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Trustee Line for November 2009

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A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 11/30/09.

From The Trustees

The subjects listed below are just a listing of themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them or start an entirely new subject

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Submit a response to the [Trustee Line](#) because of something you have read in this or any other issue.

Letter from Ralph D.

11/1/09 - 12:01 AM

It is appalling that this has happened. However, it will happen again and again if people accept a position as chair of a committee and don't do anything. Whether it is because of a relapse, death, or other life issues. Hopefully the new system of the chairmen sending a report monthly will be of some help. The Literature on CD Committee stated they were working on "the twelve steps of recovery" on cd and that they hope to have this project completed by the summer of 2009. The Literature on CD Committee had no report in Montreal. I am not sure which item this is, as their mission statement states they are only working on approved literature.

The mission statement of the Literature Committee states: **To encourage the creation of new Gamblers Anonymous literature as needed and to revise, edit and or update existing Gamblers Anonymous literature.** This mission statement does not reflect the work that needs to be done with new literature. Could the fact that no deadlines are in the mission statement have lead past chairmen to loose focus. Or is it that they don't feel they have the right to fix what was submitted, other than grammar.

I have seen a lot of new literature items come up for a merit vote where the concept is great but the item provided needs a lot of work. Trustee should look at what they are submitting as ask themselves if it is ready to print. Maybe a committee needs to work on it first whether it is a local committee or a BOT committee. We ask a lot of our literature committee when we give them raw work and expect a polished copy in six months, no matter how many items there are.

1 Conference a Year

11/1/09 - 12:01 AM
Greeting All,

The fact that no bids for either Conference in 2011 or 2012 adds support to the need for 1 annual conference per year. The Committees are having slow response in bookings for both hotel and conference over the past few years as everyone is aware. Only the 50th anniversary was a quick sell. Trustees are making later and later commitment to attend with many sending proxy voters instead of attending to vote on the agendas in person. This supports the need to take a long hard look at the process and the need for 2 meetings per years when 1 would suffice. I have attended many conferences but with the continued increased cost I will only attend 1 yearly . I feel that trustees should get response from their areas and vote based on what the membership views are not just personal desires. The membership does finance a lot of the cost and in many cases all of the cost. We are elected to represent the membership.

Thank you,
Gary G. - 6C North and South Carolina

11/2/09 - 8:09 PM
To Gary G, Area 6C

I appreciate your point of view, but do not agree with you. There is another side of the coin. While financial decisions are difficult to make in some circumstances, there are always alternatives. We had a member recently state, "There is always a solution for the problem; we may just not like the solution."

We can alternate Trustees for each group; we can have fundraisers to support the Trustees we help to participate; we can make a greater effort to support our Trustees; we can share rooms with each other - we don't have to pay for single rooms; we can carpool to close events - in other words, we have other choices - and I have not yet thought of them all....and I'm sure others have ideas as well.

But to shut down one conference I think would harm Gamblers Anonymous more than it would help. The number of agenda items would certainly increase requiring more time to be spent at that one location; items requiring second votes would take much longer to approve as would new literature.

The concept of 'voting on line' has piqued my interest though. My only concern there is that not all Trustees have access to the website, some only read it; others use it as the tool for which it was intended. To have voting by internet would require a greater dedication to this vehicle. But I do think it can work. Until such time, I think it is very dangerous to remove a Trustee meeting. (My opinion)

With love, faith, hope and respect for our Fellowship,
Linda S, Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

11/7/09 - 5:35 PM
To All Trustees,

Thanks Linda for the kind words about the agenda item I put on for Kentucky.

The main reason behind opening up ALL conference bids to all areas was to create interest in all areas. Also it is to take advantage of the out-of-season rates different areas can offer. The conferences are getting a little pricey and I think if areas can take advantage of the lower rates when it is out of season we all would be better off. The regional boundries we have now can confine areas and the agenda item is to remove restrictions. All inout is greatly appreciated.

Thanks,
Richie S. - Area 6, South Florida

11/25/09 - 5:39 PM

I read with interest the "reasons" for having one meeting/yr and I think we are not attacking the real reasons-
First let me ask a few questions.

1. Why have the number of minis increased.?
2. Why are they right on top of the International conferences. ?

3. Why does the BOT have 19 vacancies from North America .?
4. Why do we seem to feel that the reason that there are so few bids for conferences is \$\$?.?
5. How many groups in your area do NOT have a "coffee" break ?
6. How many members in the group that you call your "home" group are Lifeliners. ?
7. Why did we do away with the "alternate" Trustee concept.?

Oh I have some more questions but I'll save them for another day-I don't want to seem as though we have too many problems.

I think that the answer to many of our problems can be summed up in a very few words. Apathy
 lack of the sense of Responsibility
 and the lack of Obligation

FIRST- I think we should do away with proxies and absentee ballots----from the North America area!
 Second- go back to the alt trustee system-it worked
 THIRD-redo the -physical meetings-in other words-ie-meet separate from the conference at a low cost "motel"
 Forth-drop the Trustee slot (North America) if no attendance lets say for 2 yrs.
 Fifth-think about using the mail meetings for non-discussion items.
 Sixth-Have a conference or BOT meeting fund.

WE don't have conference bids because we cannot get people to accept the responsibility.
 Stop the word change bit-people get bored and anoyed with attempts to alter poor pg 17
 Stop being copy cats
 Let's not let others do our work-ie-councils

Let's all get one more lifeliner before our next BOT meeting. (money is not our problem)

Bill B. - Area 15, New York

Personal Agendas in the Rooms

11/1/09 - 12:01 AM
 hi everybody,

this is my first time writing on the trustee line, but i need some help and this seems to be the quickest way to get the most input. i seem to be having a problem with people wanting to use their meetings for their own agenda. when it gets out of whack they call me to referee. no matter what i show them in print if it doesn't agree with the outcome they want, i'm accused of being the GA police. principals before personalities (step 12) is only used when it serves them. i realize i am new at this, but i need some assistance. help.

Paulette M. - Area 10, Ohio

Paulette,

During some of my travels in October, I had the occasion to visit a number of different meetings in different areas. First let me say that I am getting tired of AA mentality governing our GA meetings. There are far too many people that come from the AA side imparting their own agendas on the GA members. Many of AA derivative members have a lot of years of abstinence in GA and they run the rooms the way they want to, without any regard for what the group conscience might be. I have seen rooms where this kind of member chairs EVERY single meeting. Other rooms have this kind of member as the ONLY one allowed to give a comment to someone's therapy. The list is long of how abuses like this continue to undermine Unity Step 1 in so many rooms in the US.

Let's add another component of how these people have no idea what is written in our literature, most notably, the Group Handbook and the Guidance Code. By NOT reading these documents, these members can call the shots in the room anyway they see fit. Most of them bully the rest of the members in the rooms and most just follow what is done because they are too new in the program to know any better.

The bottom line is that each one of these rooms have a very big common problem. None of them had a written format for how business was to be conducted. The members who push their own agendas will fight to prevent implementation of that process, arguing that we don't need any more rules. Actually, those are the rooms that need it the most. One person cannot make the decisions on behalf of the group. ALL decisions regarding the group MUST

be done with a group conscience vote - without exception. Again, I point to Unity Step 1. Don't just read the title, read the explanation of it from the Red Book. The last sentence in the 1st paragraph is quite revealing and supportive of a room agreed upon business format:

---- **A group that is troubled due to personality conflicts, indifference to others, individual ambitions, super egos, compulsive talkers, disruptive members and others who openly indicate that group unity is not essential, will certainly be unable to carry our message, and in time the group will cease effectively to exist.** ---- If you remember, a very important agenda item for a change in the Group Handbook took place in Montreal. It was for the insertion of a new section for Compiling a Written Room Format. It passed the 1st vote almost unanimously. I hope it meets with equal success in Louisville to have it then be incorporated into our GA approved literature. Here is the link for the attachment from the Download Center of the Trustee website:

[Attachment 78 from Montreal](#)

Just remember that it is not yet approved literature and cannot be distributed in the rooms.

Bring the room to the point of recognizing that it needs to formulate a written format of how exactly the room should be run and you greatly reduce, if not eliminate the control these people exercise in the rooms.

One more thing. Did you ever stop to think that it is only those people that violate the Guidance Code, the decisions of the Board of Trustees, and the rules of the rooms who complain about those who try to enforce them that scream about that wonderful phrase - 'GA Police'?

I hope this helps.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

Question 18 - The Only Question in the Present Tense

11/1/09 - 1:15 PM

I recently had the occasion to go the ISO office on a project for the Trustee website. This afforded me the opportunity to also attend a Board of Regents meeting, my 2nd since becoming a Trustee, 10 years ago. As they say on TV, that's another show. However, while I was out there, I decided to attend a GA meeting in the area. I really don't know how people in the Los Angeles area deal with the traffic there, but it took me over 70 minutes to go 9.6 miles from my hotel to get to this meeting, when I thought 20 minutes would be enough time. I would have left earlier in the evening, but I had to wait 20 minutes for my car from the hotel valet service.

The meeting was listed on the ISO website with hours from 7:30 -9:30. I arrived at the meeting at 8:30 that evening, knowing that I only had an hour to hear therapies from the attendees and see how the group ran its meeting. I walked into the room and there were members sitting around discussing some business. Seeing a new face, I was immediately asked if this was my 1st meeting. Saying no, I was then told that the meeting was ending and the members were just clearing up some finishing business; however, if I wanted to 'talk' (whatever that meant) to someone after the meeting, I could do that. I responded by saying that the meeting shows up on the website as being open until 9:30, why would it be closing. The answer I got was that everyone had spoken.

WHOA !!!

Fortunate for me, I had attended a meeting in NJ prior to my trip to California and didn't actually 'need' to get to a meeting, nor did I have any pressing issues I had to get off my chest, but I just wanted to attend one. By the way, there is a world of difference in how the meetings are run between the coasts. I know, I know, Unity Step 4, which was why I was curious to attend a meeting in the LA area.

I obviously did not want to ruffle anyone's feathers, but I did not appreciate walking into this meeting and getting treated like that. They knew nothing about me. Didn't ask me if I was under 90 days or when my last meeting was. Didn't ask me if I wanted to make an admission, but asked me to join in with the closing prayers, which I did.

If a meeting is listed on the website, or any other meeting list, to be open from 7:30 to 9:30, then that's what has to happen. Our primary purpose is to help the compulsive gambler who is still suffering. What do we say to a new member who just managed to get the strength to go to his first meeting and gets there at 8:45, 9:00, 9:15, or whenever? I really don't want to have this person find out that his desperate need for help is going to go unanswered. Does question 18 ring a bell with anyone?

If everyone finished with their therapy and wanted to leave, then they should have done so, but at least 1 person has to stay in the room, even if they do absolutely nothing, until the meeting time closure. We can't have this happen to even 1 person. Let me tell you that even with 21 years under my belt, I was affected by this meeting's early closure. I wasn't about to walk out the door and make a bet, but I was asking myself if arguments, disappointment or frustrations create within me an urge to gamble. Why should anyone be brought to that point, when they are seeking help from the very Fellowship that is supposed to help the compulsive gambler who still suffers?

Here is a solution for all groups who currently don't stay open until the advertised closing time. This is what we do in the meeting I call my home group, Westfield Thursday in NJ. Our meeting format - yes a written document arrived at by group conscience that outlines all the procedures we use in the room - shows the meeting open from 7:30 to 9:00. That is generally sufficient time to get everyone in the room to speak. At 9:00 we then do our business and then resume with the meeting until 9:30 or until the last person has spoken, whichever comes first. The expanded time is not advertised, yet we all understand that if we need the extra time, it will be there for us to utilize. We do this specifically in the event we don't get a big turnout on any night. This way, we don't have to sit there until 9:30 if we are done by 8:45 on a slow night. We stay open until the closing time to make sure that the person who might be coming to his/her first meeting late, will have the outlet to find out about Gamblers Anonymous.

I have one better. If we have ended the meeting at 9:00 and we are standing around talking after the meeting and someone comes in while we are still there, a number of us will start a new segment just to accommodate this new person, which includes reading the entire Combo Book, having a few members give therapy again, to get the new person a bit more comfortable, and then go through the 20 questions.

I complain that so many of us are GA members just for an hour and a half to 2 hours a week during 1 meeting, and that there is more to being a GA member. Let us all examine what happens in the rooms we go to and fix this serious deficiency with how we handle the times of the meetings versus their closures. For me, it took all the strength I had to 'crawl' underneath the door of my first meeting. If it had closed before advertised meeting time, I would probably not have come back for another try. I clearly would have in prison, insane or dead by now.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

PS - I will be submitting an agenda item for Louisville to put something in print for each room to understand the gravity of keeping the doors open when there is supposed to be a meeting.

11/7/09 - 2:54 PM

David - and other Trustees:

I agree with you, David, wholeheartedly; rooms should remain open if their times are published. Our main purpose is to reach the compulsive gambler who is still suffering and if a room is closed, when it should be open, this potentially could dissuade a suffering gambler from attending not only that meeting, but any other GA meeting as well.

As a result of your comment on the Trustee Line, I was able to raise this issue at our San Diego Inter Group meeting, and the heads nodded in agreement and it was vocally agreed - that at least one person MUST stay to help the 'unexpected guest.' On Thanksgiving, the temple which houses our Thursday night meeting is closed. But those of us who choose to gather together, go to a local restaurant for coffee and comraderie in support of one another. However, a volunteer stays at the temple in case a new-to-program person arrives, they are advised where the group is meeting. We have had many 'newcomers' arrive and enjoy the company and those who do ALWAYS come back to the next meeting; they feel welcomed.

In San Diego - we NEVER completely close; there is always an alternative. During the Holidays - we began and support a 'marathon' meeting which goes from 10:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. on Christmas Eve and New Years' Eve - so that anyone with any addiction who may be in pain or discomfort has a place to go - in lieu of a casino, or a bar, or a drug house, etc. These collectively seem to be the most difficult of times for anyone with an addiction, and it's comforting to know they can enjoy the company of others with the same problem(s). Volunteers rotate and chair meetings; volunteers bring food, coffee, donuts, snacks - whatever they have - for all to enjoy. It has become an amazing success in our community.

I think this only proves that there is always a need for a meeting. Addiction does not take a 'holiday,' or 'time off.' Arguments, disappointments and frustrations DO create within us an urge to gamble. It belongs in the present

tense.

With love, faith, hope and respect for our Fellowship

Linda S. - Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

Assistant to the Secretary of ISO

11/2/09 - 10:13 PM

At the BOT meeting in Montreal the need for an assistant for Karen was brought up. Personally, with the growth of the fellowship, I am amazed that this need as well as a need for more space hasn't been an issue before.

As I am assuming the assistant would temporarily replace the Secretary of ISO until a new one could be elected should the Secretary no longer be qualified or able to perform the duties. Should the requirements for the job of assistant be entered in the guidance code, similar to those for the Secretary of the ISO i.e.

Article IX - Officers of the Board of Trustees

Section 1: The officers of the Board of Trustees shall consist of a Chairman, #1 Co-Chairman, #2 Co-Chairman and such other officers as may be appointed by the Board of Trustees. They are required to be a member of gamblers Anonymous and must have two years abstinence from gambling to be eligible to serve.

Carol K. - Area 9, Michigan

11/3/09 - 3:27 PM

In response to Carol K letter regarding the assistant to the IES

If we refer to the Gamblers Anonymous By-laws page 8, section 6, item F, we will see that the Chairman of the Board of Regents replaces the IES in the event the IES is no longer able to perform the duties required. This replacement will be an interim-acting IES until the Board of Trustees elects a permanent International Executive Secretary.

Best,
Bob W. - Area 1, Los Angeles

Non-GA Speakers at an Open Meeting

11/4/09 - 5:16 PM

We have recently encountered a situation in our area where an Open Meeting invited an Addictions Counselor in as a featured speaker. This seemed a little off to me since I would interpret his invitation as a featured speaker to be an implicit endorsement of his services. In addition, GA has no opinion on outside issues and it would seem to be a conflict with a discussion on the value of counseling, how to deal with multiple addictions and any talk about potential medications that may be available.

Was I wrong to question this? Is it sufficient to just give the people in attendance a disclaimer that the opinions expressed don't reflect GA? No one else in my intergroup seemed to think this was an issue and the meeting went forward with the speaker.

As a side note, what remedies do we have as trusted servants to uphold the guidance code besides an impassioned plea? I would like to bring this up at my next intergroup for additional discussion and any feedback would be appreciated.

Jeff F. - Area 8, Chicago

11/7/09 - 3:23 PM

To Jeff F, Chicago

I was just about to write a scathing note supporting your position about a person in a profession not being allowed to speak to a GA open meeting. We had a similar 'situation' surface here in San Diego. Obviously, the speaker has an outside GA 'agenda.'

However, I said to myself, "Self, you'd better look that up in GA materials." So, I referred to our Red Book, "A New Beginning," and on page 11, it refers to "Open Meetings." The final two sentences of that paragraph state, "Sometimes open meetings have invited guest speakers. These speakers can be Gamblers Anonymous or non-Gamblers Anonymous members."

Ouch! What that paragraph does not make clear - or those sentences either -

is whether or not these guest speakers can be from any professional venue. One of our room guidelines is that there can be 'no solicitations of any kind.' But by offering a guest speaker the opportunity, is that not tantamount to endorsing the ABC Insurance Company, or the ABC psychiatric association. If our own GA members can't solicit for their own businesses, why should an outside speaker enjoy that privilege and violate our own room guidelines? Is an agenda item needed here to make that paragraph or sentence clearer?

For years I think we have 'assumed' that the sentence means Gam-Anon or family members can speak - I'm not sure I adhere to allowing ANY outside non-GA person speak. I'm interested to know if anyone sees the other side of the coin here??? I know some groups allow priests, rabbi, or other religious speakers talk - but do we need some 'restriction' here - or is it wide open?

With faith, hope and respect for our Fellowship

Linda S. - Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

11/27/09 - 10:13 AM

I'm really surprised at the surprise of having "outside" speakers at an OPEN meeting.

We have had many people present workshops at confereces and speakers at the dinners.

Are we afraid that we might learn something-many doctors,writers and social workers have spoken at many open meetings--ie-Dr. Custer, Ann Landers, Tony Shanon, to name just a few- and they have helped Gamblers Anonymous big time.

It also should be pointed out that the number of members that attend the function ALWAYS increases when a featured speaker is announced.

I never forgot Ann Lander's answer to the question-Aren't the Twelve Steps really sugestions ?

"--No, We also have 10 Commandments"

We don't have to agree or endorse to listen

Bill B. - Area 15, New York

<p align="center">Rolling Agenda - New Business #7 Hosting a Conference - Who can bid and when</p>
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11/7/09 - 3:36 PM

Richie:

I like and support your agenda item calling for bids to be open to any area wishing to host such a conference. While I know the original thought was to provide each section of the country the opportunity to host such a conference, and to allow area trustees to alternate traveling plans and expenses, I think there has remained some confusion as to whether or not it is 'our time' to bid on a conference.

Like you, I feel if an area is willing to bear the brunt of the work required and has the financial wherewithall to support such a conference, they should be allowed to do so. I think if we all turn it over to our higher powers, it'll even out - eventually.

With love, faith, hope and support for our Fellowship

Linda S. - Area 3A Trustee, San Diego

<p align="center">Selling literature at Intergroup</p>

11/13/09 - 5:14 PM

I was discussing with a fellow member if it would be possible for an Intergroup to sell literature above the cost that it pays for it from the ISO, to it's meetings that attend? The answer was, we didn't know, so let's put it on the Trustee Line and see what other people feel about this, thus this new subject. I don't know if this violates anything in our literature, but I would be interested to find out, and what your opinion is on this. Grateful to be a recovering compulsive gambler Steve F. - Area 1 Trustee - Los Angeles

11/18/09 - 11:19 PM

Steve: I contacted our Literature Chair regarding our procedure, and after some careful analysis of shipping costs and sales tax, he and our Budget Committee recommended (with our vote of approval) we add @10% of the cost of the piece of literature - to the ISO sales price - which covers both shipping

and taxes. In that manner, we can save our group representatives some expense, while not completely absorbing the other costs by our Inter Group.

We created our own 'literature order form' (with the increase added) that group reps can pick up at Inter Group meetings; fill out; and turn into the Literature Chair, with the exact change in an envelope. He gathers the literature order and passes it out to the groups during the meeting. Literature not available, for whatever reason, is refunded at the same time. (This order form is also on our website. Groups are encouraged to fill this out ahead of time. That way both the Treasurer and Group Rep know what amount of money is going to be expended on the group's behalf.)

Groups who choose to order directly from the ISO Office are free to do so, but the majority, if not all, order from our Inter Group to save money. We also have a system in place to cover emergencies, i.e. pins and medallions forgotten, etc.

If a group orders directly from the ISO, they would have to pay shipping AND sales tax themselves for their entire order. If you have other questions regarding our approach to GA literature, or our system, my phone # is on the Trustee Listing and I would be happy to answer any questions you have or direct you to our Literature Chair.

I hope this helps to answer your direct question.

With love, faith, hope and respect for our Fellowship,
Linda S. - Area 3A Trustee, San Diego
