

Courtesy of Greater NY Area  
SLAA Intergroup

## Helpful Suggestions and Tips for Business Meeting Chairpersons

### Service Positions

- Consider creating a regular service position of "Business Chair" - continuity of service can make the difference between a good and bad business meeting experience for all present.

### Ahead of the Business Meeting

- Announce a week in advance of the actual business meeting that the business meeting will be the following week. If there are specific items of old business mention those as well. Remind the treasurer, literature person and Intergroup Rep that reports are expected at that time. (Meetings may wish to add these announcements into their format).

### During the Business Meeting:

- If the business meeting is timed ask for a 2 minute warning before the close of the business meeting (this allows the chair to wrap up an item of business or ask for an extension to the meeting.)

- If there is a lot of business to discuss ask the time-keeper for a warning at each 2 minute interval - this helps the meeting to move along and shines a spotlight on any topic taking up too much time.
- As the chair, remain impartial, as best you can, about voting outcomes. When a chairperson is obviously bitter about a vote it lends a sense of strain to the business meeting proceedings.
- During votes always ask for **those in favor**, **those opposed** and **abstentions**. This allows for maximum participation and lends safety to the rooms because people feel their viewpoint was acknowledged - even if it is the neutral viewpoint of an abstention. If the vote is even remotely close **count the hands** that are raised. In the case of a tie the chairperson's vote breaks the tie.
- Remember Old Business comes first, New Business comes second. Typically Elections precede both Old Business and New Business.
- If New Business seems to be emerging during the final moments of a meeting you may entertain a motion to place that New Business as Old Business for the following business meeting.
- Always allow for some discussion after a motion has been made and seconded, again it allows people to feel heard. If the topic has been widely discussed already you may ask "Do we need more discussion on this motion or would someone like to **call the question?**"
- **Calling the question** means that the group votes on whether to end discussion immediately and vote on the motion **now**. **It does not mean that you are voting on the motion**. This usually needs to be explained especially if newcomers are present. Once someone calls the question and it is seconded *no discussion is needed* the group simply votes on calling the question or not.
- Be sure to thank each servant who gives a report.
- When asking to extend the meeting by a few minutes - usually a request of 2-3 minutes is better received than a request for a 5 minute extension (assuming that it is not a complex matter).
- Motions involving the changing of the meeting's overall format are best addressed in the following month. This way any regular member has an opportunity to arrange to attend the business meeting and offer their opinion. People are less likely to feel as if they were excluded from an important decision.
- If your meeting has a reputation for having emotionally charged business meetings and/ or personality conflicts during business meetings consider adopting the practice of 30 seconds of "*spiritual reminder*". Spiritual Reminder definition: Anyone present can request a 30 second spiritual reminder if tensions are running high or if hostilities arise. For 30 seconds the entire meeting is silent to allow people to remember to connect consciously to their Higher Power (of their own understanding) and to place principles before personalities.
- During elections have each new servant give their contact info to the secretary for the minutes so that the meeting can contact them should an issue arise.