A Sunshine Proposal to Amend AEU Bylaws

Submitted to the American Ethical Union for consideration at the 2024 Assembly by the Ethical Humanist Society of the Triangle.

Preamble

The objective of this proposed bylaws amendment is to assure transparency and accountability, that official business of the AEU is conducted in a manner open to all members (including individual AEU members as well as AEU member societies) with the exceptions as defined in paragraph (c) ii. It does not hinder the free exchange of ideas or personal communications among officers, staff, and/or board members. The additional administrative burden incurred, including notification of meetings and posting minutes, will be far outweighed by the benefits of assured transparency, and will serve AEU well. The amendment proposed is an addition to Article III, Section 3 of the AEU bylaws, as described below.

Article III, Section 3: Meetings

Paragraph (a) no change
Paragraph (b) no change

Paragraph (c): Open Meetings and Open Records

i. All official meetings that include members of the American Ethical Union (AEU) board and/or meetings of the AEU Officers, including the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Administrative Staff (or combinations thereof) shall be open. This requirement applies to normal or emergency operations meetings as defined in Article 4 Section 2 of the AEU bylaws. “Official Meetings” refers to deliberations of a quorum of AEU board members or officers where such deliberations determine or result in the joint conduct or disposition of official AEU policy or business. Official meetings shall be open for attendance by all AEU members (including individual AEU members as well as AEU member societies), with the exception of provisions detailed in paragraph ii (below).

ii. Exclusions to the official meetings definition in paragraph i above are defined here, and are limited to official meetings, records, or portions of official meetings where the subject matter involves:

a. Legal matters specifically exempted from disclosure by local, state, or federal law, or prohibited from disclosure by court orders or injunctions, and including matters involving active lawsuits with AEU or attorney-client privileged information.

b. Matters related to confidential investigations of law enforcement.

c. Matters that disclose information of a personal nature (including personal finances, medical information, or private personally identifiable information such as birth date, driver's license, social security number, and related information) where disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

iii. Announcement of meetings and meeting minutes

a. In the case of each official meeting, as defined above in paragraph i, the AEU staff or a designated Officer shall make a posting or announcement of the meeting that is available to all members of the time, place (and/or virtual conference access link), and the subject matter of the meeting, also stating whether the meeting is to be open or closed (due to exclusions in paragraph ii) to all AEU members. The notice shall include contact information for the AEU official designated to respond to requests for information about the meeting.

b. Announcements of official meetings shall be made publicly available to all AEU members at least one week in advance of the meeting, unless a majority of the members of the AEU Board or the majority of Executive Officers determine by a publicly recorded vote that AEU business requires that such meeting be called at an earlier date. In that case, the announcement of the official meeting will be subsequently made available to all members and will include minutes of the meeting (defined below) and the reason the meeting was held without one-week advance notice.

c. Minutes of all official meetings shall include the date, time, those in attendance, minutes of the meeting, documents discussed, and the reason the meeting was held. Minutes will exclude any part of an official meeting or document subject to the exclusions as defined in paragraph ii. Minutes shall be made available to all members of AEU at the earliest practicable time.