

Dear AZTA,

I am concerned that we are not paying enough attention to process. I think it may be OK to vote on which topics to discuss at greater length though maybe we need to refine the choices as someone recently posted. Maybe just professional, some form of ethics requirement and as is. But then, in my view, we need to discuss whatever face to face in a meeting, with a facilitator who is not involved. We may not find consensus but at least we could hear one another and try to understand concerns. If people are going to leave over this, maybe we can lessen the ill feelings and hurt. The only way I see is to do this at a meeting. Again, with a facilitator. Maybe a council process as we used in Vermont.

As is obvious from the responses, this is not just a “brain event;” it is also a “heart event.” If it becomes a professional organization, we will need to incorporate in order to protect the Board and ourselves from direct liability. We will need to figure out standards. How a Korean zennie does that for a Rinzai, much less a Soto teacher, I don’t know. We are having a difficult time just trying to figure it out in SZBA. We would need by-laws and a grievance process along with an ethics statement. We would have to have dues.

I am not saying that we should not consider this. I am saying that it is a very big deal. I cannot see making such changes without a great deal of conversation. This is painful to me because it represents the potential for basically doing away with an organization and process that I love. I love the wildness of AZTA. I love the simplicity and freedom of it. I think this is painful to Genjo as he is hurting for all the people that Eido and Sasaki have harmed, along with others for that matter. I imagine he feels alone because he doesn’t see a Rinzai organization coming into being in the near future. It would take a lot of conversation to convince me that I should agree to be part of yet another professional organization. Perhaps it is impossible to convince me. My sense now is that if AZTA goes that way, I will not go with it. One is enough for me. Actually I am part of two already. This thought of losing something that has been of great support to me is not easy for me. I know it is not easy for Genjo. My point here is that it matters on a heart level and a poll will not reach it.

Deciding by majority vote is offensive in this kind of situation. Note, too that there could be 20% for the professional organization, 70% for collegial with a requirement that one be subject an ethics process and 10% for “as-is” and we’d still have to discuss the matter. But, again, I think we should discuss it so that those in Genjo’s shoes and those in mine could at least feel they received a full hearing. I get lost in all the threads of our email discussions. This will be hot and difficult. There is no moderator. I dread it, frankly.

To re-cap I think we should have a facilitator at a meeting. Actually, I have suggested we hold three meetings. The first, the regular meeting in June, then two more close behind, with a shorter duration, in the mid-west and the east so that more folks could attend, perhaps for an afternoon or a day at most. I think these three meetings should be videotaped. Or, I think we could offer a few scholarships of plane fare to lovely downtown Clatskanie. We could assess ourselves to pay for a facilitator.

BTW, just so you know, I think we should opt for requiring folks who belong to AZTA to be subject to an ethics policy and procedure. We can offer some guidelines as to what is required in such a policy and procedure. This is called a “Safe Harbor” in the law. In other words, if you meet some minimum, you can’t be successfully sued for not having offered enough of a due process. SZBA requires something like this and so far as I know, it works. Note that it is the procedure for grievances and appeals that is the most important and difficult and that is why I don’t want AZTA to have its own ethics statement and procedure (An ethics statement without a procedure is meaningless.)

Thanks,  
Mary