

LifeRing Secular Recovery
Annual Meeting Notes
June 3, 2017

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Conducting Board Meetings:

Byron getting proposals: Zoom, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting
Test Board Meetings in Zoom (we're paying for it now)

Deadlines are essential

Focus on short-term assignments: Pop-up committees for specific tasks

Check-ins at each board meeting: Everyone contributes

Each board member contributes a certain amount of service (each member sets their own personal goal.) (What do these activities look like?)

Encourage/outreach to less active/quieter board members

We need your help with...

Why don't you write the first donation check?

How would you like to contribute?

What are your strengths? What are you good at? What would you like to fix?

Ideas: (Look at the large quantity of material in the "Lynn Folder" for ideas on "things to do")(Represent LSR at recovery conferences)

Board mentor for new board members/New board member training

Rotating board member leading each call:

Pros: different tone/each person explores role/demystifies “leadership”/rotating person leads each call. Empowers members to be more engaged.

Cons: few volunteers with more experience=greater efficiency

Define role of the Board Chair: See existing description in LSR files. (How does this work with a rotating “board meeting facilitator?”)

1. Have a rotating “board meeting facilitator” to give us a chance to get to know more about that person. Adds personal element.
2. Add short personal check-in from each board member (time limited)

Succession: CA law requirements? Add Vice Chair position?
(Confirm: Is this change allowed in by-laws?)

Robert: GSuite for Nonprofits. Each board member gets a Gmail address.

Five-year plan for Growth:

Long-term planning

Growth Rate: 5%? (How do we achieve this growth?)

Consideration of meeting failures (Evaluate what happened.

Learn from mistakes moving forward.)

Tracking the quality of meetings? How do we do a better job of this?

Once we provide info to a new meeting on “how to start a meeting,” we sometimes get little feedback on how successful the meeting has been.

Comparison with SMART Recovery (Full-time paid staff)

SMART attends all the major conferences (American Psychological Assn, American Psychology Assn., etc.)

Opportunity for LifeRing: Largest growth area in AA is Freethinkers. (groups like Agnostic AA in NYC/Canada constantly under attack from AA) Government reports indicate this growth in non-religious people seeking recovery.)

Get to a critical mass for meetings

Promote studies that show Lifering works

George: Canada did a traveling road show to treatment centers. (They look for alternatives in treatment.)

Get in local papers (public relations/communications planning)

Recovery coach (Faces and Voices of Recovery)

(*Note: This website for Faces and Voices of Recovery has erroneous info about LifeRing on it! <http://>

facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources/mutual-aid-resources/alcohol.html)

Promotional film? (We were featured in another film we contributed to.)(Note: Get release forms for anyone who is present in your films!)

Quality control is an issue. What is happening in other meetings?

Income:

Identify a grant writer (Susan McLean)

Identify potential grants (outreach

What is the plan that would justify receiving a grant?

Analyze meeting income (What do we get from each meeting?)

Increase meetings to increase income?

Which meetings outside the Bay Area generate income?

ED future possibility

Book author presentation:

Conference Call:

Managing convenors/regional reps: what to do if convenors are unresponsive?

Should we take the meeting off the schedule when they do not respond?

Working with Local Convenors / Service Center:

What about convenors mentioning their personal use of non-alcoholic beers?

Medical marijuana use? By convenor?

Discounts on literature, free brochures. Best to email requests for literature to the LSR Service Center..

We encourage convenors to buy books.

Some groups have little or no literature. Why weren't they replaced? Create a system for replacement. LSR Service Center can send an email to remind convenors.

Meeting money: No meetings have any monetary control. Paypal is easiest way to get money to the service center.

Speaker meetings: only one in Bay Area.

Committee Structure and Format:

Pop-up (short-term) committees for specific tasks (Report to the board, then go forward or dissolve the effort.) Reduce

organizational hurdles by skipping passing through additional committees. And, a short-term commitment will make it easier for people to participate.

Craig created a draft list of nine proposed committee focus areas. (Note: A pop-up committee is planning to meet to discuss this topic and solidify our focus areas. All input is welcome!)

Goal for how we work: Work on specific tasks AND this organized list. (Note: Sometimes a particular task might not be specifically listed in our focus areas.)

(Ex., Website: an ability to find those with skills, not necessarily possessing those skills. Project manager-style.)

Get more people involved in the governance of the organization (membership!)

ENGAGE volunteers: How to get people engaged: Ask them!
Identify NEEDS: What is our actual need? What needs to be addressed?

Sustain energy through partnership at every level. (When we get a new board member or convenor, partner with them.)

Start thinking globally. In determining what we do, consider how our work can be used outside the U.S. (Lifering Ireland: Rob Mullally)

FUNDRAISING: Richard has been engaged in this since 2016. Identify those willing to expand on Richard's efforts and increase our chances for success.

Ask: Why is Lifering appealing to you? What is your motivation for being here? What is the most impassioned thing they have ever done?

Our goal: empowerment of our membership first, completion of tasks will follow

Many people are just waiting to be asked! (Consider the value of asking, and the potential that this person's engagement has to support their own sobriety and that of others.)

Conduct a SKILLS/PASSION inventory. (We may have a form for this in our files.) Send survey to membership! **(Note: Njon will put this together.)**

EXPAND our communications beyond email. (Consider the use of texts, social media, What'sApp) We need a way for LSR Service Center to send out a message, and to get that message out via all channels.

Do we have an email list?

We need a forum on the website. (Look at what SMART Recovery is doing?)

Website is expensive. Where do we want to put our time?

Lots of discussion and decisions being made, but little action is being taken. (Solution: give autonomy to the Pop-up group doing the task.)

Richard: What % of donations come through the website? (Book sales now go through Amazon.) Forums and communication can be done through the website.

What is our committee structure? (Note: pop-up committee examining areas of focus now.)

Fred: Co-share a function vs. a particular duty

Public relations function exists in Lifering Press (Consider PR, messaging, branding)

IMPORTANT POINT: People don't know about Lifering!

(People should have as many options as possible.)

We need a primary PR function

Zoom for meetings NEW!

Google Docs

**Mary Beth and Dan co-lead LifeRing Committee Structure
(Robert, Rob also on committee, and Nancy Acord.**

Note that SMART is different from LSR. (We can learn from them, but we should be able to clearly articulate the difference, including their strong points and our own.)

Future of the LifeRing Service Center:

Robert in office only on Fridays

Craig goes into office most days. This work does not require his being in the office. Craig is moving to WA in the fall. People visiting the office is very rare.

How do people find us? (Since going to print-on-demand via Amazon, our book orders have been cut to one-third prior levels.)

Rent: \$650/month

Telephone/Internet: \$150/month

We would save about \$850/month, but would have to have a PO Box.

Board needs a front person as a spokesperson for LSR. (in emails)

NOTES FROM SUNDAY'S PORTION OF MEETING: June 4, 2017

Board Meeting begins

It was determined that a quorum of board members was present, and the meeting was called to order by Board Chair Njon Weinroth. Board Members present: Dan Carrigan, George Gidora, Byron Kerr, Emily Marcus, Rob Mullaly, Craig Whalley, Carola Ziermann. Executive Director Robert Stump was present. Board member Harold Marques was not present.

Book sales: We need to have a fire sale to sell remaining books.

Intention to transition to virtual office: (closing our physical office in Oakland)

Motion passed: Ask Robert to create an action plan to transition from brick and mortar to virtual office.

Motion passes unanimously.

Robert has indicated that there are gaps in our nonprofit management. Board members should review these needs and identify resources to fill these gaps.

Public Comment:

Identify our primary focus areas and direction as an organization.

Where do we put our attention?

Idea: Create case study using Santa Clara County as an example. (Three small, struggling meetings in a massive population center.)

Growth is #1 target. Everything else falls under that category.

Get into treatment centers. Take books. Send a convincing representative to obtain commitment to start meetings in new locations.

Create PowerPoint presentation.

Getting into these centers takes time, but after a persistent effort, we can do it.

Mary Beth and Rick Thompson will contribute time to work on this with Byron.

Goal of Pop-up committee: to produce a template for further growth and expansion of meetings.

Timeline: Deliver an outline to the August LSR Board Meeting. Conduct smaller, regional annual meetings in areas where we wish to support growth.

LifeRing Press:

Stories from secular recovery project is still in progress.

Robert will post a press release if someone prepares it.

Shutdown of office:

Books: We need to sell our existing books.

Proposal: National Recovery Month special sale pricing on the books.

Send email to convenors announcing special pricing

Board meeting ends

Introduction of prospective board members:

1. **Byron Kerr** - 6 years sobriety. Served on LSR Board the past 4 years. Started multiple new LSR meetings.

2. **Jason Groce** - (not present) 2-3 years in Seattle meeting. Convenor for dual-recovery group. Attends face-to-face meetings in Seattle.
3. **Lorraine Hull** - 3 years sobriety. Looking for outlet to do more. HR experience. Supports LSR values of Sobriety, Secularity, and Self-help. Convenor in Denver, CO, and organizer of coffee clutch gatherings.
4. **Mary Beth O'Connor** - 23 years sober. Attends local meetings. Judge. Good at gaining attention of people to move along tasks. Must be able to look at long term goals.

Reports on LifeRing meetings:

Coby Smolens: Marin County. Tracks number of people being added to meetings to indicate growth. Some meetings needed to be split after reaching

Bobbi: LifeRing sober living online group (group requires 1 year minimum sobriety.) Approx. 5-10 contributors.

Richard:

Kathleen Gargan (Colorado): Approx. 25 meetings.

Lorraine Hull (Colorado): Co-convenes a meeting in Denver. Well attended.

Carola: Conducts All About LifeRing presentation at hospital, followed by a LifeRing meeting when time permits.

Craig: Convenes Oakland Kaiser CDRP meeting.

Dan: interested in convening. Not currently convening.

Byron: Looking for convenor for meeting in Laguna Honda Hospital. Meeting transitioning from closed meeting to open meeting.

Rob: Eight meetings in San Diego. He was asked to attend an Agnostic AA meeting that took place in San Diego.

George: VP, LifeRing Canada. Eight meetings in Vancouver area. Starting two new meetings.

Njon: Meetings in San Francisco. Attendance varies, but consistent.

Emily: Oakland Sunday meeting still going strong. Not currently convening.

Proposed Bylaw Change:

5.2.2. In order to be eligible to designate a delegate to represent the meeting at an Annual Congress and/or vote on behalf of the meeting, the meeting shall be listed with the Service Center forty-five (45) days prior to the Congress.

(Amendment is ratified and will be presented to the Registrar.)

Open Forum:

When representing LifeRing at conferences and in presentations, how do we have a professional presentation, without looking “too corporate?” (Be professional, but non-corporate.)

We have bits and pieces of a presentation, but some missing elements. (Recruit/hire someone who has PR skills to create presentation/messaging. Possible pop-up committee task?)

Professional Advisory Board: Identify professionals willing to volunteer their skills.

Convenor Workshop: (28 attendees)

1.) Engaging people with long-term sobriety to keep them coming to meetings. Ways to keep meetings fresh and different. Recruitment and outreach.

LSR is more about bringing you back into life, versus being in a recovery community.

Retention: keeping people coming back: how do we attract? What is the benefit to those who are strong in recovery? Why come back if they're "okay?"

Healthy people go on with life.

People who like to help others tend to get more engaged.

Connect with people the concept of reinforcing their sobriety by helping others.

Promote Recovery by Choice book as a tool. Introduce the challenge to those who are strong to work with newcomers.

Will we be necessarily smaller than organizations.

Service above self as a motto.

Change meeting topic from "How was your week?" to a workbook meeting.

Describe continued engagement as an **insurance policy** for our sobriety.

Some people who are not actively attending meetings could be activated by way of an **outreach with an offer of service** or a request for assistance on a particular task.

Engagement: Expand LSR.

Use of LSR as a social network to keep people connected.

2.) Keeping meeting discussion on topic of recovery, stop runaway topics, stop war stories

Convenor handbook: how to refocus when participant shifts focus to details that are unrelated to recovery.

Solution: Refocus topic. Encourage refocusing from the group, versus the convenor.

Sometimes, the participant will refocus by themselves.

Convenor can help to refocus: "How can that help us in sobriety?"

Connect their experience to how it relates to their future sobriety.

Introduce topic: How have you been relating to the people who care about you this week? (Take participant out of self-focus.)

Bring participant back to basic concepts: Sober self vs. Addicted self.

Add suggestions that invite expansion beyond the mechanics of their week. Ask open ended questions: How do you see yourself beyond treatment? What things do you want to do that held you back prior to recovery?

Inpatient participants: Coming out of the initial fog, participants can focus on the wreckage. Shift focus to solution (gives people hope.)

How do we offer hope? Demonstrate through our example. Have empathy and compassion. "I got where I am now by making the choice not to drink one more day. I'm here to show you that you can be in the same place."

We help to **reorient** people to their life in recovery.

Give them a track to run on: LSR workbook. (Some people will need the **structure** of the workbook.)

Empowerment is what sets our program apart.

Most people have never heard of LifeRing!

What is LSR? A non-religious, non-12 step recovery program.

What LSR is NOT:

Stay positive on recovery alternatives: Promote what works for each person as an individual. Use a positive approach. If we confront other programs (whose members feel that their program is the ONLY way to achieve/keep sobriety), we threaten their security and instill fear in them.

When we talk about LSR, say what we ARE vs. what we are NOT. (ex.- Don't say: "We're not AA.")

3.) Tips for starting a meeting in a new area.

Failed attempts at meetings:

Many of us have started meetings that didn't work out.

Fearlessness: Sometimes meetings fold for reasons beyond our control.

(Example: Government facility condemned after earthquake. New location was too far from population center.)

Lack of people coming.

Focusing on what works:

Perseverance, bring a book in case no one shows up, utilize the time to conduct phone outreach to contact other potential meeting resources.

4.) Co-occurring diagnoses (people with more than one disorder)

Examples: anxiety disorders, PTSD, depression, Bipolar

How do we give hope to these people in productive dialogue?

How to run a meeting when you have people present.

Everyone is there for substance use. (finding common topics to discuss.)(How to start a communication?)

Ask: Are you working with a therapist? (Note: We do NOT do therapy in LifeRing meetings.)

Keep LSR as the bottom line

Identify the least common denominator

Dual diagnosis online LSR meetings

What vs. Why?

Use LifeRing to build our toolbox to have an alternate solution to picking up a drug or a drink. Personal responsibility of taking control over my behavior when we run up against stressful, triggering situations.

Shared experience is how we benefit from LSR meetings.

Instead of focusing on how we're different, focus on the challenges we share.

5.) Succession Planning

Identify leaders as soon as possible in your meetings. (minimum 6 months sobriety)

Observe facilitator potential in participants (happy, excited about LSR, passionate, attentive, encouraging without being pushy)

Co-convening improves chances that people will agree to become a convenor.

Compliment people

Offer support/encouragement

What are qualifications to convene?

Could a more experienced convenor act as a mentor to a new convenor?

6.) What makes great cross-talk?

Positivity and encouragement

Stay away from fear-based language (intimidating, threatening)

Don't hijack someone else's share

If a person seems confused, ask questions (clarifying questions, questions, "So you're saying that...") (Use motivational interviewing skills. Help them express what they are trying to say.

Google: motivational interviewing skills. Also: Active listening skills.)

If someone goes on and on, ask, "How does this relate to your sobriety?" "Do you think that will help you next week?"

My job as convenor is to raise all boats. (Ideally group raises all participants together.)

Going around in a circle has advantage of engaging those who are more reluctant to share.

Being genuine and honest. (Skip bland statements/slogans.)

Use "I" statements (vs. "you")

Be a good listener. Establish eye contact with those speaking.

Listen and provide feedback

Future training sessions:

Book: How was your week?

LSR website:

New science of sobriety

Candace can facilitate a webinar.

Create a video of a LSR meeting (\$5,000 + those present would have to agree.)

Convenor's handbook (see website)

Role playing: how to re-direct after topic veers off track. Break into smaller groups to reduce intimidation.

Convenors lead using different styles. Learn from each other's styles.

Have experienced convenor come to new convenor's first few meetings. (Get supportive feedback afterward. What worked, what didn't work?)

Is there a **directory of convenors** where people can find all convenors in a particular geographic area?

Other topics for convenors:

Limiting AA critiquing

Succession planning

Multiple addictive substances

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LifeRing Secretary

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