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Trustee Line for November 2014

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 11/30/14.

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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Modified Closed Meetings

11/1/14 - 12:01 AM

I just want to understand this modified closed meeting item #6. Now that we have this title Modified Closed Meeting. This means that in this meeting AA and NA members, any kind of addiction can come to the modified closed meeting. In addition, does this mean that any time a closed meeting allows anyone in the meeting is no longer a closed meeting? A closed meeting is closed, no wives or kids. No one but gamblers.

So now, the closed meetings need to be informed of this so they can decide if they want to stay closed or change to a modified closed meeting. If they stay Closed, they have to know that only gamblers can attend a closed meeting. San Diego has three closed I think the other trustees who have closed meeting should go and explain what this mean.

Can someone tell me is that true?

If changed to a modified closed meeting. What are the guidelines for this meeting?

Does anyone speak who wants too?

Can someone who attend on a regular, be secretary of that meeting?

Can they other addiction groups bring their literature?

Does the closed mean only people with an addiction?

What does the closed mean in modified close?

Just trying to understand, what this really means? Because I do not understand this at all. Maybe being new, I am missing something. Can anyone answer some of my questions? So I can understand as you do why we voted for a modified closed meeting title.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

11/1/14 - 11:49 PM

Hello Karen,

I'm very glad you asked these questions, by writing my thoughts I may discover that my conclusions are not necessarily accurate. I'm sure many people have a better idea and more direct experience with this situation.

It seems Item # 6 was a change to the group handbook, which I believe is a very good reference point, with many suggestions which I believe help us all work off the same page. Presumably each group implements whichever suggestions it decides through group conscience.

I also believe this item # 6 has merely named a type of meeting that was already in existence in many places, in fact, I imagine there have been countless times where a new member has turned up requesting a family member or friend sit in and a group has allowed that. Likewise people with other addictions and media and other interested people.

Now there is a name for that in our literature, a modified closed meeting.

I believe that the vote to change to a modified closed meeting would have to be taken on each occasion a non member wished to attend, otherwise the meeting would just be an open meeting. I am unsure whether it is practice to have a format that allows for an ongoing modified admission policy without a vote on each occasion, interesting question. I presume not, I could well be mistaken.

To your other direct questions I would suggest this, the guidance code seems to be quite specific in that a Gamblers Anonymous group limits use, display and distribution to only approved and appropriate literature, which answers the question about outside literature, that answer being no. (Article VII section I)

Likewise, the guidance code states that only members of Gamblers Anonymous can be trusted servants of groups or intergroups so members of other fellowships who are not members of Gamblers Anonymous would not qualify to be a group trusted servant, regardless of how regularly they attend. (Article VII section 6)

Our literature also states that a group member should not comment on any other person's therapy until they have 90 days abstinence from gambling themselves.

According to the group handbook, the closed in Modified closed meeting will now be as stated in item # 6 just passed and not limited just to people with an addiction. Again, groups will presumably decide how each incidence is dealt with by their group conscience.

Presumably each group will decide it's guidelines at format meetings etc. although the Guidance code and Unity step four among other factors, will be considered.

Hope this helps.
Odie.B. Trustee. Area 36, Ireland S - E

11/4/14 - 12:03 AM
Hello Odie B,

Thank you for your answer to my questions. Reading what you said made me think if you were a modified close meeting; I would think that you don't have to ask the group because that what the definition said. I think you just have to let the group know that they are in the meeting so they can say if they want them in the room when they share, but they are welcome to come. I just feel like that is a title. Why would you change to a closed modified meeting when you can do a group conscience and let in who you want and not everyone? I wonder how many meeting are going to change to a modified close meeting. I think by definition of the group it should be call an open modified meeting because I don't see how it's close.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

11/4/14 - 7:37 AM
Karen,

The room always has to agree on what type of meeting you are holding. It's never up to one person. Yes, it is a title, but not just a title.

There are 3 types of meetings, but Open and Closed are the bookends, with Modified Closed in the middle.

With a modified closed meeting, the room can allow some non-GA person in for support for the new member or other outside people in for just the one

meeting. The room would have to approve that person's presence and individual room members would always have the option to ask that outside person to stand outside when they give their therapy. This could involve reporters, bookies, members of the court system, students working on papers, just to name a few. It can be a very delicate and sensitive situation, which is why the room always has the right to reject an outsider's presence.

In an open meeting, the member does not have the right to ask anyone who is not a GA person to step outside when they give therapy. Everyone who attends can stay, but the non-GA people cannot speak unless they are a GA member or someone with a desire to stop gambling.

That's the distinction. If the individual GA members can ask people to step out while they give therapy and allowing those people to attend only on a singular basis, then it's a modified closed meeting. If the members of the room do not have the ability to ask non-GA members in attendance to step outside and there is no restriction on how many times they can attend, then it's an open meeting.

Of course closed is just what it says, closed only available to GA members and those who have a desire to stop gambling. There is no latitude once a room makes this decision. Members who look at the meeting directory and see a closed meeting, expect exactly that, not an option to have outsiders in the meeting periodically.

This also includes members who are sent to the rooms from the courts. The court system does not have any jurisdiction over GA meetings. Someone under such a court order who doesn't have a desire to stop gambling, MUST find an open meeting. Even modified open meetings must abide by this, if the person does not admit to having a desire to stop gambling.

There are members who say we cannot refuse anyone to a GA meeting because of Unity Step 5. My response to those people is that the message can still be carried, just not in a closed or modified closed meeting. Unity Step 1 quotes the Ultimate Authority - group conscience. The room must abide by whichever designation is voted on.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

11/14/14 - 2:14 AM

Today myself and another area trustee attended a "Closed Meeting" to discuss with them their options for the San Diego meeting. Currently the meeting allows guests during birthdays.

Under the new definition: "A Closed Meeting would refer without exception to a meeting where only those with a gambling problem, or those who think they may have a gambling problem, with a desire to stop gambling, are eligible to attend and participate." Under this definition this San Diego meeting should not be a closed meeting but modified closed or open.

Unity Step #4 "Each group should be self-governing except in matters affecting other groups or Gamblers Anonymous as a whole." Some might say that, because a group is self-governing that the group could keep it closed and do as they want, but with the new definition of a closed meeting the group would be affecting others and Gamblers Anonymous as a whole; because they are not abiding by the new definition.

This group discussed their options of Closed, Modified Closed or Open. After much debate the group voted on being Modified Closed with allowing guest during birthday celebrations and working on possibly more modifications in the next few weeks.

Bobby W. - Area 3A, San Diego

Time To Talk '2 And 1' Again

11/1/14 - 8:35 PM

Time To Talk '2 And 1' Again I first became a Trustee in 2000 and over the past 14 years, I've sat out for 2 separate 1 term periods. However, I have only missed 1 Trustee meeting, which was New Orleans in 2004. Without question, Tampa 2014 was the best Trustee meeting I have ever witnessed.

A lot of things contributed to that. Without question, I believe the fact that there was no Conference being held in conjunction with this Trustee meeting, made all the difference. This is the result of no area submitting conference bids for 2 successive Trustee meetings. Tampa was the first incident of this provision being put into place.

For every other Trustee meeting with a conference, I felt the distractions were too intense to keep the Trustees focused on the items on the Trustee agenda. The Trustees in Tampa were there to work. There were no concerns about rushing through the agenda to get to dinner on the 2nd night. No rush to get done to get to the bar or dinner with the others at the conference. No distractions – period, the end.

I have been criticized for many years because I don't attend these after Trustee meeting events. The way I see it, I'm there to do the work of a Trustee.

So I say, let's resurrect the 2 Trustee meetings and 1 Conference a year platform. Have the conferences with a Trustee meeting in the Spring and just a Trustee meeting in the Fall. This will dramatically reduce the strain on Intergroup treasuries.

There will be those who opt for 2 and 2 per year. I say it is time to face the facts that what we have been used to for many decades, needs to change. The impact on our Intergroups finances is far too severe to have all begin to push the members in our areas to contribute more to support the Trustees. We can't ask the members to make revenue sacrifices if the Trustees are not willing to make expense sacrifices.

Oh, and one last thing... Everyone who is complaining that we didn't have the conference in a central location... get over it. Would those same people have complained if there was a conference at Tampa? No. I suggest those same people exert the same energy into helping the Executive Board find a location, if and when we run into this situation again.

Lastly, I am also elated over what I witnessed with the new Trustees and their level of participation in the Tampa meeting. Opinions and discussions were coming from everywhere, and evidently without fear. I say bravo to all the new Trustees. I hope some of the other more 'well-established' Trustees noticed this also. I hope it provides some motivation for those Trustees to get up to the microphone and make their views heard on each item.

Remember, one person can say something on an item that can completely change the sentiment of the Trustees and the outcome of a vote.

2 Trustee meetings and 1 conference a year. Let's make that happen.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

11/6/14 - 6:32 PM

David, I am glad you are not involved with any scientific experiments, that might be useful to mankind as a whole.

As your hypothesis and conclusion is so self-serving.

First of all I have been to the same number of Trustee Meetings as you. In fact probably I more since you had to miss New Orleans

I would say 95 % or better of the Trustees at these Meeting were never distracted because of a bar or a dinner. How presumptuous of you.

We have ALL come back for a 5th and 6th session either Friday Night or Sat. morning and finished our work.

To say that we were not focused is an inaccurate statement. We might have been tired But the Conference attached to the meeting was NEVER the cause of our tiredness. But we still managed to do the work for GA as a whole.

Let me explain: The Tampa Agenda had 35 NEW agenda items. Remember that number.

After committee reports, rules and procedures, and second votes 35 NEW items.

In Houston 46 NEW agenda items
In Orlando 107 New Agenda items
In Vancouver 58 New Agenda items and Elections
In San Diego 53 New items
In Boston 45 New items with re-alignment

I did not go back any further but all of these agendas required 5 and 6 sessions NOT 4

So If you want to look at a cap on NEW agenda items per agenda, that might be something to think about..to stay alert at a Trustee Meeting.

Also , Since the rules and procedures have been put in place the Meeting is running so much better than in 2000.
And the stream-lined committee reports have also helped with getting to the

meat and potatoes of an agenda

So lets look at the whole picture please and not blame a Conference on the length of an agenda

Now to the economic differences..PLEASE

Trustees still had to get to the meeting.....same as a conference
Trustees still had to eat and I am sure no-one went hungry..same as if there were a conference

Yes the facility was a little more economical per night than a conference facility...but so were the amenities..I'll give you that.
The registration fee was approx. \$20.00 lower than a conf. registration fee but that \$20.00 saving would not break an inter-group when it comes with so many perks..Hospitality room..audio personnel on staff etc

As you well know there is NO requirement for any Trustee to attend or purchase the meals of a conf. so your point is a mute one when it comes to economics.

I do not want to bore you any further since you made your conclusion to fit your hypothesis,{ without facts..just conjecture} and also fit your personal point of view.

But I would hope you would keep an OPEN mind to some of the facts I've pointed out to you

Richie S. - Past Trustee, Area 6, South Florida

11/7/14 - 4:55 PM

A few thoughts and a suggestion

I remember my first conference, it was at the Nevele in New York (Spring 2000). I live about 120 miles from that location. I was fairly new to program and many members in my area stressed the importance of going to these events. I certainly wasn't disappointed. The next conference was in Montreal (Fall 2000). I drove to that conference (8 hours). After that, I was fortunate enough to become a trustee and attended many conferences. I haven't been trustee for several years now, however I still try to make the conferences that are within driving distance. There is no doubt in my mind that the conferences has enhanced my recovery.

1) some intergroups only pay for the trustee part of the conference. The weekend conference is at the trustee expense, if he/she decides to stay

2) As I mentioned above, I feel there are enormous recovery benefits by attending an international conference for the GA members of the "host area" that attend. Most likely almost all these members would never have attended a conference that was not held in their area.

3) Suggestion would be to start trustee meeting Wednesday evening at 6:00 P.M. Thursday can have 3 sessions. Schedule Friday trustee meeting in morning and afternoon. That would make a total of 6 sessions, if needed. Don't believe a trustee meeting has ever had more then that. Conference would start Friday evening as usual.

Mike A. - Past Trustee, Area 14, Long Island

11/12/14 - 9:10 PM

I know that I am a new trustee but change is good. It is the only certainty in life. Being open to it eases the flow. I agree with you that there needs to be some changes because it is costing a lot. Just since the time I been a Trustee. The trip to Cancun that is going to cost a lot, I know that it is nice to go to these places but it has nothing to do with the reason we are there. The conferences wouldn't have as many people in attendance. I think that we could have more mini conferences for your own area to make money for ISO. The money used to go to the conference could go to ISO. Think about how much that would help ISO. I think that we can do a lot on a conference call it would be the same as coming to the mic. to speak. The conference call training for new trustee worked very well. I believe that it could work as a meeting to go over the agenda items.

I think that we should have (1) trustee meeting, (1) conference and (2) conference call meetings a year. That will save two trips a year. I believe that we can make the conference call work. It does cost intergroup anything for travel, or hotel. We can have a set time and days for the conference calls. Just like going to a conference, you need to be present that weekend for the conference call meeting. It should count as a trustee meeting and roll call taken.

Just as you said, we must make some sacrifices. There is a severe shortage in donations for ISO. There is a severe shortage in retention of people staying in GA. I believe that we must do what we can to cut expenses for the local inter-groups. We can't keep asking for more from the members. I hope that we are doing everything we can to support G.A. already.

We need to have some kind of fundraiser. Maybe local inter-groups can give ISO a percentage of total monthly collections. Maybe once a year each area has a mini conference as a fundraiser for ISO. Once a year have a dinner and dance fundraiser for your local area. Charge a fee per person. This dinner and dance would be for all family and friends.

I just want to end with this is just my opinion and I know everyone has one. So let's hear yours.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

Winds of Change

11/8/14 - 7:02 AM

Attending the Trustees meeting in Tampa was a very pleasant experience and I hope it is the first breeze signaling a wind of change. The discussion topics were lively and focused on helping new GA members and GA as a whole. The number of items attempting to change one or two words in our literature was small and several new committees were formed and ideas funded to get information out to the gambler who still suffers. Many new Trustees stepped into the discussions and brought excellent items to the agenda.

I hope the tone and direction of the Tampa meeting continues. For Cherry Hill, my desire is to see some thought put into public awareness and member retention. With the explosion in legalized gambling and the expansion of state lotteries and casinos, why has our membership stayed stagnate or declined in some areas? Are we doing the best job of letting people know that GA exists or are we relying too much on counselors and healthcare professionals to refer compulsive gamblers to use? Has GA done its best to educate these professionals about our fellowship? Is there any way to quantify how many people in prison are there as a result of gambling and educate the prison administration on the benefits of institutional meetings? How do we get our members to support and take a role in these efforts?

The Board of Trustees has expended a lot of effort over the last few years to get our house in order: cleaning up the bylaws, refining some glaring problems in the rules and procedures, refining the Guidance Code, etc. Let's take the next year and put the same energy, thought and passion into ideas that will make us more efficient and effective at reaching out to the gambler who still suffers and keeping in the rooms when he or she shows up at their first meeting.

Thank you to all the Trustees for a great meeting in Tampa!

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, Connecticut

11/12/14 - 9:10 PM

People here in the San Diego Area don't believe in giving back, there are I don't know how many names (Over 300) on the phone list yet we can never get anyone to take the positions in the rooms. I think that is sad but there isn't anything we can do about it.

The way this program should work is you give back to help make the membership strong for all the people because if we all do our part and give back, we will have a strong fellowship. The way it is now only certain people do service. When the old-timer leave there will be no GA because the newer people will not give their time to help or give back to GA.

People keep trying experimentations only getting worst never better. There is only one person who can help you and it is you. The problem is you can't fool yourself. I don't think there is much we can do about retention but Public awareness we need to do something like a billboard, letter size ads. We can ask the casinos to post them. We ask the stores if they have a board we can post the sign on with a put off phone number.

People who have been in the program for years and have never done any kind of service. We need to all do our share to keep this program running smoothly. We need to continually get new people in because they don't stay but if they stay a little while then they will be back. The retention is like 7% but the number of people who come in are unbelievable.

If we could get the word out, I believe that we would get all kind of first timers.

The retention I don't know but just getting new people in gives us a chance to help the person who still suffering.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

No Committee Report - Replace the Committee Chair(s)

11/11/14 - 12:56 AM

There's something that still lingers for me as a source of irritation from the Tampa Trustee meeting. It's the fact that 5 committee reports were NOT submitted. 7 reports were actually not submitted, but the Trustee Meeting Rules and Procedures Committee and the Trustee Removal Merit Panel Committee are standing committees and have nothing to update each Trustee meeting.

When these 5 committees were called on the floor, there were no reports of any kind. That means nothing of what happened during the previous 6 months was discussed on the floor in Tampa. That's insulting – period the end.

The committees are supposed to submit their reports to the Trustee website 2 weeks before the Trustee meeting, in order to be able to give a verbal report to the Trustees and if they submit after that time period, then the committee representative is only allowed to answer questions at the Trustee meeting. So what are we looking at here? Committee reports that miss the 2-week deadline still need to be turned in, yet these 5 were not.

For me, I don't see that such a situation should ever happen. The Co- Chair Liaisons are actively reminding the Committee Chairs about the 2- week deadline. If only 1 person is responsible to get a report in, then the Chair of that committee is acting irresponsibly. There has to be a backup person to make sure a report gets submitted. Maybe an additional person is needed to backup the first backup person. Not having that provision in place simply means the Committee Chair is not properly showing the necessary leadership for the committee.

Yes, we all have things that gets in the way of our obligations to this Fellowship, it's called life. Ok, so you can't get your report in by the 2 week deadline, for whatever reason. Does that mean you completely give up and don't submit anything? In my view, no. The Committee Chair has to bust his/her hump and make sure the backup plan is put into place in order to get that committee report submitted.

I believe there should be an agenda item that if no report is submitted by 2 days before the Trustee meeting begins for any non-standing committee, then the Committee Chair(s) should be replaced from those committees.

Committees are formed for a reason. Most of the time people are doing work on these committees. The Trustees deserve an updated report at a Trustee meeting. No report - then it's time for new leadership on the committees.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

11/12/14 - 9:10 PM

I have to say that if you are not doing the job, you need to be replaced. I also feel that if you didn't complete your report in time. At the conference, you explain why? I feel if you aren't going to do what is asked of the committee. Why be on the committee?

I feel that replacing the committee chair should be done and even the committee if need be. I feel like you shouldn't chair a committee if your heart is not in it. I believe that the chairperson should step down because they don't have the time to chair the committee properly.

So many people in GA are here for the potlucks and parties. People who ever do anything for GA yet they always say how GA has helped them. If only some of those people would step up and do their part.

I feel that there should be a back up person but the chairperson needs to appoint their back up person. The whole committee should be responsible for the report. Yet the Chair is the responsible party when it is not turned in on time. I feel that if the report is going to be turned in it should be at the next meeting or conference. The report should be posted on the trustee website to review. Alternatively, if there is no report at all then the committee is dissolved and if needed a new committee is formed to handle what the old committee did not do?

I just want to end with we all sometime take on more than we can handle so don't be afraid to admit you need help before it is too late. Also we need for

more people to step up make a different.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

Gamblers Anonymous Approved Literature

11/15/14 - 11:22 AM

At our monthly Intergroup meeting last week, the members of Long Island Intergroup had a terrific discussion as it related to GA approved literature (Guidance Code Article 7, Sections 7,8).

Having seen what the BOT goes through in order to create and amend literature, I think it is paramount that the program as a whole come to an understanding on this subject and as importantly, we as Trustees disseminate, educate and enforce these findings.

The following is a list of things I have seen done in rooms in varying areas of the country. I would like everyone to indicate their feelings as to whether or not these actions should be permissible given our existing bylaws:

1) GA Members type up page(s) indicating a theme for that particular meeting and disburse them in the meeting. In some cases, this could be a poem or story that means a lot to them and may include some of their thoughts on the subject matter.

2) GA Members read aloud from a piece of paper (or even from a text message or email received on their cell phone) during their therapy time a poem (although it is not distributed), a passage from the bible, or perhaps a letter they received from a loved one applauding their turnaround since coming into the program or something similar. In this situation, would your opinion change if the person committed the information to memory and recited it?

3) GA members come in to the meeting with or during the meeting jot down some of their thoughts on paper on the basis of what they heard or some ideas of subjects they want to share about during their therapy.

Lastly, would your answers to this change if it was an Open Meeting vs another format meeting? Would any of these be acceptable during the pinning portion of an anniversary if that occurred after the Serenity Prayer closed the meeting?

I look forward to some great participation on this.

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

11/25/14 - 1:52 AM

1. - GA Members type up pages for a particular meeting.

In San Diego, We have that kind of a meeting and we call it a speaker's meeting where someone is a speaker for that meeting. At this meeting, they are allowed to bring in papers and things to help them explain what they are talking about. This part of the meeting is the view of the speaker and it should bring experience, strength and hope to the meeting. The story of their life and why they came to GA.

2. - GA Members read aloud from pieces of paper or text message and email a passage from a bible or letters from love ones.
In San Diego, We do not allow any of the above. Texts or Phones are not use in the rooms. A phone can be used as a timer only. In the meeting I have been to there is no reading emails or letters. There is no reading of a passage from the bible. Never allowed. Yes, I would have a different opinion if they recited it from memory except for passage in a bible (no formed allowed) because then it is in the member words and I do not think it would be word for word but if it is good for them.

3. GA members come in to the meeting and jot down some thoughts on paper. In San Diego, we do allow someone to write down thought and things from what they heard to talk about when they share.

Lastly, I think it would be the same no matter what meeting. As far, as after the meeting is over it should not matter what they talk about or pass out. That is just my opinion.

Karen T. - Area 3A, San Diego

Cost Savings ISO

11/19/14 - 8:44 AM

After the discussion about lack of funding at ISO, I believe now is the time to eliminate 1 of the Trustee meetings. Do we really need to have 2 per year? NYIG uses 80% of our annual budget on Trustee reimbursements. That amount would be cut in half if we eliminate 1 of the trustee meetings. The ISO would benefit greatly, because our donation would increase 2 fold. Any thoughts?

Joe B. - NYIG Chairman, Trustee, Area 15 - New York

11/20/14 - 8:36 AM

If we go to one trustee meeting per year I believe we would be abdicating what our primary purpose is: to help the compulsive gambler who still suffers. Based on the way our current rules and procedures are, even those outlined in the Guidance Code, it would take that much longer to get things approved that could be beneficial to everyone in our Fellowship. Someone could come up with a piece of literature, or a change within our current literature, that would be extremely helpful, but would take six months to a year longer to pass. To me that would actually be detrimental to our primary purpose. While I am not unsympathetic to the funding of trustees, if we go down this road it should be to have only one conference per year, but maintain two trustee meetings. Money can be saved by going to one conference, but keeping the two trustee meetings.

Yes, we do need to increase money to come into ISO. But the way to do that isn't to eliminate a trustee meeting, but first and foremost to increase the number of lifeliners. I can't explain why there are not more lifeliners in GA. That's what we need to push more on, rather than potentially hurt our Fellowship by eliminating a trustee meeting.

Pete K. - Area 13B, South Jersey
