

Highlights from A.A.W.S.

January 25, 2018

The A.A. World Services Board met on Thursday, January 25, 2018, 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 – The general manager has been meeting regularly with the Conference coordinator and the director of administration and services regarding planning the program and business sessions of the 68th Conference. The Meetings, Events and Travel Services team is working with the Conference coordinator regarding the logistics of the Conference and implementing a new software system to aid travel planning. The general manager has also been meeting regularly with the International Convention coordinator and the management team regarding planning and budgeting for the Convention.

A review of key vendor billing, customer service and contracts to assure best practices and the most effective service has been completed and, at this time, there are no unresolved issues with major vendors.

Administrative Services – Cross training continues for staff assistants to enhance the diversity of experience and facilitate teamwork. The program roll out is scheduled to begin February 2018. In response to the RFI for architectural firms to develop recommendations on how best to optimize existing floor space on the 11th floor, one firm has been invited back for a second meeting. The Records team began updating the new area officers for Panel 68 on Saturday, December 9, 2017 and completed the updates the week of December 11-15. Some areas appoint area officers in January, so we are awaiting responses from six areas.

Human Resources – The insurance waiver buyouts offered to employees over the last quarter have proven beneficial. In 2017, 18 employees waived their insurance coverage, saving A.A.W.S. approximately \$390,000 or more annually. In 2018, 14 employees waived their medical/dental benefits, with a projected savings of approximately \$311,000.

A new payroll and HR system is being implemented which offers employees, as well as the HR team, greater flexibility to customize, manage accounts and provide customer service. The new software has been implemented with the first payroll of 2018.

The Employee Handbook has been reviewed by an outside employment attorney and should be available for A.A.W.S. review within the next month.

Information Technology – Two vendors involved in the new systems software evaluation have been called back for a second round of meetings and discussions. Currently, the target decision date is expected to be early February.

A new version of the backend of the B2C (consumer) bookstore site was implemented in the first week of January. Implementation of the new version of the backend of B2B (bulk order) bookstore site is scheduled for mid-February.

The IT Services director was able to negotiate a three-month contract with our hosting company. Three servers have recently been decommissioned, at a savings of approximately \$1,000 per month. There will be further decommissioning of servers and reduction of monthly costs.

Staff Report

Communication Services — After a six-month selection process, the G.S.O. Website Design committee has selected a vendor to build the new G.S.O. website. A plan is underway to complete the construction of the YouTube channel and to introduce it to the Fellowship.

Conference – By December 15, 2017, the deadline for submitting requests, 60 proposed agenda items were received. The list of these requests was posted on the Dashboard in keeping with the 2016 Advisory Action. The process of translating the Conference background into French and Spanish has already begun, in an effort to reduce the load to be translated after the completion of the background in English. Our goal is to be able to post the complete background to the dashboard in French and Spanish by March 1.

C.P.C. – The C.P.C. PowerPoint presentation has recently been updated with new images and is now placed more prominently in the C.P.C. section of the website.

Corrections – A CD of the Twelve Steps in Navajo has been used locally to open up opportunities in Area 03 to potentially modify the prison clearance process, which will help committees bring A.A. meetings into a number of correctional facilities within the Navajo Nation.

Group Services / Loners Internationalists Meeting (LIM) – The Loners Internationalists Meeting (LIM) Directory, which contains the confidential contact information of Loners, Homers, Internationalists and Port Contacts, is being updated.

International – The information in the International Directory has been reorganized to make the directory more user-friendly in response to numerous requests. The “A.A. Around the World” webpage text and content have been reviewed by the Website Committee and the page is ready for posting.

Literature – An Activity Update Report will be sent in mid-January to all listed Literature chairs. This mailing will include catalog information, new formats, translations, Big Book distribution figures and information regarding *Box 4-5-9*.

Nominating – A second reminder regarding regional trustee vacancies for 2018 was sent to the Pacific and Eastern Canada region delegates. Nominating procedure No. 11 and a Regional Trustee resume form were included with the reminder. Reminders were also sent to each trustees’ committee to see if replacements or new ACMs will be sought for 2018.

Public Information – The video PSA download page, recently added to the Public Information Committee page of aa.org, has been very successful in delivering HD Broadcast quality video PSAs to broadcasters. Since the webpage was launched in September 2017, broadcasters have downloaded over 670 copies of our PSAs. This includes 120 French language downloads and 150 Spanish language downloads.

Treatment and Accessibilities – After a number of years in development, production began on the new ASL translation of Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The production team included an A.A. member ASL consultant, two ASL interpreters and a dedicated crew. A clip from the filming was made available for the Board to view.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS)

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

Oral reports were given by the director of IT Services and the Group Services assignment. The committee reviewed a clickstream analysis of the “Need Help with a Drinking Problem?” page and expressed appreciation for the useful data.

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. Language for the disclaimer has been incorporated into the proposed launch plan.

The committee also discussed and will respond to a letter from a district expressing their concerns about the YouTube channel.

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

- That the 2017 Website Visitors Activity Report and the 2017 Fourth Quarter Website analytics be forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Public Information.
- That the 2017 Fourth Quarter Report on G.S.O.’s A.A. Website Activities and the 2017 Annual Report on G.S.O.’s

A.A. Website Activities be approved as amended and forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Public Information.

- That responsibility for the daily operations of the YouTube channel be assigned to the G.S.O. Website committee.
- That the report on the Google Nonprofit YouTube channel be forwarded to the trustees’ Committee on Public Information.
- That the G.S.O. Website committee move forward with the proposed launch plan for the A.A.W.S. Google Nonprofit YouTube channel.

Publishing

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

Gross sales: December gross sales are under budget with actual gross sales at \$894,156, which is a \$111,518 (or 11.09%) negative variance against budget of \$1,005,674. For 2017 through the month of December, gross sales are above estimate: \$13,904,794 actual sales vs. estimate of \$13,750,000, which is a \$154,794 (or 1.57%) positive variance.

Web sales: Total web sales (A.A.W.S. Online Bookstores) for December 2017 stand at \$545,479, which accounts for about 62.14% of total sales for the company. Sales on the B2B online store (primarily Intergroup/Central Offices and other bulk orders) for December are \$369,389, and B2C sales (individual customers) stand at \$176,089.

Digital books: Total ebook gross sales January through December 2017 stand at \$213,492, with 57,490 units distributed.

International licensing and translation: The Big Book is available in 71 languages, which includes the original English plus 70 translations. The latest translation, now in the audiobook production process, is the Navajo Big Book. There are 20 non-English language Big Books pending (16 new ones and 4 revisions in process). The period January – December 2017 saw a 45% increase in translation reviews over 2016, with 42 reviews completed across 16 languages, as compared with 29 reviews across 14 languages in 2017.

Notable high activity included India (Hindi, Kannada and Telugu languages), China (pamphlets), and ongoing high volumes of projects in process in Czech Republic, Mongolia (3 books in progress), Poland, and Ukraine.

Catalog redesign: The new catalog was completed and mailed in December.

Staffing: Longtime French freelance translators Lise P. and Fernand L. retired December 31, 2017. Their service has been much appreciated over the years. Interviewing has commenced for a new full-time in-house French editor/translator.

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

- That The Twelve Concepts audio (in all three languages) be streamed on the G.S.O. website upon completion of the project. At a future date, the committee will discuss additional mediums/formats.
- That the “anonymity placard” be released in PDF for-

mat which would be offered to the Fellowship at no charge. At a future date, the committee will discuss additional formats which may be offered for sale.

Finance

Unaudited financial results: Noting some of the ongoing variances between 2017 budget and year-to-date actual results in areas such as salaries, professional fees, contracted services and travel, meals and accommodations, it was reported that both sales and contributions were running ahead of budget throughout the year.

Gross sales were \$13,898,550 (or 1.08%) ahead of budget, contributions were \$8,409,452 (or 9.57%) ahead of budget and total operating expenses were \$16,012,547 (or .47%) less than budget. Net profit for the year-end was \$1,758,837 compared with a budgeted profit of \$397,798.

The increasing percentage of online 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.

A progress report and updated budget was provided by Convention consultant Gregg Talley for the 2020 International Convention. Discussion covered income and expense variables and how best to approach the evaluation and application of the budgeted 20% contingency figure requested by A.A.W.S. It was noted that while the overall trend of attendance from the U.S./Canada was upward, overseas attendance seems to be decreasing, in part due to the growth of more national events in overseas countries.

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

- That the budget for 2018, which reflects gross sales of \$14,000,000 and a bottom line profit of \$501,693, be adopted and forwarded to the trustees' Finance Committee.

- That the "partial contingency" budget for the 2020 International Convention, which reflects contingencies set on

high risk areas assessed at \$481,535, be adopted.

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 recommendation brought forward by the Internal Audit Committee:

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

Additional Topics

Proposed 2018 Conference agenda items: A number of items that were received as proposed agenda items from the Conference coordinator were forwarded, as deemed appropriate, to G.S.O.'s publishing department, the Conference Report and Charter Committee and the A.A.W.S. Board for possible action and follow-up.

AA Grapevine request for access to database information: A.A.W.S. will provide requested information to Grapevine from the FNV database and the 2015 International Convention database, with the understanding that Grapevine will not contact anyone who may have already "opted out" of receiving additional information.

The Board approved the following recommendations from the ad hoc AIR Committee:

- That email notification be sent to all members who applied for nontrustee director positions during the prior search to notify them of new nontrustee director positions.

- That the trustees' Nominating Committee revise the A.A.W.S. nontustee director resume to include a checkbox for the applicant to indicate that they would also like to be considered for nontrustee director positions with the AA Grapevine Board if there is a concurrent opening.