

# **Pine Street Sangha Grievance Policy January 2017**

## **Values**

Pine Street Sangha holds the following values and makes every effort to enact them organizationally and interpersonally.

- Mutual support for growth in meditation and understanding of dharma
- Gentleness and responsiveness to conditions rather than striving and ambition
- Generosity rather than obligation
- Moderately paced growth which is responsive to the needs and resources of our community
- Flexibility balanced with structure and boundaries
- Balancing independence with care and attention to relationships
- Clarity in regard to roles and responsibilities
- Honest and kind communication considering impact on others
- Conflict and difficulties acknowledged and discussed with those involved

## **Conflict Within the Sangha**

Although conflict is inevitable and painful, it also provides a way to develop more awareness (sati) about oneself and others, and to develop more skillful responses. We ask that individuals in conflict turn to Buddhist teachings for guidance and to apply their practice and their understanding to the situation. We encourage the people in conflict to give their best effort to resolve the conflict between themselves and, as appropriate, with support from other sangha members.

When conflict arises that cannot be resolved informally between the people involved, we have a more formal Grievance Process which begins when someone files a written complaint. Our commitment is to offer an atmosphere free from retaliation.

In responding to a grievance, Pine Street Sangha has an obligation and a commitment to look deeply at itself, the organization, and any systemic practices that might have led to the situation. The result of this introspection will help identify actions that will safeguard the organization from further occurrences

## **Basis for Grievances**

Misconduct is the most frequent type of action that gives rise to a grievance. Some misconduct is illegal, such as sexual harassment or stealing. Other misconduct, while not illegal, violates the Board's expectations of ethical conduct.

The Board of Directors of PSS is responsible for making a final decision about ethics and assisting in the resolution of disputes.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

### **Making a Formal Complaint**

When a member of the community wishes to file a formal complaint, s/he must do so in writing. The following information must be included in this initial communication:

- A clear statement that a formal grievance process is requested; the name of the person(s) whose behavior the complaint concerns;
- A description of the alleged behavior to allow the Grievance Committee to decide whether the complaint is appropriate for initiating a formal grievance procedure;
- A history of any attempts to resolve the complaint through other means; and
- A general statement about the resolution desired.
- The name and contact information of the person filing the complaint.

The written complaint may be sent to the any member of the Board of Directors. Go to <https://pinestreetsangha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Board-member-bios.pdf> for current list of board members.

### **Appointing a Grievance Committee**

When a written grievance is received, the Board of Directors will appoint a Grievance Committee which shall be composed of three people who are teachers or other committed members of the community. Appointments to the committee will be made in consultation with the individual filing the grievance and may, when feasible, include a person from outside the organization who has experience in restoring relationships, in mediation or in issues of power and authority.

Any Committee member who has, or has had, a personal and/or intimate relationship with any party involved in the grievance should recuse herself or himself from the work of the Committee and/or the Board of Director final decisions. Since PSS is a close-knit organization and we are known to one another, it is the personal responsibility of a Committee/Board member to evaluate his/her own ability to be neutral in investigating the complaint, and the obligation of other Committee/Board members to be sensitive to one another's neutrality throughout the process. The Committee will follow the process outlines below once it receives a formal written complaint.

### **Accepting the Concern**

The Committee will review the complaint to verify that the complaint represents a Basis for Grievance as described above. If the Committee accepts the request, it will convey its

acceptance to the party filing the complaint. As part of this notification, the Committee will state its understanding of the issue under inquiry.

If the Committee does not accept the complaint, it must convey the reasons for the denial to the complainant.

## **Investigating the Grievance**

The Grievance Committee is authorized to make use of whatever processes and procedures it considers appropriate to resolve disputes and grievances, and restore harmony within the sangha. The Committee will meet as soon as it is possible to review and develop a plan for investigating the grievance.

The Committee will schedule closed interviews in which all parties are given a chance to present their understanding of the issue under investigation. The Committee may ask other people to provide information pertinent to the complaint. All parties may be accompanied by a trusted ally and will have the opportunity to respond to all information. These interviews will be held confidentially. While the complaint is being investigated, all parties are to hold the matter in confidence, in the interest of allowing for a swift and objective investigation.

The Committee will write a factual investigation report and forward their report and recommendations to the Board of Directors for its decision and any implementation.

## **Board of Directors' Decision**

Once the Board has received the Committee's recommendation, it will meet to consider it. As above, any board member who has, or has had, a personal and/or intimate relationship with any party involved in the grievance should recuse herself or himself from the decision process.

At its discretion, the Board may seek non-binding advice from any other source. If possible the Board's decision should be reached by consensus. If not, the decision will be made by a majority vote as established in the By-Laws.

Once the Board makes its decision, designated Board member(s) will meet individually with the complainant and with the subject of the complaint. Both will be told the Board's finding; such as, 1) a finding of no misconduct; 2) a finding of misconduct; or 3) that the Committee was unable to reach a determination about whether misconduct occurred.

Board findings may include corrective action. It may also include proposals about further steps the organization should take to avoid recurrences of this kind of complaint, including such things as

restructuring the organization, staff or community-wide training, dialogue between different groups, or other process work.

In rendering its final decision, the Board will make its best judgment about what is fair and appropriate for the Complainant, and what will support the further learning and wisdom for the entire organization. The Board may decide that additional efforts are required by the organization to rectify the underlying causes of the complaint. The Board's decision is final.