

Highlights from A.A.W.S.

March 8, 2019

The A.A. World Services Board met on Friday, March 8, 2019, at the General Service Office, 475 Riverside Drive, NY, 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 – A verbal update was presented on the following items and issues: ERP implementation; website and app design and development; GSO staff recruitment for two open positions. These items continue to carry a high priority and ongoing progress will be reported to the board.

Administrative Services – Office space and room for expansion continue to be a challenge; the conversion of some single-person offices to two-person offices has taken place, along with ongoing exploration of the possibility of utilizing additional space in the building.

Human Resources – With the appointment of Albin Z. as publisher of AA Grapevine, the open position of director of administration and services has been posted, with the expectation of filling the position as soon as possible. Lola Ibrahim (nonalcoholic) executive assistant to the general manager has taken a position with another organization. Eileen G., retired staff member, will provide administrative support to the general manager until the position can be permanently filled.

Information Technology Services – The I.T. team continues to improve connectivity with the hosted servers as well as reducing the number of active servers needed. The Laserfiche server was decommissioned with an estimated savings of \$1,800 per month. A permanent help desk technician has been hired and database administrator and web developer positions will be filled next.

February-March Travel:

February 22-24: 28th NERAASA, Hunt Valley, MD.
March 1-3: WCRAASA, Moorhead, MN.

Staff Report

Accessibilities/LIM – Twenty responses were received to the request for sharing on cooperation with the Armed Services and may be included in accessibility or remote communities materials.

Communications Services – The scope of the Website Design and App Working Group has been expanded to include the development, transfer and onboarding of the Meeting Guide app. YouTube continues to be populated with videos from aa.org, with analytics being captured to measure the channel's effectiveness.

Conference – The final list of 75 agenda items for the 2019 General Service Conference was posted on the Conference dashboard. Over 570 pages of background documents are being translated into French and Spanish and will soon be available on the dashboard.

C.P.C./Treatment – The C.P.C. assignment continues contacting local committees about their availability to staff the traveling A.A. exhibits at national professional conferences in their area; 35 exhibit locations are scheduled in 2019.

Corrections – In January 102 male inmates and 30 female inmates were linked with A.A.s on the outside through the Corrections Correspondence Service.

Group Services – A number of Guidelines are currently moving through the revision process based on input received from the Fellowship and other A.A. resources.

International – The anonymity-protected version of the 2018 WSM Final Report has been posted to the WSM dashboard and the print version has come off press and is now available.

International Convention – An animated 2020 International Convention video flyer is ready to go live and will soon be available for download through G.S.O.'s website. Registration and housing will open in September and, as in the past, members will be able to register online.

Literature – Requests for proposals (RFPs) have been received and are under review for the revision of "Your General Service Office, the Grapevine, and the General Service Structure."

Nominating – Preparations are underway for the regional and trustee-at-large/Canada elections which will take place at the 2019 Conference.

Public Information – An assignment activity report is in preparation for mailing in March.

Regional Forums – Preparations for the 2019 Regional Forums are ongoing, with the Northeast Forum to take place in Tarrytown, NY, May 31-June 2.

Finance

For the one month ended January 31, 2019 revenues were 7.82% higher than budgeted and 5.29% higher than the one month ended January 31, 2018. Operating expenses were 1.45% greater than budgeted and 4.57% more than last year.

Actual contributions for the one month ended January 31, 2019 were \$776,231, 10.09% higher than budget and 10.09% higher than the one month ended January 31, 2018. Online contributions for the one month of 2019 amounted to \$88,038. This compared with \$63,277 in 2018, \$49,587 in 2017, \$32,992 in 2016, and \$42,246 in 2015. The one month of 2019 online contributions accounts for 11.46% of total contributions.

There was an extensive discussion on the Cost of Literature Distributed line of the financial statements. There is a variance on this line of \$31,325 compared to 2018 which is mainly due to the literature display racks. These items are ordered once a year and take a \$9 loss due to selling it at a lower price than manufacturing cost. At this time no decisions have been made on this topic.

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

- That a transfer to the General Service Board General Fund in the amount of \$3,088,283.45, be made to cover the G.S.B. deficit as follows:

G.S.B. General Fund loss	\$2,907,431.00
La Viña Funding	148,467.00
Cap Projects transfer	32,385.45

- That the Virtual Basket text inserts developed by the Publishing Department for the service pieces “Finance Guidelines” and “The A.A. Group Treasurer” be implemented; and that the text insert on the Virtual Basket for the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” be forwarded to the Conference Committee on Finance for consideration.

- The draft International Literature Fund and Credit Advance Policy be adopted as amended.

Publishing

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

Gross sales: January gross sales are above budget with actual gross sales at \$1,464,305, which is a \$103,514 or 7.61% positive variance against budget of \$1,360,791.

Web sales: Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for January stand at \$976,214, which accounts for about 67.67% of total sales for the company. Total online orders for January are 1,996, which is 71.64% of total orders. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for January are \$662,601 and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$313,612.

Digital books: Total ebook gross sales for January 2019 stand at \$21,715.78, with 5,542 units distributed.

History Shelf gift sets: a total of 1,276 sets in English, French and Spanish; 5,104 total books, with gross sales of \$38,280. This was a 17% increase in units distributed over 2017, which totaled 1,089 sets.

New pamphlet distribution: “A.A. for Members with Mental Health Issues – and their sponsors” totaled 34,975 copies in English, French, and Spanish; “The ‘God’ Word” totaled 53,259 units in English, French, and Spanish; and “A.A. for

the LGBTQ Alcoholic” totaled 24,995 copies in English, French, and Spanish.

Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.’s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1971: Estimated availability of finished books in English, French and Spanish is on track for mid-April 2019.

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

- That re-formatting and production of improved Large Print in English, Spanish and French versions of the following be implemented: Pamphlets – “The A.A. Group,” “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship,” and “Access to A.A.”; Books and Booklets – As Bill Sees It, Came to Believe, and A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate.

- That the data DVD version of the P.S.A. “Changes” be priced at \$10.00 per unit in English, French and Spanish.

- That ebook distribution rights be granted to international entities for their licensed titles, upon request, excepting the English, Spanish and French ebook editions.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

The The TCS Committee reviewed the minutes of G.S.O.’s Website Committee, along with an updated Website Committee Composition, Scope and Procedure.

Reports were given by the director of I.T. Services and the Group Services assignment. The director of I.T. services noted that some data entry inconsistencies within Traverse have been pinpointed that will have to be reconciled. The decommissioning of servers with DataPipe is continuing with attenuating cost savings.

The staff member on the Group Services assignment reported that a number of intergroups and central offices have inquired about the upcoming ERP changes. There has also been positive response expressed by a number of visitors to the office regarding the Meeting Guide app.

A verbal report was provided by the Communication Services coordinator summarizing the website and app progress, noting that the website consultant and multi-media manager are currently working on website intercept capabilities for volunteer user testing of visitors to aa.org. A six week Scope of Work document has been signed with an app vendor to enhance and develop the Meeting Guide app. Technical information, code and wireframes have been shared with the vendor to accelerate the process for a potential spring release.

The committee discussed the four proposed components of Meeting Guide, including Meeting Finder, News/Alerts, Daily Reflections and the Big Book. The committee reaffirmed their commitment to the first three components and agreed that the Big Book could be discussed at a later date due to its complexity to develop for the app.

In February the Meeting Guide consultant sent an invitation to Meeting Guide participants inviting them to a conference call on the second Saturday of every month to keep them informed of progress and capture their suggestions and concerns. The first call occurred with 24 participants.

Internal Audit

The committee reported on potential approaches to scheduling the work of future audit committees in a manner that balances the workload over the year and is in harmony with the office workload and focus. The committee also discussed the importance of revisiting this schedule each year to determine if there are opportunities for better balance or improved efficiencies.

The committee reviewed and discussed the results of the previous year's RFPs for an external review of the entire audit process as well as the proposal delivered by one provider. Given the difficulty in finding a firm prepared to review the entire process as well as the cost and internal workload of such a project, the committee considered another approach. For 2019, a firm focused primarily on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) could be hired. While the other audit areas will require future external reviews as well, privacy has been prioritized as the primary focus for 2019.

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

- That the A.A.W.S. Board forward a memo to the Group Services desk requesting that the Service Manual include the Internal Audit Committee on the list of A.A.W.S. committees.

Additional Activities

The board reviewed an updated draft of a proposed service piece on safety being developed by G.S.O. staff. The work is ongoing and additional input was requested to help inform subsequent drafts.

The board discussed a request from an area to consider creating a Young People in A.A. liaison among G.S.O. staff assignments. It was noted that currently the Group Services assignment includes such liaison responsibilities, as well as those of other special A.A. entities. These duties should be more clearly identified on the Staff Assignment sheet that is made available to the Fellowship.