will receive a signal when one (1) minute remains.

Chair: Can someone volunteer to take notes for this meeting? Our group conscience suggests that we record the motions, outline the discussion, and count the final vote for each item of business.

[*someone volunteers*]

Chair: Is there a volunteer who has experience conducting business meetings who would be willing to lead this one as the business meeting chair? If not, then I will serve as best I can.

Business Chair (volunteer, Chair, Treasurer, etc.):

The first item on the agenda is: [*reads item from agenda*]

Would someone (with their hand raised) like to make a motion to address this item?

Is there a second to the motion? Please raise your hand.

The motion was seconded. Are there any suggested amendments to the motion?

[*If someone proposes a friendly amendment, ask the motion's author if it is accepted. Others may propose additional revisions, and the process repeats; otherwise, the motion stands.*]

Would our secretary for this business meeting read back the motion to the group?

We will now discuss the motion.

The Chair will recognize any member who wishes to speak IN FAVOR of the motion for [2][3] minutes. *[After the share]*

The Chair will now recognize any member who wishes to speak OPPOSED to the motion for [2][3] minutes.

*[This process repeats until at least two (2) members have spoken IN FAVOR and OPPOSED (if there are members who wish to do so.)]*

Are there others who wish to share a new perspective on this motion, either IN FAVOR or OPPOSED for [2][3] minutes?

*[The process continues until the 5-minute warning or the discussion becomes repetitive. If some members continue to have their hands raised, the business chair has the prerogative to request a vote to “Call the Question”]*

**[Instructions on voting using Zoom™]**

Click on the green “**yes**” (✓) under reactions if you **favor** the motion.

Click on the red “**no**” (x) under reactions if you **oppose** the motion.

The Chair will count the votes for and against the motion.

Members who don’t vote count as abstentions.

*Example of the process for the above]*

*[As Chair, I request an immediate vote on whether to end the current discussion]*

*[The chair/secretary will count the votes OPPOSED and IN FAVOR]*

All OPPOSED to ending the discussion; please raise your hands (see Zoom™ instructions).

All IN FAVOR of ending the discussion; please raise your hands (see Zoom™ instructions).

*[If continuing discussion, take a group conscience on how many minutes to extend it]*

*[Continuing discussion]*

Is there anyone (who has not already spoken) who would like to address the motion on the floor?

*[If discussion terminates, proceed to a vote on the original motion]*

Would all members IN FAVOR of the motion please raise their hands?

[In Zoom™, click on the green “**yes**” (✓)]

Would all members OPPOSED to the motion please raise their hands?

[In Zoom™, click on the red “**no**” (x)]

Will the secretary record the tally of votes?

The motion [*carries*][*fails*] by a vote of [##] in favor, [##] opposed.

*[The above steps repeat for as many items on the agenda; if time runs out, a group conscience can extend the business meeting or vote to table the issue until the next one, which may need scheduling]*

Thank you all for your participation, especially those who served the business meeting as Chair, Secretary, and Timekeeper. We have our next business meeting scheduled for [date]. *[Alternatively, a new date can be proposed and voted upon, especially if there is unfinished business from this meeting]*

*[Business meeting ends – return to regular format]*