

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The 62nd General Service Conference was held in Rye, NY at the Hilton Rye Town April 22nd-28th. The theme this year was “Anonymity: Our Spiritual Responsibility in the Digital Age.” I wish I had the words to describe to you that, while the week-long schedule is grueling, the work is satisfying and spiritually fulfilling. I think Ward Ewing, Chair of the General Service Board, put it best in his opening report, *“I have always viewed the General Service Conference as a spiritual adventure – at once exciting and a lot of hard work, but also uplifting as we seek to reach an informed group conscience for A.A. in the U.S. and Canada.”* This part of my journey is so amazing to me that anyone who drank like I drank and felt like I felt would have evolved to be a member of the General Service Conference that develops and improves means of reaching people who are still drinking and feeling that pitiful, incomprehensible demoralization. I believe that we are all here because of the General Service Structure and our trust in the processes of the GSC. I know today that I am sober in Alcoholics Anonymous because someone took the responsibility to reach out to me with the hand of A.A. We hope that hand will always be there in fulfillment of our responsibility.

I was asked to share at the Delegate-only dinner the night before the Conference began. My share was to be about the full conference process. While writing that talk, I realized that even though the Conference meets only once a year, the process has been continuous since 1960, when our co-founders turned over to us, the Fellowship, the responsibilities of continuing the work of A.A. Our sole purpose, as we know, is to reach the still suffering alcoholic. Many years ago now, the results of the General Service process reached me in a tiny detox in Dana Point, California.

GSO estimates that there are 1,423,689 members of A.A. throughout the U.S. and Canada. We reach the outermost places from isolated corners of the Arctic to the Islands of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Bahamas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and more. Each of us carries the spiritual and fiscal responsibility of making sure that we will always be able to provide literature and services to all members so that we can continue to reach out. All during this rotation, I have encouraged you to see the spiritual value of your dollars. During the Conference, I heard the phrase, “money problems vs. money opportunities.” And the latter is exactly what we have thanks to the 7th Tradition. Our money in the “basket” represents opportunities to extend our reach to every

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

corner of the world. I was amazed to hear that members in Iran are working on the development of their own GSO! But that would not have happened without aid offered by our GSO. Last year, the unaudited net revenues for A.A.W.S. were about \$819K. Sounds great, yeah? That number is down \$1,280K from 2010. While it's true that the 2010 net revenue was in part due to the \$844K in contributions from the 2010 International., according to membership estimates, if each member sent slightly less than \$1.00 to GSO, we may have been able to complete some unfunded projects.

While we are on the subject of money, I am very pleased to inform you that the Grapevine, Inc. showed a profit of over \$22K for 2011. Every effort is being made to keep Grapevine, Inc. profitable. You can help by subscribing to the Grapevine magazine.

So now to the business of the Conference:

AGENDA:

- The inventory questions approved by the 61st GSC were assigned to the three succeeding conferences for discussion (**District 03**)
- The committee recommended that the trustees Committee on the General Service Conference reduce the number of presentation topics to allow for scheduling for the inventory process.
- The committee recommended that the normal time allotted for workshops be replaced with inventory group meetings to discuss inventory questions.

ARCHIVES:

- The committee recommended that the trustees' Archives Committee develop a new section in the Archives Workbook on digitizing archival collections, intending to provide guidance to local archives committees responsible for maintaining Area or District archival collections.

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

CORRECTIONS:

- The revised pamphlet “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” was approved.
- The section on “Release and paroles” in the pamphlet “A Message to Corrections Professionals will be revised and the section title will be changed to “Re-entry and Parole.”

FINANCE:

- The annual delegate’s requested contribution is increased from \$1,200 to \$1,600 (**District 02**).
- The recommendation made by the committee to increase the annual \$3,000 contributions limit be increased to \$5,000 failed to pass. (**District 17**)
- The recommendation that the one-time bequest limit of \$3,000 be increased to \$25,000 failed. However, a Floor Action to increase the limit to \$5,000 passed. (**District 17**)
- The committee reviewed the proposed Self-Support Kit and agreed that the current Self-Support Packet is sufficient. They suggested adding “Services Provided by G.S.O./A.A.W.S.” to the packet. (**District 06**)
- The committee reviewed and acknowledged the 21 Self-Support Talking Points presented for use by the Fellowship and suggested one additional point to be included: “What is the value of your sobriety?” The committee also suggested that they be added to the Finance Section of the Website. (**District 04**)
- The committee recommended that La Vina become self-supporting within three years beginning January 1, 2013. If La Vina has not become self-supporting by December 31, 2015, General Service Board funding will cease. (**District 08**) The recommendation failed. There was a Floor Action brought that the GSC recommend that the GSB form a subcommittee comprised of stakeholders to develop a plan to address publication, distribution and finances of La Vina with the objective of self-support by 12/31/15. The Floor Action also failed.

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

GRAPEVINE:

- It was recommended that AA Grapevine, Inc. move forward with an audio strategy to have members call in and record their stories on 3rd party recording technology. (**District 12**)
 - The stories will be subject to the same editorial process as print stories
 - The audio endeavor will, at a minimum break even financially
 - The committee requests that a status and financial report be submitted to the 2013 Conference Committee on the Grapevine, as background
 - The committee requests that the board ensure that all contracts protect our Traditions, with the option to discontinue any and all contracts at any time.
- It was recommended that the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., carry out the “Sunset” proposal of Grapevine items. The “Sunset” proposal is a plan to phase out older or slow-moving Grapevine items and archive them digitally or make them available in another format.
- The committee considered incorporating the service responsibilities and duties of the service position “Grapevine Representative” in the service responsibilities and duties of the “General Service Representative” and took no action. (**District 13**) There was another additional committee consideration requesting that groups that do not have a GVR or RLV consider incorporating these duties into the duties of the GSR.
- The committee made an additional committee consideration requesting the AA Grapevine Board incorporate into all appropriate literature, the 1962 Advisory Action that: “retiring delegates become Grapevine Representatives (GvRs) in their areas, with the objective of a GvR in each group.”

LITERATURE:

- The revised pamphlet “A.A. and the Armed Services” was approved.
- The final revision of *Living Sober*, with changes to outdated language or practice, was approved with minor editorial changes.

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

- The pamphlet “Circles of Love and Service” will be revised, and a draft pamphlet or progress report will be brought to the Conference Committee on Literature next year. **(District 10)**
- The committee reviewed with appreciation the progress report from the trustees’ Committee on Literature on the development of literature that focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are sober in Alcoholics Anonymous. The committee forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Literature, as requested, input and suggestions, and requested a draft pamphlet or progress report be brought back to the 2013 Conference Committee on Literature
- The committee discussed a request to add text from the dust jacket of the Third Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, to the dust jacket of the Fourth Edition of the Big Book and took no action. **(District 11)**
- The committee considered a request to add the “A.A. Preamble” to the front inside pages of the Big Book and took no action. **(District 07)**

PUBLIC INFORMATION:

- Following lengthy and thoughtful discussion related to adding language referring to current media to Tradition Eleven, the committee concluded that the spirit and principle of anonymity at the public level is conveyed adequately in the Long Form of Tradition Eleven. Recognizing that suggested changes to Tradition Eleven have come to the Conference several times, the committee requested the trustees’ Public Information Committee gather Area sharing on the effectiveness of the language of the Short Form of Tradition Eleven in addressing the needs of the Fellowship today and report back to the 2013 Conference Committee on Public Information. **(District 05)**
- The committee considered favorably the suggestion from the trustees’ Public Information Committee that A.A. establish a presence on Facebook for the purpose of providing information about A.A. to the public. Before proceeding, however, the committee requested that the General Service Board explore all aspects of this social media page and, if deemed that such a page would be feasible within our Traditions, provide the 2013 Conference Committee on Public Information an implementation

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

plan that addresses the implications of such a page, including sample content and estimates for implementation cost and maintenance. (**District 09**)

TREATMENT/SPECIAL NEEDS-ACCESSIBILITIES:

- The committee recommended that the pamphlet “A.A. for Alcoholics With Special Needs” be expanded to include additional stories of alcoholics with mental illness collected from the Fellowship, and that the trustees’ Committee on Cooperation With The Professional Community/Treatment/Special Need-Accessibilities bring a progress report or draft pamphlet to the 2013 Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities. (**District 01**) This recommendation failed. There was then a Floor Action brought that the trustees’ Committee on Literature develop a pamphlet for the alcoholic with mental illness, with a progress report provided to the 2013 appropriate committee with suggestions for content of the pamphlet, including breadth and scope of the pamphlet. *After more than 1 hour, 45 minutes of discussion, the motion carried with exactly two-thirds of the votes cast. However, after the minority opinion was heard, a motion to reconsider passed, and the motion then did not receive the required two-thirds to pass.*

Note: there were three other Floor Actions not included in this report. Of those three, two were “declined to be heard” and one failed.

ADDITIONAL MOTION FROM THE BOARD:

- The General Service Conference supports the General Service Board’s development of a plan to restructure the current A.A. World Services, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc., corporate and governance structures. The plan may, among other things, address the separate corporate existence of both entities, as well as issues of governance and operations. The plan will be designed to increase unity, better reach and connect the General Service Office and The Grapevine, Inc to the broader Fellowship while addressing financial stability. The plan will be submitted to the 2013 General Service Conference for approval prior to implementation. This motion went through several “friendly” amendments and was

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

discussed for more than three hours before being accepted in its current form. There were also two related motions that tried to change the manner in which the motion was brought, but neither was accepted. Please note that the Board has every right to explore develop a plan without the permission of the Conference. Neither are they required to gain approval of the Conference before implementation of a plan. However, it's a very classy move in the name of transparency.

I have been asked to report the results of the workshop, which you may remember was on "Safety in A.A.: Our Common Welfare." The following are the results of the workshop in which I participated:

- How can we make our Home Group a welcoming and accessible place?
 - SMILE
 - Have both men and women greeters if mixed meeting
 - Have the meeting space set up early
 - Be ready to escort handicapped if necessary
 - Help newcomers find the coffee
 - Be sure the secretary reads housekeeping items and guidelines for the meeting (e.g. cell phones away, no smoking, crosstalk, etc.)
 - Personally invite the newcomer back
 - Be sensitive to closing the meeting with a religious prayer
 - Don't leave any cleanup people alone to do the chores
 - SMILE

- How can sponsorship aid in keeping our A.A. meetings safe?
 - Discourage profanity
 - Discourage sharing re sexuality
 - Educate as to pray vs. prey
 - Offer guidance in life skills
 - Be an example of appropriate conduct
 - Be aware that predators exist and speak up if see inappropriate behavior

AGENDA ITEMS OF THE 2012 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

- In keeping with the Traditions, how would/does my group address matters that may arise, such as:
 - Conduct the disrupts the meeting
 - Be sure the secretary reads housekeeping items and guidelines for the meeting (e.g. cell phones away, no smoking, crosstalk, etc.)
 - Speak quietly with the person; if one-on-one is not effective, ask the person to leave the meeting (but not AA)
 - In group conscience, define disruptive behavior and develop a plan (snoring, texting, kids running around, pets running around)
 - Illegal activity
 - Any illegal activity that jeopardizes the health and well being of others needs to be reported
 - Call police
 - Take action, don't withdraw
 - Inappropriate behaviors towards vulnerable newcomers (e.g. "13 Stepping")
 - Be aware/mindful
 - Sponsors can alert newcomers to potentially harmful situations
 - Encourage newcomers that we need to change behavior in sobriety (i.e. appropriate dress and language)
 - Inappropriate behavior includes more than sexual predation; be mindful of monetary predation and so-called personal behaviors; watch for drug dealers
 - Emergencies (injury/accident/fire)
 - Have procedures in place
 - Call 911

Finally, here are two thoughts:

- Inaction = condonation
- Remember: what's good for the group comes first, but personal welfare follows close behind.