

# Highlights from A.A.W.S.

December 8, 2017

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, December 8, 2017, at the General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY. Chair of the A.A.W.S. Board, Richard P., 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* – Having lived with the office redesign project undertaken over the last few years, some work still needs to be done, potentially some reconfiguration of work stations, etc. We have begun assessing individual department needs, what works and what doesn't, as well as storage space. Additional reporting to the board will follow over the next several months.

*Administrative Services* – Work on the International Directory began in September. The final product is a coordinated effort between the International assignment, records and the publications department. The intent is to send the final proof to print at the end of January or early February 2018.

*Archives* – On November 2, the Archives hosted an Open House for all G.S.O. and Grapevine employees. The event celebrated the recent construction and marked the 42nd anniversary of the official ribbon-cutting opening of the Archives in 1975.

The weeding and scanning project of subject files is complete. Approximately 52,000 pages of paper records have been digitized and are now available as a valuable resource to both Archives and G.S.O. Staff.

*Human Resources* – Following discussions with A.A.W.S.'s insurance broker, two medical plans (with high and low options) will be offered to employees during the open enrollment period in December. Additionally, in order to keep rates low and services high, we will be changing our dental insurance provider.

*Information Technology* – A number of vendors have responded to the ERP (enterprise resource program) RFI (request for information). Three have made presentations and two have been selected for the RFP (request for proposal) process. The RFP presentations are scheduled for early December. RFP presentations are also scheduled in early December for the Website Design project.

The IT Services team is now testing the backend of the Online Bookstore applications, with implementation expected by year-end.

*Office Services* – A new Serenity Prayer collage is underway

for the 11th floor lobby and once the design layout is completed and agreeable to the decoration committee the office services manager will set up delivery and installation. Additionally, in response to a recent RFI, the office has met with an architectural firm to develop recommendations on how best to optimize existing floor space on the 11th floor.

### November Travel:

November 3-6, 2017: Area 59 Annual Convention, Gettysburg, PA.

November 17-19, 2017: East Central Regional Forum, Springfield, IL.

November 26, 2017: Area 44 Linguistic District (Spanish), Newark, NJ.

## Staff Report

*Communication Services* — A decision about the selection of a vendor to develop the new aa.org website will be made by the end of the year. Oversight of the YouTube Google for Non-profit channel has been assigned by the Technology/ Communications/ Services Committee (TCS) to the in-house Website committee.

*Conference* – To date, 42 proposed agenda items have been received for 2018. The G.S.O. team responsible for translating 2018 Conference background material into French and Spanish is continuing preparations.

*C.P.C.* – Class A trustees Nancy McCarthy and Christine Carpenter participated at the First National Corrections Conference held in St. Louis

*Corrections* – Staff reported that over 389 A.A. members attended the First National Corrections Conference, with 35 states represented, including Puerto Rico and four Canadian provinces.

*Group Services / Loners Internationalists Meeting (LIM)* – The A.A. Guidelines on Intergroups and Central Offices have been updated to reflect current local office sharing.

*International* – Along with the trustee at large-U.S., the International assignment recently attended Costa Rica's General Service Conference and Bolivia's XXIII National

Convention. Invitations to participate in the 25th World Service Meeting in Durban, South Africa have been sent to 62 G.S.O.s around the world.

*Literature* – Interviews for the trustees’ committee Appointed Committee Member (ACM) opening have been scheduled. The Holiday issue of *Box 459* will be distributed early in December in English, Spanish and French.

*Regional Forums* – The East Central Regional Forum held in Springfield, Illinois closed out the 2017 forums calendar with 371 attendees including 192 first timers. Attendance at all four 2017 Regional Forums topped 1,500 with more than 800 first time attendees.

*Treatment and Accessibilities* – Work has begun on updating the DVD now titled “Accessibility for All Alcoholics” (formerly “A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs”). The selection process for talent is underway for the audio recording portion of the project.

## Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The TCS Committee reviewed progress reports and updates on G.S.O.’s A.A. website software/analytics, noting the enhanced ability of the new system to provide useful metrics.

An oral report was given by the director of IT Services, focusing on a number of projects, including vendor presentations and evaluations for the website redesign and enterprise resource planning (ERP) system; payroll systems and events management software are also being evaluated. A written report from Group Services was reviewed, noting an informational conference call that was held between G.S.O. and a group of intergroup/central office managers. Additionally, the assignment continues compiling relevant information from intergroup/central offices regarding dealing with natural disasters.

A progress report from the subcommittee on Additional Channels of Communication with the Fellowship was reviewed, highlighting discussions regarding pros and cons of integrating development of an app with the website design and how to approach development of a meeting guide app. A progress report was presented on the Google for Nonprofits account and a “sense of the meeting” suggested that a disclaimer should be inserted at the end of each A.A. video on YouTube to clearly delineate A.A. materials from any other content.

## Publishing

The committee accepted the publishing department report, highlighting the following information:

*Gross sales:* October gross sales are above budget with actual gross sales at \$1,156,445, which is a \$34,956 or 3.12% positive variance against budget of \$1,121,489. For 2017 through the month of October, gross sales are above estimate: \$11,820,440 actual sales vs. estimate of \$11,560,865, which is a \$259,575 or 2.93% positive variance. The Holiday gift set sales (October 2017 – present) reflect 241 sets sold to date (213 English, 8 French, 20 Spanish) for an aggregate total of 964 books.

*Web sales:* Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for

October 2017 stand at 671,045 which accounts for about 60% of total sales. Note: Total online orders for October stand at 1,388 which is 68.11% of total orders. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for October are \$457,652 and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$213,393.

*Digital books:* Total ebook gross sales January - October 2017 stand at \$180,398, with 46,331 units distributed.

*International licensing and translation:* Production continues for the Big Book audiobook in Navajo; recent activity for licensing and translation is underway in Denmark, Dominican Republic, and Peru, with recent activity in Brazil, Guatemala and Honduras. Additional translations are underway in Kazakhstan, China and India.

*Regional Forums:* Two sessions of a new workshop titled “A.A.W.S. Publishing and G.S.O.’s website aa.org” were presented at the East Central Regional Forum.

The Board approved the following recommendations brought forward by the Publishing Committee:

- That pricing be set for the Navajo Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (abridged, on CD), at \$9.10 per unit.
- That A.A.W.S. implement the following revisions to the Braille Big Book and the Braille *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: Change the binding on the Braille Big Book to the more standard comb binding; reformat the page numbers of the Braille *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* to mirror that of the Braille Big Book.

## Finance

*Unaudited financial results:* Noting some of the ongoing variances between 2017 budget and year-to-date actual results, the director of finance called the committee’s attention to the bottom line profit for the ten months of \$1,361,845. This profit compares with a ten-month 2017 budgeted amount of \$78,159 and 2016 actual of \$819,446 for the same period. Net sales for the ten-month period were \$11,643,808 or \$280,529 (2.47%) greater than budget; contributions were \$622,816 greater than budget. Total operating expenses for the period were \$8,445 less than budget and \$462,018 greater than at October 31, 2016.

The increasing percentage of online contributions (currently 10-11% of all contributions), an uptick in non-A.A. literature sales and continuing savings linked to the cost of paper for some of our larger print runs were noted as elements of the positive financial position. Preliminary 2018 budget numbers were reviewed and discussions will continue as the budget is refined for presentation in January 2018.

The committee discussed pamphlet pricing, noting that English-language pamphlets make a profit but, because of lower print runs and higher unit costs, French and Spanish pamphlets do not. A history from Archives was presented that detailed early pamphlet pricing strategies and discussion will continue at subsequent meetings.

The committee discussed how best to approach contingency costs in the budget for the 2020 International Convention, with the consensus being to provide a lump sum number at the bottom of the budget rather than trying to

break out various expense lines.

The committee also discussed a volume discount analysis based solely on volume by dollar amounts and determined to continue the discussion, evaluating different approaches.

## Internal Audit Committee

The committee discussed a series of potential internal audit policies related to Management, Human Resources, Directors and Finance and determined that these could form the basis of an in-depth review by an independent auditor.

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

- That the Composition, Scope and Procedure for the Internal Audit Committee be approved.

## Additional Topics

*Daily Reflections video project:* A sample of the video project was viewed and discussed, with development to continue and a more detailed proposal to follow at a subsequent meeting as G.S.O. looks into soliciting input from different vendors.

*Literature pricing and discounts:* Discussion continued on different pricing and discount scenarios presented by the director of finance. The ad-hoc committee looking into this matter will continue discussion and report back at the next meeting.