

Highlights from A.A.W.S.

December 6, 2019

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, December 6, 2019, at the General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, NY, NY 10115. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Cathy B., welcomed all in attendance and opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

General Manager's Report

General Manager Greg T. provided the following report:

Administration – There have been several key developments with the ERP project including the addition of a business analyst role, now filled by nonalcoholic employee Michael Munguia at the recommendation of project consultants. Additionally, there has been a change in IT leadership with Lorna Graham (nonalcoholic) starting as interim director of technology services and providing support to the ERP Steering Committee.

The general manager and a team of staff, employees, vendors and consultants conducted a site visit to the 2020 IC center in Detroit where they met with the welcome committee and discussed other planning for the convention.

Additionally, the new Communication Services department successfully launched in November; plans are underway to launch a new travel program with World Travel, which will also cover delegate travel and streamline the process of booking and invoicing; bids for the 8th Floor project are moving forward and will be discussed more fully in Executive Session.

Administrative Services – The Records department is processing a backlog of GSR, DCM, DCMC and New Group kits, fulfilling over 1,200 kit requests. This push will continue through the first quarter of 2020. An interim Records Analyst is assisting the Records department in maneuvering around NetSuite and is part of the project team working on the “My Portal” development. Office Services has worked to align our security entry system with the new entry system of the Interchurch Center.

Archives – Archives staff was recently informed that St. Thomas Hospital (owned by Summa Health) in Akron, Ohio, where Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia worked and helped many alcoholics, will be closed soon. The hospital's chapel holds an exhibit of Sister Ignatia that is visited by thousands of A.A.'s worldwide. The Property Management of Summa Health informed Archives staff that the Sister Ignatia exhibit will be transferred to the new location. They also sent pictures of the current exhibit held at St. Thomas for G.S.O.'s archival photo collection. Sister Judith Ann Karam, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, was instrumental in coordinating the introductions with Summa Health Property Management and obtaining the images of the exhibit.

Human Resources – A temporary Business Analytics interde-

partmental assignment will continue for the next four months to focus on ERP implementation from the user perspective. The team assists with the evaluation and review of practices, procedures and processes as it relates to the ERP. The new Communication Services department was created as of November 11, 2019. Clement C. was promoted to a position of senior manager/Communication Services and will oversee the work of the department and provide leadership to the following nonalcoholic employees: Daniel Brown, digital media manager; Julie Gonzalez, digital communications analyst; Kalilah Pendergast, communications project coordinator.

Information Technology Services – Lorna Graham (nonalcoholic) will serve as the interim director of technology services starting December 2. Lorna is working with A.A.W.S. as a contract employee of Welman Digital. The IT team continues to improve connectivity to G.S.O.'s hosted servers as well as reducing the number of active servers needed and will be migrating and decommissioning the remainder of the servers, including our main file server, by March 2020. In addition, the IT Services team is in the process of creating a redundant failover network with the hopes it will be fully complete in the next couple of months.

November-December Travel:

Nov. 11 – 12: 2020 International Convention site visit, Detroit, MI.

Staff Report

Accessibilities/LIM – The assignment has extended deadlines for the Fellowship to submit stories to update the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic” and to share Cooperation with Elder Community activities to January 15, 2020. The assignment is working on developing audio interviews with the military in A.A.

Conference – The Conference Communications Kit will be posted to the Conference Dashboard and made available to all Conference members. The kit includes the list of preliminary committee agenda items, committee assignments, buddy lists, the Conference Timeline, as well as several informational documents.

C.P.C./Treatment – The LinkedIn page is now live and an announcement was sent to the Fellowship through C.P.C.

chairpersons and members of the General Service Conference. Participation requests regarding C.P.C. exhibits are being sent out to local area committees who volunteer to staff the booths. This year, exhibits will be in 27 areas within 7 regions of the U.S. and Canada.

Corrections – The assignment continues to relay requests for Grapevine and La Viña subscriptions to the GV staff for the “Carry the Message” Program. The staff member on the assignment regularly hears from inmates how essential the magazine is to their sobriety.

Group Services – The coordinator is working with the Publishing Department on the “thorough evaluation, update, and redesign of the Service Manual.” The coordinator is also helping organize a Day of Sharing at G.S.O. in December, with representatives from other twelve step fellowships, that will include presentations on “Licensing and Translations” and “Communications,” as well as time built in for updates and general sharing.

Literature – Production for the video “Your G.S.O., Grapevine and General Service Structure” is ongoing, sharpening voiceover and graphics content as well as overall editing. An additional full day of filming onsite is planned. The targeted goal is for a final draft video to be viewed at the February meeting of the trustees’ Literature Committee.

Nominating – In 2020, the Regional Trustees for the West Central and Western Canada Regions will rotate. Resumes are being collected and will be made available for voters in the regional elections. A reminder notice was sent to area delegates who had not yet submitted nominees.

Public Information – The assignment is preparing to send out an RFP to public relations media firms in the Detroit area to work on behalf of G.S.O. for the International Convention in 2020.

Regional Forums – Follow up tasks for West Central and Southwest Regional Forums are in process and preparations for 2020/2021 forums are well underway. The Regional Forum video is in post-production, with a final draft expected in January 2020.

Finance

For the ten months ended October 31, 2019 revenues were 0.91% higher than budgeted and 1.19% higher than the ten months ended October 31, 2018. Operating expenses were 5.35% greater than budgeted and 8.41% more than last year.

A large variance of \$303,553 in net sales to budget is caused mainly by less than budgeted sales of *Our Great Responsibility*. Also, in October, there were \$300,000 less in overall sales with Intergroup/Central Offices compared to last year.

Actual contributions for the ten months ended October 31, 2019 were \$7,013,382, 8.76% higher than budget and 6.37% higher than the ten months ended October 31, 2018. Online contributions for the first ten months of 2019 amounted to \$741,424. This compared with \$642,462 in 2018, \$586,381 in 2017, \$417,601 in 2016, and \$308,775 in 2015.

The first ten months of 2019 online contributions account for 10.60% of our total contributions.

The following variances were noted for the ten months: The Salary line was \$6,498,209 (0.42%) less than budget and \$359,060 (5.85%) more than the ten months ended October 31, 2018. Professional fees are \$266,974 (81.60%) higher than budget and \$163,991 (38.12%) higher than 2018. These variances are mainly caused by contract reviews being over budget by \$132,970 for the first ten months of the year. There are also additional legal fees (general counsel) that amount to \$137,105 higher than budget. Contracted Services are over budget by \$829,081 (77.73%) and also \$902,349 (90.83%) over last year. This variance is caused by ERP costs amounting to \$489,357 over budget. Travel, Meetings and Accommodations are \$141,345 (13.46%) higher than budget and \$52,990 less than last year.

Publishing

Gross sales: October gross sales are below budget with actual gross sales at \$954,918, which is a \$522,171 or 35.35% negative variance against budget of \$1,477,089.

Web sales: Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for October stand at \$656,518, which accounts for about 69% of total sales for the company. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for October are \$355,218 and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$301,300.

Digital books: Total ebook gross sales through October 2019 stand at \$157,620, with 40,707 units distributed.

American Sign Language Update: Big Book released on DVD November 4, 2019; video with subtitles and audio posted for viewing on aa.org. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* released on DVD November 4, 2019; video with subtitles and audio posted for viewing on aa.org.

Twelve Concepts for World Service Audio project: Professionally produced audio versions in English, French and Spanish posted for listening on aa.org.

Digital Distribution: A progress report was provided, including detailed projections on ebook and audiobook sales. The committee looks forward to continuing updates and a proposal with specific pricing.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The website committee has not met since the last TCS meeting; accordingly, no minutes were presented for review. The general manager communicated that due to the recent leadership change in the Technology Services department, a full report on IT functions and activities will be submitted for the January 30, 2020 meeting. The Group Services coordinator gave a verbal report on the recent “Day of Sharing” hosted by G.S.O. with a number of Twelve Step Fellowships.

The committee reviewed progress reports and updates on G.S.O.’s website and app design and development, Google-For-Non-Profits projects and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) efforts. It was noted that a YouTube posting policy has been developed and will be provided for review at the next

meeting. The committee discussed at length how best to proceed with the LegitScript/Google Ads project considering parallel discussions within the trustees' Public Information Committee suggesting a more deliberate approach which would include further research and discussion given the changing landscape of in-kind contributions. In this regard, the staff secretary will pursue setting up a joint conference call with A.A.W.S. and the trustees' Public Information Committee.

The committee also discussed whether the meeting finder functionality should be made available on the aa.org website. Some felt it would be prudent to gather input from the broader community and local A.A. Others raised concerns regarding the fundamental shift in the role of the website in managing an alcoholic's contact with A.A. in their community.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the TCS Committee for how to help users find meetings in the new website design:

- That A.A.W.S. proceed with Option 2 ("Improve on current A.A. Near You functionality") before pursuing Option 1 ("Integrate a meeting finder into the website") and seek input from the broader user community, including local A.A. entities.

Internal Audit

The committee noted that the current process for appointment of the auditor for the annual A.A.W.S. audit complies with the A.A.W.S. Bylaws, and that no changes are required on the Finance RACI Matrix. The committee agreed to proposed language updates in the Finance RACI Matrix to clarify responsibilities regarding investments and have begun the review of the Director's RACI Matrix. An RFP for the Emergency Response-Business Continuity Plan will be presented at the next meeting.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Internal Audit Committee:

- That the Finance RACI Matrix, as reviewed and amended by the committee, and the deficiency list of the Finance RACI Matrix be submitted to the A.A.W.S. Board.

Additional Activities

A.A.W.S. Ad Hoc Committee on Pricing, Discounts and Distribution (Delta committee): The committee met five times from August to December, considering a grid of past recommendations coming from the committee, pending implementation.

The Board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the committee:

- That the current 20% pamphlet discount be eliminated, with repricing of all applicable items at the actual selling price (that is, with the 20% discount already applied).

The Board also addressed the issue of literature price normalization for all English, French and Spanish literature. A discussion followed regarding the financial implications this might have, particularly with bound versions, and whether this could be implemented as a phased approach. The Board suggested a deeper analysis with further input from the office, including Grapevine. It was agreed a recommendation on this topic would be brought back to the board for approval at a later time.

Review of A.A.W.S. Policy on Publication of Literature (per 2019 General Service Conference floor action): A motion was made and tabled to a subsequent conference call to adopt an updated Policy on Publication of Literature, pending approval by the board of additional editorial revisions. Additionally, a proposal for an A.A.W.S. policy on the creation of videos was discussed.

On the January 6, 2020 conference call, the Board approved the following recommendations:

- That the "A.A.W.S. Policy on Publication: Keeping A.A. Literature Current" (as retitled and amended on January 6, 2020) be approved and forwarded to the trustees' Literature Committee.
- That a draft "Proposed A.A.W.S. Policy on Creation of Video" be forwarded to the trustees' Literature Committee.

It is the Board's hope that these two policy items will be referred from the trustees' Literature Committee to the Conference Committee on Literature for review and feedback.