

Highlights from A.A.W.S.

October 26, 2018

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, October 26, 2018, at the Hilton Westchester Hotel in Rye, NY. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, David N., 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 – Progress continues on the major administrative priorities for 2018: The ERP implementation; the G.S.B. Communications Audit; website and app design and development; G.S.O. Staff rotation, which has just been completed; a series of new and follow-up RFIs and RFPs regarding potential new locations for Board meetings and Conference.

Archives – The Archivist participated at the 22nd National A.A. Archives Workshop, September 28-30, presenting on the topic, “Dr. Bob: Early Days and Early Writings” and moderating a hands-on workshop titled “Taking Care of Your Repository: Using the Archives Workbook.” A total of 160 registered attendees participated.

October is observed as National Archives Month in the United States and Archives staff created and posted information around the office, highlighting the significance of archives.

Human Resources – A number of employees have transitioned from temporary to regular fulltime positions, with additional temporary support services positions approved going forward. Zenaida Medina, accounting department manager was promoted to the position of assistant director of Finance.

The Employee Handbook revision and update has been completed with the inclusion of the new non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy that was modeled after New York State and New York City law. In compliance with the new laws, the policy and a complaint form was distributed to all employees.

Executive management of A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine, Inc., and the HR department met with insurance brokers to review and discuss 2019 insurance renewal.

Information Technology – The IT team is working to create a single database, combining FNV, Contributions, A.A.W.S. bookstores and Traverse. The department director continues writing policies and procedures and a security awareness policy to comply with the GAP assessment performed earlier this year. New wireless access points were purchased and installed to conform to PCI compliant rules.

September – October Travel:

September 20-23: Intergroup/Central Office Seminar, Montreal, Canada.

October 7-11: World Service Meeting, Durban, South Africa.

Staff Report

Communications Services — On September 14-16, the Communications Services coordinator attended the National A.A. Technology Workshop and presented a panel discussion on the website, YouTube channel and app development.

Conference – The Conference Final Report was printed and distributed in September. The Conference Evaluation Summary Report has been posted on the dashboard and the coordinator has sent out a request for shared experience about the Conference dashboard to all Conference members that will inform the trustee's Conference Committee.

C.P.C. – Several nursing homes have requested A.A. meetings for their clients and a request was received for audiovisual materials dubbed in Arabic and Burmese languages by a therapist whose clientele are illiterate refugees convicted for DUIs. A request for the Safety in A.A. service piece was made by an A.A. group that on several occasions had to ask patients from local treatment centers to leave because of their disruptions during meetings.

Group Services – As liaison to local Intergroup/Central Offices in the U.S./Canada, the Group Services coordinator attended the annual Central Office/Intergroup/A.A.W.S./Grapevine Seminar in Montreal, September 21-23. One request coming out of the seminar was to add a statement to the A.A.W.S. Online store encouraging A.A. groups and members to order literature and other items from their local service entities such as central offices, intergroups, areas and districts. The request was implemented by management on aa.org in English, French and Spanish.

International – The 25th World Service Meeting took place in Durban, South Africa, October 7-11. With 72 delegates from 45 countries, including Bolivia and Turkey, who attended for the first time.

International Convention – “Frequently Asked Questions about the 2020 International Convention” was published in the Fall issue of *Box 4-5-9*. The article will be available on G.S.O.'s A.A. website in the portal for the 2020 International Convention. In September, staff traveled to Detroit, meeting with Al-Anon Family Groups staff, key members of the Talley

Management team and some of the key vendors who will be working on the convention.

Public Information – The P.I. desk has been in contact with the distribution company who will be handling distribution of the PSA “Changes” to local T.V. stations to review plans for the video’s release. The desk has also reached out to Impact Collaborative to discuss distribution of a press release announcing the new pamphlets: “Women in A.A.” and “LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A.”

Regional Forums – The Pacific Regional Forum, took place September 7-9 in San Jose, California, with registration of 918, which included 634 first-time attendees. The Southeast Regional Forum is scheduled for November 16-18, and has a preregistration of 192.

Finance

For the nine months ended September 30, 2018 revenues were 1.66% higher than budgeted and 1.14% lower than last year. Operating expenses were 1.72% greater than budgeted and 8.37% more than last year.

Contributions were \$5,830,773 or 1.66% higher than budget and 0.87% lower than the nine months ended September 30, 2017. Online contributions for the first nine months of 2018 amounted to \$571,165. This compared with \$521,348 in 2017, \$364,853 in 2016, \$268,454 in 2015, and \$223,532 in 2014. The first nine months of 2018 online contributions accounts for 9.80% of our total contributions.

The following variances were noted for the nine months:

The Salary line was \$197,832 (3.73%) more than budget and \$607,037 (12.39%) more than the nine months ended September 30, 2017 due to several more positions in the first nine months of 2018 compared to the same period last year.

The Other Program Printing expenses are \$75,032 less than last year and \$80,684 less than budget. Mailing and Labor were down by \$22,318 when compared to last year. Postage was down by \$53,760 mainly caused by a catalog being printed and sent out last year.

The Editorial Services line is higher by \$94,684 in 2018 as compared to 2017 due to the ASL project taking place in the beginning of this year.

Selling expenses are less than last year by \$228,588, mainly caused by the catalog being printed in the first nine months of last year, with \$175,000 of this savings caused by less credit card processing fees.

Professional fees are \$59,538 higher than budget and \$13,279 lower than 2017, related to the manuscript case settlement.

Contracted Services are under budget by \$5,032 and over last year by \$50,551.

Office Service and Expense is \$66,945 (24.68%) higher than budget and \$128,592 (61.34%) higher than last year mainly due to the Conference audio-visual costs being higher this year as opposed to last year.

Travel, Meetings and Accommodations are \$324,839 (49.64%) over last year because the Conference was held in Rye last year and in New York City this year.

The treasurer of the General Service Board provided an update on discussions of the Retirement Committee regarding fourth-quarter 2018 contributions for the defined benefit pension and post-retirement medical plans, outlining a number of different options being considered by the committee. No decisions have yet been made at the Retirement Committee and the A.A.W.S. board will continue to be informed of any suggested contributions to be made going forward.

Following the suggestion that a Grapevine director be invited to participate as part of the ad hoc Self-Support Committee, Carole B. was invited onto the committee and participated at the last meeting, noting that support of Grapevine through subscriptions and other means is an expression of Tradition Seven.

Publishing

The committee accepted the Publishing Department report, highlighting the following information:

Gross sales: September gross sales are above budget with actual gross sales at \$1,113,266, which is an \$89,458 or 8.74% positive variance against budget of \$1,023,808.

Web sales: Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for September stand at \$696,636. Total online orders for September are 1,621 or 77.9% of total orders. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for September are \$498,621, and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$198,015.

Digital books: Total ebook gross sales through September stand at \$164,565, with 42,124 units distributed.

Staff travel: Publishing Director David R. and Publishing Operations Manager Malini Singh attended the annual Central Office/Intergroup/A.A.W.S./Grapevine Seminar in Montreal, September 21-23; David R. attended the 2018 Digital Book World, October 2-4, Nashville, Tennessee and the 25th World Service Meeting, October 7-11, in Durban, South Africa, meeting with representatives from 37 countries.

The committee discussed proposed revisions to the existing A.A.W.S. Policy on Literature with respect to expanding A.A.W.S.’s ability to update and revise A.A. pamphlets and books. There was general agreement to move the revised policy forward, with some readjustments and refinements. It was agreed that an updated policy would be brought back to the December meeting and, if approved by the A.A.W.S. board, would then be forwarded to the trustees’ Literature Committee and the 2019 Conference.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The TCS Committee reviewed the minutes of G.S.O.’s Website Committee, along with progress reports and updates on G.S.O.’s A.A. website analytics.

Oral reports were given by the director of I.T. Services and the Group Services assignment. The director of I.T. services noted that progress on the new ERP system is continuing. Reporting briefly on the Intergroup seminar, the Group Services coordinator noted that the event offered a great opportunity for listening to the concerns and challenges facing intergroup/central offices. It was also reported that the quar-

terly conference calls between G.S.O. and representatives from the seminar had been helpful and it was hoped that they would continue.

Oral updates were also provided by the general manager and the director of administration and services covering progress on the website design and the meeting finder project. A working group is preparing to restart the visual design phase of the website, looking closely at “voice and tone” issues, and will begin a user testing program in November/December. Text has been developed for a new meeting finder website and an announcement letter is soon to be released to Intergroup/Central Offices, area chairs and area delegates encouraging them to sign up.

The Board **approved** the following recommendations brought forward by the TCS Committee:

- That the 2018 Third Quarter report on G.S.O.’s Website Activities and the 2018 First Quarter Website Analytics report be forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Public Information.
- That A.A.W.S.’s Policy on posting YouTube Videos be approved as amended.
- That the YouTube Support page and the YouTube FAQ be posted on aa.org.
- That the second draft exit disclaimer language be approved.

Internal Audit

The Directors and Management RACI matrices are still in process, with completion expected in November. Six actions outlined in the September 14, 2018 minutes of the committee are progressing and an update was reviewed on the renamed A.A.W.S. Emergency Response-Business Continuity Plan. Updates were also reviewed on G.S.O. audits, gap analysis, consultant reviews and policies.

Additional Activities

The ad hoc Pricing, Discounts and Distribution Committee (also known as the DELTA Project): The board discussed an update and recommendations regarding discounts, shipping/handling charges and order processing procedures. Discussion will continue at subsequent meetings.

2020 International Convention: A report on the ongoing planning and finances for the 2020 International Convention was provided by Diann Furfaro, CFO of the Talley Management Group, noting that they have been gathering final hotel and dorm blocks along with contracts and are issuing RFPs for the final services they require. The only significant variances from budget so far are in professional legal fees, which relates to a necessary review of contracts, and in the professional fees for decorating.