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Trustee Line for November 2011

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

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are 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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It's Time To Eliminate Proxies

11/1/11 - 12:01 AM

In Los Angeles, if memory serves me correctly, we had a total of about 125 votes, which included 25 proxies and 7 absentee ballots. That means we had about 93 Trustees were actually present. Those 32 comprise 34.4% of the members present. This means that more than 1 in 3 Trustees has an extra vote. That's too much concentration of voting for too many people.

It's time to go back to the '1 Trustee – 1 Vote' concept. That means eliminating proxies all together. Don't jump to any conclusion, but take a deep breath first.

Robert's Rules covers this subject in very specific detail:

1. Proxy voting is not permitted in ordinary deliberative assemblies unless the laws of the state in which the society is incorporated requires it, or the charter or bylaws of the organization provide for it.
2. Ordinarily it should neither be allowed nor required, because proxy voting is incompatible with the essential characteristics of a deliberative assembly in which membership is individual, personal, and nontransferable.

An independent non-profit organization writes the following:

Attendance at board meetings is a commitment board members make when they accept an appointment to the board. Although proxy voting may be common in the corporate world, in large organizations or on for-profit boards, proxy votes are not appropriate for nonprofit boards. A proxy is a legal document signed and dated by a board member that gives his or her right to

vote to another board member.

That same organization strongly discourages use of proxy voting. Even a limited proxy where the vote is given for a particular board meeting or a specific issue and directs the proxy holder to vote for or against the motion, is an abrogation of the board member's duty to be informed on matters before the board and to vote accordingly. Without attending the meeting or participating in the discussion leading up to the vote, the board member who gives a proxy votes without adequate information. Also, responsibility for actions of the board cannot be assigned to the person holding the proxy. A board member who uses a proxy may be held responsible for an action he or she may in fact not support.

Between now and the Boston conference, there will be a functioning absentee ballot that will allow any and all members who wish to be represented, to submit an absentee ballot. The results of those absentee ballots will be compiled and given to the Chair of the Board of Trustees for distribution to the Trustees to reflect the votes during each item. Or...the results can be compiled for each item in total and kept by the Chair to then add to the results of the vote by the Trustees. That could happen if we vote for such a change to the Rules and Procedures in Boston. Currently, we have been giving out the absentee ballots to current Trustees. There is nothing that says we have to do it this way, but that's what we are doing currently.

Let's take it one step further. Let's eliminate proxies all together and replace absent Trustees with absentee ballots. That takes the potential overweighting of the votes by a small group of Trustees. Again, 1 Trustee – 1 vote.

To do this will take a change to 4 sections of the Guidance Code under Article VIII, as these are the only sections in the Guidance Code that reference proxies and 2 items in the Rules and Procedures.

This entire situation is going to take some bold thinking from all the Trustees. This is about fairness and equality for all Trustees. It wasn't so long ago that a person could receive multiple proxies. Proxies would also be given out to the friends of the Chair in an unspoken attempt to sway the voting for individual items. The best example of what used to be was that previous Chairs could actually keep all the proxies, and as a result, the power shift was felt far and wide.

The BOT has made amazing progress to get to the '1 Trustee – 1 vote' closer to a reality. It is within our grasp to achieve this, starting in Boston. Please indicate what your feelings are with a response to the Trustee Line.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

11/1/11 - 12:57 PM

I like the idea a lot. When it comes to making a decision, I don't like the idea of leaving my choices up to someone else. To me, a vote is a pretty personal thing, and I'd rather abstain than give it to someone else. At least with an absentee ballot I'm indicating my personal wishes, not leaving it to someone else to figure out what I'd want to do.

That said, if a motion is amended, shouldn't the absentee ballots be counted as abstentions? (If we are going to use absentee ballots to determine a quorum, we can't just not count them when a motion is amended; we could suddenly not have a quorum voting.)

Also, I think that the votes from individual absentee ballots should be compiled and totaled onto a "Master Absentee Ballot", and held by whoever is chairing the meeting. That way, if a trustee leaves before the end of the BOT meeting, the absentee ballot need not be reassigned to another trustee.

On another note, I completely agree with the statement that "Attendance at board meetings is a commitment board members make when they accept an appointment to the board". In the corporate world, board memberships are offered, usually for political reasons (or as a token honorarium), and therefore sometimes taken lightly. In our case, board membership is not offered, but actually sought by us, making it, in my opinion all the more important that we commit, if at all possible, to physically attend meetings of the board. "Decisions are made by those who show up". If I can't show up, the least I can do is represent my area by casting my vote in absentia, rather than asking another trustee to perform my duty for me.

I don't want to beat this to death. It's a good idea. Let's do it.

Your friend in recovery,
John B. - Area 13 - Philadelphia

11/1/11 - 4:02 PM

I fully support the elimination of proxies.

If we do not have enough trustees present to conduct our business, we should not have the relevant trustee meeting. It should be canceled.

We should not be making any decisions affecting all of Gamblers Anonymous if we do not have 50% plus 1 trustees physically present to debate and vote on the agenda. Having proxies just gives the absent trustees an excuse to avoid the work of filling in an absentee ballot.

If a trustee cannot attend the meeting for any reason at all, his area still deserves to express their opinions and send a proxy ballot, thus voting for the agenda items as they appear on the agenda. Changes to the agenda item automatically void the proxy vote.

All our areas need to be represented at every trustee meeting and this can only be done by being present or by sending an absentee ballot. I also feel that if a trustee does not attend or send an absentee ballot for two (2) successive trustee meetings, he/she should be replaced by the area. Our areas should make it mandatory for anyone wishing to be elected as a trustee that they must either attend all meetings or send an absentee ballot if they cannot.

Herb B. - Trustee Area 5, Montreal

11/3/11 - 10:35 PM

I support the proposal to eliminate proxy voting at Board of Trustees meetings. It makes excellent sense.

As pointed out by David M., the BOT is not merely a voting body; it is a deliberative body. The discussion and debate that normally precede any vote are vital to the Board's decision-making process. It is not unusual for minds to be changed after careful consideration of opposing points of view. This is why it is essential for Trustees to attend meetings in person, as a full exchange of views is not possible in absentia. Allowing proxy voting to continue implicitly diminishes the importance of the Trustees' responsibility to physically attend meetings.

While absentee ballots also represent, to my mind, an imperfect solution, they do require a level of individual involvement and accountability that proxy voting forfeits.

Eliminating proxy voting will restore balance in voting at the BOT by firmly establishing the basic democratic principle of "I Trustee-I vote". It will also help to promote a reliably engaged BOT membership and a healthier decision-making protocol.

I urge all Trustees to be open-minded about this matter and to vote in favor of the Guidance Code changes proposed by David.

Ed E. - Past Trustee, Area 2 Northern California

11/7/11 - 12:51 PM

I am in agreement with regards to eliminating proxies. I truly believe that it gives too much power to those who have them. As a Trustee, I believe that it is my responsibility to either attend the BOT meetings and represent my area, (as I was elected to do so), or at least take the time to fill out an Absentee Ballot and submit it to the BOT Chairman. I was not elected to just give my proxy to another Trustee. I consider this my obligation to my area to be involved with what is happening with Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, which agenda items are being proposed, and most importantly, vote the way my area would like me to on certain issues that will affect our groups and Intergroups. How can I be involved if I am turning this "power" over to someone else? How do I represent my area when I give a proxy to another member? All I'm doing is giving that person one more vote at the meeting. Do any of us really need two votes? I believe that I don't fulfill my duties of being a Trustee, regardless of whether it is in the Guidance Code or not, when I give my proxy to another Trustee. I keep asking myself the same question, what is so difficult about filling out an Absentee Ballot?

I am also in agreement that all Absentee Ballots should be counted beforehand and there should be a "Master Absentee Ballot". I think it becomes way too confusing about when an Absentee Ballot can and cannot vote. By having one vote/one Trustee, it simplifies the process.

Over the past few years, I have been asked to take the proxy votes a few different times, and I have been more than happy to help out. However, looking

back, I realize that the proxy that I had, I had never met this Trustee, and even if I had met them, it doesn't mean that we agree on everything. I did "my best effort" to represent them in the way that I thought, but is that really the way an area should be represented. I would think that my area would want me first to be able to attend the BOT meeting if at possible and if that is not an option, than at least take the time and fill out the Absentee Ballot. For a Trustee to say that he or she doesn't have that time, I would like to question their commitment of being a Trustee. I think that proxy votes should definitely be eliminated. I would like to see the effects of one vote/one Trustee, and see what the results are.

Grateful to be a compulsive gambler,

Steve F. - Area I, Los Angeles

Thoughts From The Front Table

11/1/11 - 12:01 AM
Hi Everyone!

First of all, I would like to thank all those involved in putting on a fantastic conference in Los Angeles, CA! Everything from the hotel, meals, meeting rooms and the hospitality room were amazing. I would also like to personally thank all the Trustees for their support and cooperation during the Trustee meetings. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed by all of the positive feedback that I received as a "newbie" to the Executive Board. The meeting seemed to flow well and I feel like we accomplished so many good things.

I did notice one thing that I believe would make our process go smoother, a well written agenda item that could easily be made into a motion would eliminate procedural problems and would expedite our business quicker. I would appreciate any feedback from any Trustee on how I could make our meetings go smoother.

It was so good to see new Trustees at the microphones. Your input and fresh perspective is so important to our process!

Thanks again to all the Trustees for all of your service.

Gary B. - Area 10B, Kentucky

Just For Laughs

11/1/11 - 12:01 AM

So Ronnie W. and I go to In-And-Out Burger for lunch one day in Los Angeles. Upon returning to the car, I find a parking ticket on the windshield (we were only there for 25 minutes). The ticket says I am parked in a no parking zone. So I look at the signs on a pole next to the passenger side door, and there are three signs on it: One Hour Parking, No Parking From 11pm to 5am, and No Parking At Any Time (with a small arrow pointing towards the rear of the car.

So, after my morning coffee, I decide to contest the ticket online. After giving name, address, etc, I am given a block to provide a "detailed" explanation. After 255 characters, I cannot enter any more. Wordsmithing gets my "detailed" story down to 255 characters. I take a few minutes to print out the form before I submit it and vent to my wife about the 255 character limit and I come back and hit the submit button and it says my session has expired and takes me to a page where I can pay my ticket on line for a small fee.

After a few more choice words at my monitor, I quickly fill out the form again, enter my 255 character "detailed" explanation again, and quickly hit the submit button. My web browser churns for a couple of seconds, the screen goes blank, and the address line displays <http://wmq.etimspayments.com/pbw/disputeComplaintAction.doh> . When I see the "doh" at the end, I think of Homer from The Simpsons and I feel like I have been punked by the Los Angeles government website. Enough of this insanity, I think I'll go read the Trustee's Line to relax.

Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut

10 Times At The Microphone

11/1/11 - 12:01 AM

On the lanyard itself, which is provided anyway, have a second name tag in addition to the usual one, but the second one of a bright color with our name on it in large print, along with 10 punchable pictures on it, of a microphone, for example. And then, at each of the 3 microphones, have a single punch on a string (they're pretty inexpensive at Office Depot, etc.), which each of the trustees will punch each time they speak.

Another suggestion I heard while I was in Los Angeles was to have all eligible speakers have 10 marbles each and have buckets by the microphones. Something like this will not work. I can envision a trustee or former trustee who has already used up his or her 10 chances at the microphone borrowing from someone else, which totally defeats the purpose.

We need some way of being accountable for the number of times we approach the microphone.

Just my idea,

Debra M. - Area 2E, Manitoba, Canada

11/1/11 - 2:05 PM

Although I seem to be in the minority, I think that the proposal to limit the number of times a member may comment at the microphone is seriously flawed and a mistake.

When you consider that many of our trustees never speak out either for or against an item, (don't they care; or are they afraid of being unpopular?), if it weren't for the ones who do, there would be very little or possibly even no discussion on some issues. Personally, on more than one occasion I have come into a Trustees meeting with an opinion already formed, then, after hearing discussion, been persuaded for one reason or another to change my mind.

I believe that most of the suggestions like this one are in the interest of saving time. I'd rather spend time in the interest of making intelligent decisions.

Rather than discuss how to keep track of the number of times someone speaks (not marbles - gumballs; they're bio-degradable and edible) we should be talking about how to preserve our freedom of discussion.

Let's rescind this motion in Boston.

Your friend in recovery,
John B. - Area 13, Philadelphia

11/1/11 - 4:10 PM

I agree with both David M, and John B, first with David's item to RESCIND the Rules & Procedure item on the number of times one can speak at a Trustee meeting.

John, you are not in the minority on this item. The vote was 60 to 50, why I don't know. Isn't that why we are there at the Trustee meeting to address the agenda items thoroughly, so we may have full understanding of each of them before the vote.

I myself was pleased that we didn't go back on Friday night to finish the agenda, as we did in Cherry Hill. I was well rested and a lot sharper that next day. I had made a commitment to do a workshop at the LA conference, but the conference workshop chair was unable to switch my 10:30 AM time until later in the day on Saturday. I advised him that my first commitment was as a Trustee, and I would be unable to do the workshop. He in turn advised me they would work it out, which he did.

I again do feel we should limit the amount to agenda items to almost be sure that we do not have to come back, either late Friday night or Saturday. See Trustee Poll item # 1. I know, as I said before, I was well rested and my mind was working (although some may feel that my mind never really works -- hahahaha). Every item that is on the agenda should be heard and given as much attention as any other on the agenda.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

PS: I also say Eliminate the Proxies.

11/1/11 - 4:37 PM

I was really surprised when this item actually passed. I completely understand the reasons why though. At Tampa and Cherry Hill, there were people who felt it necessary to get up to the microphone and speak on every single item. Often times, many others were not able to be heard because time would run out

before they had a chance to speak. Even when they had nothing to say one way or the other, they would still get up to the mike. I know for me, I stopped hearing what they were saying because I just didn't want to hear them anymore. The bad thing about this was, they may have had something that needed to be heard. In LA, after this item passed, this didn't really seem to be a problem anymore. I don't know if this was a coincidence or if they realized that this was why this item passed. Whatever the reason, it was nice to finally get some feedback from people I hadn't heard from before.

I know that this is already on the new agenda to rescind this item. I just hope that if we do that, that we don't go back to how it was before. There are items that people feel passionately about and it is those people I want to hear from on those items. If we all leave our egos at home, then we will have a productive meeting in Boston!

YSIR,
Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

11/1/11 - 11:59 PM

I think we should be looking at this 10x at the microphone (10x ATM) issue in a different light. I'm even going to assume that this agenda item was directed toward me, amongst other people. For my 23 years in this Fellowship, I have constantly been told to deal with my problems head on. If I allow others do it for me, it's just a bailout. And yes, bailouts don't have to be only about money, they can be emotional also. In my recovery, if I have an issue with someone, either in or out of the Fellowship, I have always been counseled by others to face the problem and resolve it with the other party. If anyone feels that way about any other member coming up to the microphone too many times, they should have spoken directly to those people. Now what we have, as of the Los Angeles BOT meeting, is 60 people who voted 'Yes' versus 50 people who voted 'No' on a measure that doesn't deal with the problem head on. A 'Yes' vote on something that ended up being a decision that wasn't thought out completely.

I agree that points of information, points of order and challenges always seem to get overdone. But some of that falls on the backs of the front table. When an item is completed and time runs out, it is done. MOVE ON TO THE NEXT ITEM – period, the end. Anyone with a point of information about that item should be ruled out of order. All such questions should be directed to the Chairs during the breaks. Unfortunately, the Chairs have been too soft by allowing these points of information to be answered after a decision has been rendered on an agenda item.

In all fairness to the Chairs, the announcement is always made at the beginning of each Trustee meeting that if you aren't going to bring up a new point of view or example in a discussion, to not just go to the microphone to say you agree with the previous speaker. We start out fine with that, but continually fall short of reinforcing that throughout the duration of the BOT meeting.

Speaking for myself, I don't get funded by my Intergroup, because I am a past Trustee. I attend the Trustee meetings because I want to make a difference. When I wish to speak on an item, I am not the first one to raise my hand. I wait to allow others an opportunity to speak. I listen to see if anyone is going to reflect my opinions and if not, I then raise my hand. The problem I see with people who say they get shut out of speaking is not because of other speakers, but because they wait too long to raise their hands to speak.

I feel privileged to be a past Trustee and still have a voice, and as long as I continue to come to Trustee meetings, I will always look to present a coherent position that may sum up the essence of why we should vote either for or against an item. If there is a procedural problem, I will look to protect the rights of the group.

Now, on to the potential solutions for making this 10x ATM rule effective. I mean no disrespect to those who really believe that they have a workable situation with this provision, but they really don't. I too believe, as John B. does, that we cannot impede anyone's ability to speak. We are deciding some very serious situations that could permanently affect the welfare of GA as a whole. So with this measure, we have to resort back to handicapping our own efforts? We have to handicap which items we should allocate our discussions with? Do we really need to face question 18 about frustration because we waited to speak on an item and then got continually shut out so our handicapping actually was a wasted effort? In the meantime, because of this 10x ATM issue, we didn't speak on items that should have been spoken on that will now potentially negatively impact our Fellowship and all its members? Are you really serious? Who is really being affected by all this? Yes, the BOT will possibly end up making decisions without sufficient information that will end up affecting GA as a whole.

We need to stop playing games and get more serious about what we do in the BOT meetings. How many people just sit there and never get up to the microphone to be heard? Were those people the bulk of the 60 who voted to pass this 10x ATM nightmare? Did anyone think about how this new 10x ATM system would be administered, or is it just about these same people sitting on their duffs for 2 days in a Trustee meeting and getting tired of other people speaking their minds in an attempt to expand everyone's comprehension of the full impact of each agenda item? Could it be that people just want to get finished with the Trustee meeting as soon as possible so they can party at the conference? All I know is that Trustees have the obligation to finish the Trustee meeting, irrespective of how long it takes. That is why the areas fund the Trustees, not to socialize at a conference. Too many of us lose sight of that.

Anyway, back to the subject of this posting. Just to clear one thing up, we already have Rules and Procedures in effect that prohibit someone from speaking more than twice on an item. Also, a person cannot speak on the item again until all others who have not spoken once do so.

I have heard some ideas on how to administer this new 10x ATM deal. Tokens, punch cards, someone keeping a tally on a spreadsheet, no doubt there are more possibilities. Is anyone thinking about the extra work that is being created just to make this procedure work? Who is keeping track of all this? Who is going to create all these cards? What happens when someone challenges the results of the 10x ATM procedure? Do we bring the meeting to a stop to verify all that has happened with that person? Do we videotape the BOT meetings so we can archive who got up to the microphone and how many times? What happens when the 10x ATM Police (I couldn't resist that) make a mistake? Maybe that is a chargeable offense and we can immediately go to a session to have that person removed as a speaker for conduct unbecoming a current or past Trustee. Am I getting a wee bit too sarcastic? Am I bringing up enough things that are unresolved that should be the basis of rescinding the 10x at the microphone debacle? I certainly hope so.

As much as I would like not to throw the 3 Chairs under the bus, I think much of this 10x ATM stuff is easily contained by the front table. They have a difficult enough time keeping the meeting running correctly. Why don't we all pay closer attention to what we need to do in order to keep the meeting moving, rather than to just sit there and complain about issues that really can be dealt with more effectively than standing behind a flawed item about 10x ATM.

Between now and Boston, I'm going to actively campaign to overturn/rescind this decision and I hope that others who voted in favor of this item in Los Angeles, will realize that there is a better way of handling this 10x ATM procedure without the inherent problems it creates to administrate it. As always, let's hear what others have to say. Now is the time to chime in and say you agree or disagree.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

11/5/11 - 10:48 PM

To: David M -

As a former Trustee, I truly appreciate your agenda item for Boston to recind the 10xATM recently voted favorably at the LA Trustee meeting. As was my usual habit, I printed the agenda and wrote my own notes and comments on the agenda prior to attending the meeting.....even though I knew I couldn't vote. My notes to myself were: (1) 'I don't think we have the right to orchestrate anyone's behavior,' and (2) 'who keeps score?'

Traditionally, I have learned to accept the majority decision - don't have to like it - just accept it. But this was the first one out of the box and blew me away. Not too long ago, we had someone suggest via the agenda that we could only serve on two committees - and that was resoundly defeated. Now someone else was telling us we could only speak 10 times - then sit down and shut up.

Like many others, I also tired of hearing the same voices either pro or con voice opinions. However, as someone else has already mentioned, what if the 11th time this person had something profound to share and couldn't? Are we losing that benefit? I, too, mark some items with notes that I want to hear more and other opinions - what if I lost that chance and voted incorrectly? What do we do at meetings if we perceive someone to be disruptive? We take them aside and have a conversation.

I firmly believe we owe it to our memberships to hear the best advice each Trustee has to offer - even if we don't personally agree with it. We might just happen to hear something we never thought about. I know I have in the past, and hope I shall always remain openminded and teachable.

With love, faith, hope and trust in our Fellowship,

Thoughts On LA

11/1/11 - 12:01 AM

First, I would like to thank all of those who put together the LA conference. You did an excellent job! Next, I just want to give my opinion of the trustee meeting. This was the third one that I have attended and it has so far been the best one. I had the opportunity to hear a few different people give their opinions at the mike, which was a nice change from the first two. I was a little surprised at the number of times a point of information was called after the vote was taken on an item. It is my understanding that once the vote is taken, that item is closed and we move on to the next item. It seems that a lot of time was wasted on this, especially since a second vote is not going to be taken. The time for questions is during the discussion or perhaps even before the meeting. Area 8A spends a lot of time on the agenda before the meetings and Jeanne and I try to be well prepared when we walk in the door.

I am also surprised by the egos of some of our trustees. I overheard one saying that the only reason an item passed is because they decided to speak for it, not against it. I would hope that not any of us are so easily swayed as that.

I have placed on the trustee poll an item that is very important to our area and that is having one BOT meeting per year and one international conference per year. The reasoning for this is purely economical. It is very expensive to attend two of these conferences a year. Our intergroup would save close to \$1000.00 per year by having only one conference and one meeting. Also, many of our trustees are employed by others and need to take vacation time twice a year to attend these conferences. Speaking for myself, I feel that the work I do in GA is important and personally rewarding, however; I do not want to take all of my vacation time to attend these meetings/conferences. Recovery has given me back my life, and I want to enjoy some of that with my family. I have noticed that several people have said they would NOT be in favor of this. I would love to hear the feedback and the reasons why we need two international conferences per year.

Looking forward to Boston.

Your Sister in Recovery,
Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

11/4/11 - 9:49 AM

Thanks for the discussion items Karen. I would like to respond on the need for two conferences per year. Based on the number of items and the need for two or three votes to get items approved or passed, I support two Trustee Meetings per year. That does not mean we need two conferences per year, it has just been traditional to have the conference on the weekend following the Trustee Meeting. As long as an Area puts in a bid, I will continue to attend the conference following the Trustee Meeting, it is a great way to relax and unwind with fellow GA members after a busy couple of days and it supports the Trustee's when they don't get their work done by Friday night.

One of the things I was taught to do when I take a commitment in the program is to take inventory and make sure I was willing to meet all the requirements and obligations for that commitment, to talk to my sponsor and family and make sure I had their support as well. I knew I had to attend two meetings and conferences per year as a Trustee, it was not a surprise. I also know that I can rotate out after two years if I cannot support the requirements after my term is up.

To be convinced we should go to one Trustee Meeting per year, I would want to know how we would get through all the items on the agenda in two days and not delay literature changes by a year or new literature publication by a year and a half. Present me your solutions to those two issues and I will give this idea some serious thought. Otherwise, I treat this suggestion as wishful thinking that we all engage in around 10pm on Friday night of the Trustee Meeting.

Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut

11/4/11 - 2:01 PM

Paul,

I just want to clarify what I had suggested. By reading your response, it seems that you think I only want one meeting per year. What I suggested was one international conference (which goes without saying is attached to a BOT

meeting) and one BOT meeting that does NOT have a conference attached. I made the commitment to my area as well to attend the BOT meetings and I do so willingly. However, it is my area that feels we do not need 2 international conferences per year in order to accomplish this and I agree with my area. If we have one BOT meeting without the conference, we would still get the same amount of work completed without the outside distractions of a conference happening in the next room. I too enjoy the fellowship of our brothers and sisters after the meeting, however, my enjoyment of that fellowship is not the reason my area sends me to the meetings. They send me in the hopes that the work we do at those meetings will benefit them and GA as a whole. Although it may be a 'tradition' to have two conferences per year, it does not mean that we as a board cannot change that. As I have previously stated, it is becoming more of a hardship financially for some areas to fully support their trustees and some areas are limited to the support they are able to give. We as a board need to be fiscally responsible to those we serve. As it currently stands, most of our international brothers and sisters are only able to attend one meeting per year anyway. Why not attach that meeting to a conference and have the second meeting be just that, a meeting? Additionally, in order for the trustee to attend the meeting, they must also pay for the conference. These meetings are not intended for the trustees to have a 'vacation'. They are intended to conduct the business of GA.

YSIR,
Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

Online GA Meetings

11/4/11 - 11:03 AM

Perhaps the most difficult part of chairing a trustee meeting is controlling my urge to speak on every issue. For those of you who were around when I was a trustee you will remember that I rarely lacked an opinion nor missed an opportunity to share it. Our new microphone monitor would sure have his hands full with me. As chair I do my best, with rare exceptions, not to speak on agenda items.

I truly regret not invoking an exception when the discussion on internet meetings was taking place. Over the years more than a few votes have disappointed me. I think I can safely say that the decision by this board to give carte blanc approval to internet meetings is the most troubling I have ever seen.

Now I know I am a bit old fashioned but even I could see that the day was fast approaching where Gamblers Anonymous would have some presence on the internet besides our website. I did not know how that would happen or what it would be, but never did I think it would be to just approve regular GA meetings to be held over the internet. I don't suppose even the committee who proposed this would have guessed that these meetings would be given the go ahead without even the discussion of guidelines, restrictions and safeguards. And yet, that is exactly what the BOT has done.

If left unchanged I believe this decision will be the beginning of the end of our fellowship as we know it.

Who will run these meetings? Who will attend these meetings? Who will insure that our guidelines are adhered to? Who will insure that "meetings" calling themselves meetings are actually meetings? How do we stop the predators who comb the internet looking for victims? How do we insure that the people attending these meetings are protected? Is live video included? Sound feeds? The questions go on and on.

As chair I have already been contacted by trustees and other GA members asking some of these very questions. My answer can only be that the BOT approved internet meetings (and phone meetings) and made no distinction between them and a physical meeting. With no way to answer even these general questions how can we even approach the more specifics questions being asked about formats, comments, collections, new members, sponsorship, pressure groups and so on and so on.

I'm told by the ISO that, not even a week after the vote, they were informed by a member that he has started an internet meeting. What does the ISO do now? How do they list it? Where do they list it? How can I attend this meeting, or how can I even find out about it? Is it really a meeting if it is not available to every GA member?

By now you get the idea. Question after question and all without an answer.

So, where we go from here is anyone's guess.

11/6/11 - 7:16 AM

Brother Denis:

While I can certainly understand your concerns regarding proposed approved 'on-line GA meetings' as well as other Trustees' concerns, I wish you had been part of the committee and heard or seen the identical concerns held by those same committee members. Each issue was addressed - in full - by all -resulting in the unanimous decision that an "approved GA on line meeting" was in no way different from any other weekly group meeting.

1. Who will run the meeting(s)? A chair will be elected by those participating, just like a group.
2. Who will attend these meeting(s)? Those who have a need for a meeting, just like a group.
3. Who will insure that our guidelines are adhered to? Who does that in a group? The members who attend that meeting.
4. Who will insure that 'meetings' calling themselves meetings are actually meetings? Who does that in a group? You and I both know that there are meetings which do NOT follow the GA guidelines and yet they continue to exist because no one wants to shut them down. No wants to act as the infamous GA Police. I will be happy to provide such evidence on both coasts!
5. How do we stop predators who comb the internet looking for victims? In the exact same manner that groups protect themselves from those attending group meetings who should not be allowed to attend - didn't we hear at the Trustee meeting about those attending group meetings with a gun?
6. How do we ensure that the people attending these meetings are protected? The program which is to be chosen will have the ability to mute disruptive participants. That procedure is unavailable at a group meeting - until the local police are called.
7. Is live video included? There was no such thing mentioned; is live video included at a group meeting? Not yet, but we're talking about it for Trustee meetings.
8. Sound feeds? Ditto response as in #7.
9. ISO Collections? A Treasurer is elected; or individual contributions can be made to the ISO. I have attended group meetings when someone has been unable to donate any dollar amount. They aren't asked to leave the group. This is supposed to be an honesty program.

Similarly, we had dozens of other questions - each raised with the greatest of concern - respected and discussed;

Perhaps the most unfortunate part of this exercise was that the committee did not submit an addition to the Guidance Code at the same time on the same agenda. That may have been able to allay some fears - as we had had. That is being worked on as we correspond. To do so ahead of time might have been perceived as arrogant, and we wanted to be sure the majority of the Trustees thought this a good idea.

I am bothered most by the inference that this was an anti-GA committee and group. On the contrary. Just as Jimmy D was successful in adding the 'internet' to Unity Step 11 (one, by the way, that David F had suggested many years ago), our committee was attempting to address the needs of fellow members who are unable to attend their weekly meeting. That list included the deaf (who cannot 'hear' therapy at a group meeting), overseas military (who have no meeting at all to attend), snow-bound or ice-bound members (who cannot get to a weekly meeting), hospitalized members (who are unable to leave the hospital to attend a weekly meeting), traveling businessmen and businesswomen (who find themselves 200+ miles away from a regular meeting), and others with similar difficulties. What about overseas members whose countries have not yet been accepted into the fold, and yet who crave a GA connection? What about those internet gamblers who have not yet attended a GA meeting and want to know more? These were in no way to replace a regular, weekly group meeting.

One of the major concerns of all committee members was that any such on-line meeting MUST follow the Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code - and it would be my personal opinion that any such on-line meeting would have to be approved by the BOT prior to its inclusion as an "approved" on line meeting. Where would it be listed? My suggestion would be where the states and countries are listed. These are the details which must be and shall be ironed out. I'm certain that the Guidance Code and Rules & Procedures didn't just pop up out of the ashes. It had to start somewhere. Well, I suggest the on-line concept had to start somewhere - the internet is not going away - and we, as a Fellowship, must learn to use it as a good tool - not as something to be feared or ignored.

We are currently investigating the possibility of voting 'on line;' of pre-qualifying agenda items 'on line;' of disclosing the outcome of trustee meetings 'on line;' of video-conferencing the meetings, and yet some are threatened by a meeting 'on

line?' Personally, I don't perceive this as the 'end of the Fellowship,' but rather more of an enhancement to the Fellowship as we now know it.

With love, faith, hope and trust in our Fellowship
Linda S. - Area 7B, Oklahoma
On-Line Committee Member

11/6/11 - 4:47 PM

We just started the 6th day of this month and already we have enough 'pithy' subjects to get all the Trustees involved with their thoughts. Pinch me please, is this a dream?

I thought Denis did a great job of getting the subject launched about online meetings, but Linda's response, which might just possibly be the exact thinking of the committee, is a testament to why we debate items at the Trustee meeting. This entire subject, in my opinion, was ill-conceived and not appropriately submitted to the BOT for a decision, which completely surprised me as being voted in the affirmative 60-41.

The item passed but did not have the structural material to support the who, what, where, when and most important, the how. But I want to use Linda's rebuttal to Denis as a platform to hopefully enlighten more people as to the dangers of this online meeting decision.

I am literally stunned that the committee could make a unanimous decision that 'an approved GA online meeting was in no way different from any other weekly group meeting.'

To your item 1) – who is the chair that is being elected? You have some person on the other side who just identifies him/herself with a screen name and that's good enough? That's the same as a regular physical meeting where you get to see the person on a regular basis? In my area of NJ, most if not all of the rooms don't allow a member to chair until they hit their 90 days. We know a bit more about the person, the member has a sponsor, the member is working on Pressure Relief, etc. Who are the Trusted Servants of this online meeting? With online meetings, we are supposed select a chair and go with a screen name not knowing anything about this person?

To your item 2) – so these meetings will be open meetings? You can't just say for those that have a need for a meeting, just like a group. There are closed meeting, there are closed meetings with exceptions and other types. You can't apply your west coast profile for meetings, which are mostly open to make this determination. How are the online meetings going to manage this aspect? So much for Unity Step 3. Is everyone now going to be questioned if they have a desire to stop gambling when they login to the room?

That brings up a question that I didn't see on your submission. What requirements are you going to have for people to login? If it's anything more than a first name and last initial then it is obviously not the same as a regular meeting. How are people supposed to get in touch with everyone, as we do in regular meetings? I hope you are not going to argue that email addresses and phone numbers are going to be given out online? This is an open environment, irrespective of how much you try to convince every Trustee that it is secure. Anyone can start a meeting, anywhere, and at any location. Are you going to tell me that those meetings will be in a secure network environments? Please don't even try to defend that answer. Many of the members in my area won't even give their telephone numbers to a master list that is periodically compiled for all the members in NJ Intergroup. The reason is that those people don't feel comfortable with their name and number 'possibly' getting into the wrong hands. That's a much more controlled environment versus the 'Wild West' arena of the Internet. But let me get back on topic.

Your item 3) – adhering to Guidelines? We're not talking about guidelines, we are talking about the Guidance Code. All you have is a name on a screen, you have nothing other than that, and no guidelines or Guidance Code issues can be adhered to online. Our Intergroup has opening announcements that are compiled and given to the individual rooms, from which modifications are made to improve the guidelines at the room levels. One that strikes me is 'no cameras, tape recorder or recording devices of any kind in the GA room at any time.' Are you going to tell me that this is the same with online meetings? I certainly hope not because all you can control is the events that are put on the screen. I didn't see anything about not allowing audio online meetings or even video. This is part of the ill-conceived characterization I made earlier about the passage of this item in Los Angeles. Online meetings are so fertile for law enforcement people, reporters and other normally banned people from the physical rooms, to have complete artistic license to do what they want, with cut and pasting of chat sessions. and recording of voice and/or video. Why isn't that being addressed by the committee?

Your item 4) – who will ensure that meetings are meetings? Linda, are you really sure you want to make your point that because some meetings don't follow the Guidance Code that is now becomes okay for online meetings to do the same? Seriously? If the Trustees in the areas were a bit more proactive, this wouldn't be a point to even mention as justification that online meetings are the same. Because some meetings use non-approved literature, that makes it okay for online meetings to do the same? If this is how the committee's thought process progressed, then maybe this needs to be re-evaluated in a larger and more thorough venue, because you're not moving the need off the scale of being able to sell your premises.

Your item 5) – I actually think that physical safety issues may be better with online meetings because a member can't stalk another member after a physical meeting, or find out where they live or work, etc. Internet predators are more about a younger demographic that is somewhat naïve about such things.

Your item 6) – you don't have this issue resolved about abusive members online. There is nothing mentioned about specific programs in the item that was passed in Los Angeles. Shall I remind you and everyone else what the motion was that passed? 'To recognize any online meeting that adheres to Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code as a regular meeting and add it to the gamblersanonymous.org website.' This is what I mean about being ill-conceived and not appropriately submitted for approval by the BOT. Anything goes. Someone calls ISO and says they have an online meeting. That person is asked if the meeting is or will be following the Guidance Code. The answer is: 'Yes, we follow the Guidance Code. ISO responds with: 'Okay, thank you very much, your meeting will be listed on the website.' That's it – absolutely nothing to create the framework for any of the myriad questions that need to be answered. Not a great piece of forethought from a committee of 10, and the members of which I hold in high regard as far as being able to think analytically about the actions being taken.

Your item 7) – why can't video be used? It's not a requirement for listing and would not be a reason to not list the meeting. If you have a video feed, you are compromising anonymity. So how is this feature like a regular meeting? Yes, 'we' are talking about it for the Trustee meeting, but not for transmitting faces of those who speak at the Trustee meetings. The last suggestion by that committee was to blur the faces of people who come to the microphone. Now if videoing the faces of those in the Trustee meeting was such a wonderful idea, why blur the faces? Because it destroys the anonymity of the members. How could you possibly compare the 2 situations? I know I'm a compulsive gambler, but I feel pretty strongly that a vote to allow videoing of any kind in which a member's face is shown will be defeated in a hail of gunfire.

Your item 8) – I won't say ditto for the response from 7, I will point out that voice in an open forum, such as the Internet makes this 'same as a regular meeting' theory look weaker and weaker.

Your item 9) – I can't imagine how you could support any parallel of contributions from an Internet meeting to a physical meeting in the area of contributions. It's completely incredulous. If it worked so well, why to we have such a fractional amount of members who are active Life Liners? It's because members who attend online meetings will put off sending in money. What about something very subtle like a member having full anonymity by making a direct contribution to an ISO can in a regular meeting? It's over and done with that effort. Now the member has to write check and send it. We are all lazy people. The more the meetings turn to online meetings, the lower the contributions to ISO will be. Then the people who attend the Trustee meetings will have to be harangued by Marshall to increase our contributions? Not quite the way things are supposed to go.

The omission by your committee of submitting a Guidance Code item in Los Angeles would have been a very different issue. Not only would it have been sadly deficient with how things should be done, but it wouldn't have passed. The vote in Los Angeles would have been 22 votes short of approval for the Guidance Code passage. Since Los Angeles, I believe with the uproar of people realizing what a mistake it was to pass this item, that resistance to this online meeting concept will continue to increase.

Once again, your use of Jimmy D's successful change to Unity Step 11 has nothing to do with this issue. There must be numerous meetings that occur online. That's fine and yes, it does serve people who can't ordinarily get to meetings. I'm not advocating that people stop that activity, I am merely saying that they cannot be recognized as regular GA meetings. You speak of there being no way to replace a regular weekly meeting. That sounds good, but the fact is that compulsive gamblers look for the easy way out. Online meetings are the best way to defraud the basic tenants of the Gamblers Anonymous Fellowship. Yes I also understand that people who choose to act this way will

only have themselves to answer to. That's an overly simplistic way of looking at the detrimental effects that would result by not having good example for the newer members to follow.

This fits right into the world of those who want to drop the 39-meeting requirement and eliminate all Guidance Code issues and any structure. Online meetings are great to login and then leave your computer. A spouse to a GA member - Yes, honey, I attend GA meetings all the time – online. Are we now going to require that people have to respond to the chair every 5 minutes to make sure they are still there? No..why do that? Let's let everyone do what THEY think is best. How do we distribute literature? How do we do pressure relief? There are host of other problems.

The Guidance Code and the Rules and Procedures came out of the outgrowth of recognizing that structure was needed. This online meeting approval was designated as a problem situation during the discussion of the item, yet the committee went ahead and pushed it through without having it properly vetted and structured, so as to avoid Trustee Line submissions, like mine, questioning the efficacy of such decisions.

Lastly, I think you are really off the reservation with this 'what are you scared of closing in your posting. The Internet is a tool and you should not be looking to use a wrench when a screwdriver is needed. The pre-qualification of agenda items has nothing to do with online meetings. Disclosing the outcome of Trustee meetings has nothing to do with online meetings. The BOT's approval of video conferencing was the 1 first of 2 serious mistakes made with the second being the approval of online meetings.

I mentioned this topic at our Intergroup meeting last month and the tone was of complete disapproval for such a platform. Someone tried to offset my statement similar to what I have written here, and the only thing this person could cling to was that the meeting must adhere to the Guidance Code. Having that be the case, only addresses a minor level of problems from such a platform.

It is my opinion that we have unleashed a slow poison for this Fellowship with the approval of online meetings. It will tear out the very fiber of what we are about in favor of this overwhelming thought process that many at the BOT level have these days, which is to do things that are ultimately problems for the Fellowship, the whole while standing behind the primary purpose we face. It's true with the International Relations Committee, the Video Conferencing Committee and now with the Online Meetings Committee. We cannot be all things to all people. There is a moral hazard in some of the actions we are taking that are not being fully thought out before BOT approval. The official recognition of online meetings must be stopped – for the good and survival of the Fellowship.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

11/7/11 - 4:54 PM

4 - Who will ensure that 'meetings' calling themselves meetings are actually meetings? Who does that in a group? You and I both know that there are meetings which do NOT follow the GA guidelines and yet they continue to exist because no one wants to shut them down. No wants to act as the infamous GA Police. I will be happy to provide such evidence on both coasts!

Linda, I love you as I would a Sister, but I was taken back when you make a statement as you did in your response to the On Line Meeting post by Denis M.

In # 4.... as you state, give me the areas and names of the meetings in which they are not following the Guidance Code. If the Trustee in that area doesn't want to SHUT THEM DOWN, then let that trustee step down and get someone else do the job of a Trustee. That's a BS statement really, about being the GA Police.

Maybe there are too many people in the program that don't take the responsibility of being a Trustee as they should. We now have procedures to handle Trustees that are DETRIMENTAL to Gamblers Anonymous, and allowing meetings to go on, as you state, is very detrimental and undermines the program.

Awaiting your reply

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

11/4/11 - 1:12 PM

"I remember the way things used to be." When we apply that to GA and the interaction of the Board of Trustees, those who have been around can think back to a more relaxed GA. People basically did what they wanted and we were one big happy family.

11 years ago, I became a Trustee and was dropped into the deep end of the GA pool called the Board of Trustees. Ideas, concepts, changes, egos, attitudes, arguing, procedural upheaval and agendas that were much smaller than what we see today. Looking back at those days, we didn't get a lot done relative to the agenda and it would go almost without surprise that most items were defeated.

Skip to today, and the contrasts are stark. We get a huge amount of work done in the same time. Committee diversity and finished products have exploded. Approval rates on agenda items are skyrocketing because the quality of the agenda items has grown immeasurably. I won't even go into the expansion of our global footprint and the inclusion of many new overseas areas and what an additional load that has become.

But let me bring this down to what we are doing with new literature. In that area, we have had a bumpy history and I feel that the wheels have come off the tracks. Let's go back to the way things used to be. An item involving new literature came on the agenda and it had to go through 2 approval votes. Back then, we had to submit the proposed new items to the literature committee to have them edited before the 1st approval vote. Enter the 2 pieces of proposed new literature from Australia of roughly 150 pages each of material about the Recovery program and the Unity program. Larry B, from New York, and his committee labored for months to get these 2 items edited, and it was a gargantuan task. The editing was done, the items were submitted to the agenda, the BOT looked at the items and shot it down like enemy aircraft.

If I remember nothing else about that meeting, I will remember Larry's reaction and the expression on his face after the items were defeated. He was fit to be tied over the time that was wasted as a result of the failure of these items. He was 100% correct, in my opinion. That is what spawned the literature approval process to be outlined in print and to also give birth to the merit vote. Now it was fine with everyone to bring whatever anyone wanted to be approved by Board of Trustees, but the Trustees had to vote that it was interested in pursuing this path. Only then would it go the literature committee for the 'clean up'. Bravo to Larry for introducing the literature approval procedures and for the foresight and respect for the committee members' time.

Since that time, the literature process has been transformed and is not now what we all remember. Irrespective of what procedures are in place now, the author of an item of proposed new literature used to be able to pitch the item to the Trustees and it either passed or failed without any other influences other than the merits of the item itself and the discussions on the floor by the Trustees. Today, we have something different. The author makes the pitch and then begins to lose control of the item as it makes its way through the literature committee process. It is no more just about spelling and grammar, but now it is about editing and structural changes that are in the hands of the committee. What ends up coming up for the 1st literature approval vote could be very different from what the author originally envisioned. On top of that, the literature committee has come to believe that it can render an opinion about the potential passage of the literature, which could easily sway the Board in its voting.

So it's time to bring back some of the things we remember. That points directly to the literature process. The 2 biggest changes need to be in the area of the author having direct responsibility of approval for the work submitted right from the beginning of the agenda process until the very end of voting. Next is that the literature committee carry out the function that it was charged with, "To encourage the creation of new Gamblers Anonymous literature as needed and to revise, edit and or update existing Gamblers Anonymous literature." No more opinions please. The 60- day period to accept suggestions from the Trustees should be just that, suggestions. If the author doesn't like them, then they don't get added. The literature committee changes also have to be approved by the author with the same provisions regarding accepting or rejecting changes.

Now I have had discussions with others about the author retaining refusal rights and the people who are against all that I have proposed in this submission, base their position on the fact that the author of any item, initially owns the item, with the ability to withdraw the item without objection, right up until the moment discussion begins on the item. At that point, the item becomes the property of the Board. Motions to withdraw can only be

accomplished with a 2/3 majority. Therefore, the argument is that the author no longer has final say as to what happens to new literature when the changes are made.

To that, I say that even though the changes might strengthen the item, it is completely up to the author to understand those improvements and reject them if that is the decision. If the item fails, that is the sole responsibility of the author. Then it is subject to the 2-year rule.

Our passion for helping to improve the Fellowship should be unbridled when it comes to introducing new literature. If the tone and temperament, or look and feel of the item is going to change, the author should have the right to pull the item or accept any or all of the changes that are suggested. I call your attention to Linda S, past Trustee from San Diego. A few years ago, she submitted something for the merit vote and the literature committee radically modified her submission. She wanted it to be withdrawn, but at the time it couldn't be. It failed, but it ended up being presented as a completely different piece.

The author should decide what should be the final format of any piece of new literature.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

Should Agenda Item Submissions Be Done By Current Trustees Only"

11/17/11 - 6:39 AM

I'm looking for feedback in this item to see if I should add it to the Boston agenda. I have only a few years involvement as a current Trustee and I am curious why we allow past Trustees to submit agenda items. My understanding of Unity Step 2 is that I am a servant to my Area when they elect me to serve as a Trustee. I should be bringing their items and wishes to the Trustee Meeting. Once my term is over, I pass that responsibility to the next Trustee and he or she carries the desires of my Area to the Trustee Meeting.

Once I am a past Trustee, I would still have the option of attending and speaking on any issue at the meeting and I can submit items through the current Trustee for my Area. As time goes on, the number of past Trustees is going to grow and I fear two things: 1) The number of agenda items will continue grow proportionally with the number of past Trustees, 2) The wishes and needs of all Areas will be lost in the noise of all the agenda items that tweak the Guidance Code or attempt to manage the agenda of the Trustees Meeting.

Any other 'governing' body that I am aware of does not allow past members to submit agenda items. Why did GA make that exception? At the Los Angeles conference 36 out of 85 items were submitted by past Trustees, that's almost 45% of the agenda. Why is that? Are we, as current Trustees, not doing our job properly? Is it just easier to let these passionate GA members do the work for us? Why must the average GA member get a Trustee to submit their item and a past Trustee gets a special exception? The experience of the past Trustees is priceless and their voice should be heard on any agenda item that comes before the BOT; I just think they should follow the same procedure as any other GA member to get an item on the agenda.

I am looking for some feedback and background on this subject. I am confident some of you will not disappoint me.

In Your Service,
Paul S. - Area 17, Connecticut, Trustee 2010-2012

11/17/11 - 11:37 AM

Paul,

I am going to respond to this by the way that area 8A responds. We have several past trustees who are still very active in our area and they give Jeanne and myself advise often as the current sitting trustees. At the Cherry Hill conference, our area put one item on the agenda. It was given to us by a former trustee and Jeanne was the one who put it on. As you stated, we are the trusted servants of our area and we conduct the business of trustees for our area. Although I highly value the advise and the wisdom of the past trustees of our program, I agree with you that the current trustees should be the only ones putting items on the agenda. The reasons for this are simple. We are the ones who have to make a motion, second that motion, and finally vote on the item at hand. If we are trusted enough by our areas to be elected, we should be trusted enough to deal with the BOT business. As long as we remember 'Principles before Personalities', any member of GA, past trustee or not, should

be able to go to the trustee/trustees for their area and have an item put on the agenda. Something to think about!

YSIR,
Karen E. - Area 8A - Minnesota

11/21/11 - 2:20 PM
Paul,

As a past Trustee, I actually think what you say has some merit. However, I disagree with some of your argument. First, and I speak for myself with the agenda items I had on the agenda in LA. These items came from work that was done at a committee level and the committee chair felt it was appropriate that each member of the committee submit items so it didn't all fall onto one person. There is another past Trustee on this committee and he as well submitted items. We decided as a committee that this made sense. If we left it all to the current Trustees of the committee, the same items would have been on the agenda.

Second, yes, there are a lot of items put on the agenda by past Trustees. However, even if this right was taken away, the agenda would still be the same length. All the past Trustee would have to do is ask a current Trustee to add the item. It's my understanding that if any member wishes an item to be put on the agenda, it's the duty of the Trustee of that area to make sure the item finds its way to the agenda, regardless of how ridiculous of an item it is, or even if the Trustee disagrees with it. I have seen many times that a Trustee has made a motion on an item submitted by a member of their area and even though it's against our Rules and Procedures, mention that they don't agree with it, but because a member asked them to add the item, it was indeed added for the entire BOT to decide.

Third, you mentioned about tweaking the Guidance Code. I think most people would agree that the average GA member doesn't have a working knowledge of the Guidance Code. But, as Trustees, and then ultimately past Trustees, we become more familiar with this document. It then falls on everyone with that working knowledge to, as you put it, tweak it so it changes with the times. I believe that to be the case with all of our literature, not just the Guidance Code.

So, while on one level I don't see a problem with past Trustees losing the right to add items to the agenda, the length of the agenda, and the tweaking of any literature, would still be the same. Simply because any member of GA has the right to have an item added to the agenda, even if it has to be done by a current Trustee.

Pete K. - Area 13B, South Jersey - Past Trustee

Now That's More Like It

11/19/11 - 8:36 PM

To all the members who took the time to write on the Trustee Line this month:

Wow! Some really great ideas and responses this month. I love the passion that my fellow Trustee's have for this program, and I feel so privileged to be a part of it. This month we have been treated with some great writing on some very important issues facing this fellowship now and in the future. I have felt no need to post any comments, because others have made my point for me much more eloquently than I could. So, kudos to you all, and thank you for your passion.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California

Thanksgiving Thoughts

11/19/11 - 10:20 PM

To all my Brothers and Sisters,

In just a few days, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. I can remember past Thanksgiving dinners that I showed up late for, left early from, or missed out on completely due to this insidious disease I have called compulsive gambling. I always had a great excuse, reason, whatever you want to call it. Always another lie. This year, as with the previous 16, will be different. I will get up early to help my wonderful wife stuff the Turkey and put it in the oven. Later I will have the pleasure of watching my 8 year old daughter make her specialty, Green bean casserole. My 14 year old daughter will make the mashed potatoes

and gravy, and they will be delicious. I will put the finishing touches on the pies we made the previous night and doing whatever else my wife tells me to do, catching bits and pieces of the football game when I can. Soon I will carve the Turkey, and sit and eat, laugh and cry with my family and dear friends as we share all that we are grateful for. I know that when my turn comes the first thing I will say is that I am most grateful to God for sending me to Gamblers Anonymous over 16 years ago. If not for GA, I would not be able to enjoy all of the things I enjoy about this day. Due to this program, and most importantly the people in it, I am able to spend quality time with people I love and that love me. No casino, no card room, no race track could ever provide that. So, I would like to wish all members who read this a warm and happy Thanksgiving, and I hope and pray that if you are reading this and you don't yet have something similar, don't give up, because the miracle is waiting for you, just like it waited for me.

Your Brother in Recovery,
Levi B. - Area 2, Northern California
