

# FA Meeting Secretary Kit

## A Guide for the EAI Meeting Secretary

*One year of continuous abstinence suggested.*

*Thank you for your willingness to do service as a meeting secretary.*

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### **Responsibilities of the Meeting Secretary**

- Announce business meetings both one week ahead and on the day of the business meeting. Welcome all members to attend, particularly those with 90 days of continuous abstinence. Notify members with 90 days of continuous abstinence who are working with a FA sponsor that they will have a voice, a vote and service positions open to them. Also announce any additional business meetings that may be necessary because of time-sensitive issues.
- Facilitate the group's monthly business meeting in the following ways:
  - Announce all bold-faced items noted in [Document 7A: Sample Business Meeting Agenda/Minutes](#) and record the minutes using this form.
  - It is suggested to use basic [parliamentary procedures](#) to facilitate the group's discussions and the review of motions brought forth by meeting members. Using the [Meeting Service Position List](#) in Document 7: Service Positions—Description of Responsibilities, monitor the group's service positions, informing the group when a term of service has expired or a position otherwise needs to be filled.
  - Instructs newly elected members to review the information in [Document 7: Service Positions—Description of Responsibilities](#) on the FA website or prints and distributes copies in order that they can learn about their new service positions.
  - Provide a "double check" for the monthly treasurer's report.
- Maintain business meeting materials, including previous business meeting minutes, service position lists, and relevant communications from World Service, Intergroup, and Chapters. File these documents in a three-ring binder dedicated specifically to the group's business meeting materials. Store the binder with the rest of the group's literature, so that all members may have access to the information.
- Update the meeting format with any changes that are voted in by group conscience, provided that these changes adhere to the [FA Meeting Requirements Document](#) on the FA website. Acceptable changes to the format include specific meeting-based items, for example, requests made by the hosting facility regarding parking, the necessity of using a microphone, etc. Changes to the format that are not acceptable include anything that conflicts with the meeting requirements voted upon by the FA World Service Conference.

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*It is important to note that while the secretary facilitates discussion and focuses the group around business motions, the secretary does not bring motions to the floor, does not express an opinion, and does not vote during the meeting. However, according to parliamentary procedure, if there is a tie, the secretary may vote to break the tie. If time is short, or if the question at hand may be clarified by more reflection or more information, the secretary, like any other member of the business meeting, may suggest that a particular motion be tabled until the following business meeting.*

### **Available Resources for Business Meeting Discussion**

- These resources are available on the FA website to help inform business meeting discussion: [Document 1: Meeting Requirements, Standards, Registration And Changes](#), [Document 2: Meeting Essentials](#), [Document 9: Meeting Effectiveness Questions](#), and [Document 10: Meeting Effectiveness Assessment](#). The secretary may want to keep copies of these documents in the group's business meeting binder for use as needed. In addition, the monthly "Meeting Health Question," circulated by our Intergroup, can serve as a starting point for discussions about meeting effectiveness.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: Is there a recommended time limit for business meetings?**

**A:** The meeting group conscious may decide on the business meeting's time limit. Some of the business meetings have a suggested time limit of 30 minutes.

**Q: What if someone wants to speak at the business meeting, or make a motion, and this is not their committed meeting?**

**A:** Only those with 90 days or more of continuous abstinence in FA, who regularly attend the meeting, have a voice and a vote. It would be appropriate to make that statement, rather than simply ignore someone with a hand up.

**Q: Can the secretary contribute to a discussion for a motion or even an exploratory discussion?**

**A:** The secretary facilitates the discussion on a motion, but cannot contribute to the discussion or express an opinion on a motion.

**Q: Is it true that the secretary should not bring up a new motion or second a motion?**

**A:** Yes.

**Q: I heard that the secretary only votes when there is a tie.**

**A:** According to parliamentary procedure, that is accurate. Keep in mind that the secretary is a facilitator for the meeting.

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**Q: What should the secretary do if discussion at the business meeting becomes heated or personal?**

**A:** Remember the purpose of the business meeting: to receive up-to-date reports about service activities (treasury, literature, public information, etc.), and to discuss and vote on motions that directly impact the effectiveness of the meeting. The business meeting is not a place to air grievances, but rather, a place to conduct the *business* of the meeting, through group conscience and the loving guidance of a Higher Power. If a particular discussion becomes too heated, it may be wise for the motion to be tabled until the following month, in order to give members time to reflect upon the issue and speak with their sponsors.

**Q: What should the secretary do if someone is behaving in a disruptive manner, for example, packing up the literature during the break, or while the promises are being read? Or what if the treasurer is counting the money during the meeting?**

**A:** Remember that the secretary is not in charge of other group members. As an individual FA member, it is always a good idea to speak with one's sponsor about experiences at meetings, which may be a source of confusion. Your sponsor may have suggestions for you about how to handle these situations, within the context of your own recovery. The secretary has no more responsibility to address these situations than any other member of the FA group.

**Q: What should the secretary do if someone who holds a service position has not shown up for several weeks?**

**A:** This may be brought to the group for discussion during the "New Business" portion of the meeting. Perhaps someone from the meeting will volunteer to contact the absent member and discuss the situation, asking whether the member intends to continue filling this service position. It is important to remember that the secretary is not in charge of "enforcing" or "patrolling" the meeting, but rather, serves as a *facilitator* for group discussion about meeting effectiveness and what measures the group, *as a whole*, may adopt, to ensure meeting effectiveness.

**Q: What should the secretary do if they notice that someone who holds a service position is no longer maintaining a credible body size?**

**A:** This should **not** be brought up at the business meeting. This is not the responsibility of the secretary. However, after quiet time and discussion with your sponsor, you may be moved – *as a fellow member of FA* – to reach out to this person to talk about the situation.

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### **Suggested Parliamentary Procedure for FA Business Meetings**

(Adapted from “Parliamentary Procedure Basics,” [World Service Conference Document, pg. 12](#), and “[Matching Parliamentary Procedure to Needs](#),” Jim Slaughter, JD, CPP-T, PRP)

Parliamentary procedure is a method of conduct that is used at many business meetings, to ensure the clear communication of information and an orderly decision-making process. Using these procedures facilitates effective and timely meetings. A meeting secretary who applies these methods will have a better chance at turning long, confrontational, and ineffective business meetings into short, painless ones.

The secretary may adopt any number of the following suggestions, depending on the size and temperament of the business meeting. A business meeting with fewer than 10 attendees may work well with some of the more informal procedures. A larger, or a more contentious business meeting may benefit from implementing some of the more formal procedures listed below.

#### **Formal Procedure**

- Members must be recognized by the secretary before speaking.
- Members are to identify themselves before speaking.
- A motion to take action must precede any discussion of an issue.
- Motions must be seconded.
- If there is no second to a motion, then there is no debate and the process ends.
- The secretary states the motion. This “transfers the ownership” of the motion from the individual who first presented it, to the whole group. Only the “owners” of the motion can change or withdraw the motion, so change or withdrawal at this point requires the consent of the group.
- The motion is now considered “pending” and members of the group may speak to the motion, (debate) or act on the motion by proposing a subsidiary motion.
- The group secretary does not participate in debate, but does recognize and call on members to speak for or against the motion).
- Members may not speak a second time on a motion until all who wish to speak a first time have spoken.
- Members may only speak to a specific motion twice in one day.
- The secretary can have the group vote after three members have spoken for and three members have spoken against the motion. The motion maker counts as a “for.” Or in a smaller group that has had an open discussion the secretary can have a vote after discussion.
- Votes are taken by voice vote, or show of hands.

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**AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE:**

When the secretary introduces the “New Business” portion of the agenda, a member raises her hand and is called on by the secretary.

Member 1: Hi, My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I move that we change our meeting time from 9:30am, to 10:00am, in order to enable us to share a fellowship meal after the meeting ends at 11:30am.

Member 2 (sitting in the audience): I second the motion

Secretary: The motion on the table is that we change our meeting time from 9:30am to 10:00am. The motion is now open for discussion.

Members may raise their hands, and be called upon to speak for or against the motion on the table. After all who are eligible to share have had the opportunity to do so, the secretary may call for a vote, or may ask to table the motion until the following month, if more discussion is necessary.

**Informal Procedure**

- Members are not required to obtain the floor and can make motions or speak while seated (it is probably still a good idea to require members to be recognized by the group secretary before speaking).
- No limit exists to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally are not entertained.
- Decisions are often made by unanimous consent or consensus, rather than by formal vote.
- The secretary need not stand while in discussion or putting questions to a vote.