

**Area 61 Assembly
Via Zoom
January 30, 2021 Minutes**

Area Chair and Alternate Delegate instructed participants to rename themselves and designate as voting or non-voting member by inserting a "1" or "2" in front of their names, and outlined additional meeting protocol.

Opened with moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer

Area Chair outlined Assembly voting criteria.

Introductions – 52 in attendance at peak.

Secretary's Report - Anne M. – Reported that Assembly and Area Committee minutes are now on Area website. Presented minutes of 10/24/2020 Area Assembly.

Minutes approved. 30-0-1.

Treasurer's Report - Joe H.

Joe H. presented (Exhibit A):

- December report:
 - Expenses: \$3214.57
 - Income: \$2334.96
 - \$14,853.33 over \$8500 prudent reserve
- Preliminary January 2021 report (as of 1/18/2021)
- Finance Committee summary report (Exhibit B)
- Treasurer's report accepted 33-0-0.

Alternate Delegate's Report – Alison H. reported:

Has been a pleasure to participate with various officers, districts, and others on various service projects. Pandemic has reinforced what we already know – a love of AA, and a great deal of talent in RI.

A regional service project: She has served on NERAASA inventory committee with other AltDelegates, past Delegates, and others. Committee created two-phase inventory, and will report out at NERAASA business meeting. Not a sexy committee – it's inventory! But has been terrific opportunity to learn and grow through service. Encourages all to continue to communicate the benefits of general service.

Delegate's Report Steve L. reported:

Notes that our Northeast Regional Trustee, Francis, suggested that Alison serve on NERAASA Inventory Committee.

On December 14, GSO launched "fellowship connection" to replace MyPortal. New way of tracking registration info (including GSRs, etc.). Our new registrar will begin training shortly, if she hasn't started already. Last year's big expenses: early retirement (approx. \$1.5MM), eighth floor renovation/construction (complete), hardware to enable GSO employees to work from home, etc. GSO employees still working from home, but are contemplating return, and exploring Covid logistics.

New delegate dashboard issued mid-January. Final agenda items likely to be disseminated February 14 or 15 – possibly 96 agenda items (shortened from 114 items), including 30-40 tabled from last year. Currently virtual meetings are included in “international bucket.”

His committee, Report and Charter, will be making recommendations on revising the Service Manual, to be distributed conference week. Excited for all to see – completely rewritten (except for the Concepts themselves).

New interim general manager at GSO – Stephanie L (former Corrections Committee liaison). Her term is TBD, though plan is to have new manager by April 1. New manager will have a different role at Conference this year, given the short tenure.

Literature sales \$8.6MM. 2020 - Literature 41%; contributions 59%. Historically, closer to the reverse ratio. This year, we are relying more on contributions. This weekend is Board Weekend. 2020 final financials should be available in the coming week. Steve’s committee is Report & Charter – attended first meeting of the year.

Last year’s drawdowns were a point of contention (GSO drew \$4.5MM from prudent reserve, but did not spend \$500 K.) Reserve fund now covers approx. 7.74 months – same as start of 2020. Reason: re-forecasted budget – reduction in expenses due to Covid (e.g., travel). Preliminary draft 2021 budget shows revenue increase of \$2MM over 2020. Additional revenues slated to return to reserves. Contributions 2020 - \$10.3 MM. (2019 set previous record at \$8.9MM.)

About five or six agenda items are about virtual meetings. One agenda item calling for a new virtual Area.

- Question about virtual groups not getting group numbers. It may be addressed at conference. Steve referred to a couple of proposed agenda items regarding treatment of virtual groups in the same way as in-person groups in terms of participation in general service. Conference likely to act more quickly on these items (and others) than in the past, noting that AA traditionally moves very slowly, and is hoping to increase that speed.
- Question: Can a GSR of a virtual group vote at this Area Assembly?
 - Currently a GSR of a group that is part of D3 can vote.
- Final agenda items will be sent to DCMs.
- Question about access to Fellowship Connection, and DCM access. DCMs can likely view info for their districts, but Registrar will confirm.
- Member noted that all “groups” are included in meetings lists, regardless of whether they have a group number from GSO.

Archivist Report – Don B. reported:

Don Reported. Still entering inventory digitally. He noted a display donated by the old Elmwood group in Area office that he dusted off and set up in Archives area. There are additional Elmwood artifacts to compile. Area 1 (Alabama) Archivist reached out to Don to raise questions and collaborate regarding archived materials. If any group or individual has old AA items, consider reaching out to him to take off of your hands – including old area and district reports, etc. Received cd recording of last Longtimers’ Panel for Archives, and Archives will send copies to participants. Archives Committee is planning their breakout session for the RI Convention.

Registrar’s Report – Vacant. (not present).

No report.

Group or District Concerns.

Member of one group does not have meeting listed on website due to fear of Zoom-bombers. Asking for suggestions. They are considering only listing group secretary's info, so participants can be vetted, but they don't want to exclude new members

- One group created email bot – so an email is listed on Central Service website for access to that meeting. Zoom bombers don't have the energy to pursue.
- Another group has service position of co-host, who can interact with anyone in waiting room, and then watch them closely as they participate. If they are a Zoom bomber, they can be removed quickly.
- Another group reiterated assigning a member to watch unfamiliar participants.
- Another officer to send a non-conference approved article on preventing Zoom-bombing. A member suggested to go to Zoom website.

**Motion: Article can be shared.
Seconded.**

No objections - sense of the meeting is that the article can be shared. Article shared.

BREAK

District Reports

District 1 (2nd Tuesday 7pm) – April Y. – DCM / Joe F. – ADCM

April reported: Met on 1/12. 12 in attendance. D1 treasury in good standing, taking in contributions. Dean attended and shared info regarding open Treatment commitments on Zoom. Convention position still open.

District 3 (3rd Tuesday 7pm) – Chris C. – DCM / Nat S. – ADCM

Nat reported: Joy of service on 12/9, hosted by AA @ 8. Went well. Met on 1/15, with average attendance. Discussed Joy of Service. Thanks to those who supported the JOS and alcathons.

District 4&2 - Carol B. – DCM / vacant – ADCM

Not present - No report.

District 5 (4th Tuesday 6pm) – Jackie R. – DCM / Peter C. – ADCM

Jackie reported – have had difficulties meeting, due to Zoom problems and rooms not open. Some groups are meeting in person. No bad reports from that.

District 6 (2nd Thursday 7pm) – Kurt A. – DCM / Keith R. – ADCM

Kurt reported: Met on 1/14. Surveyed group regarding possible hybrid meetings, including District meetings. All in favor of a hybrid form, when the time comes. Linda updated on ACI, although little has changed. Don reported on Archives. They are reviewing District Guidelines. Discussed convention a bit. Members encouraged to sign up for NERAASA. Asking D6 GSRs to reach out and express that their district funds are low.

District 7 (3rd Thursday 7:30pm) – Tina B. – DCM / Charles G. – ADCM

Tina reported: Alcathons went very well. Shout-out to other DCMs, Alison, young people for technical help, AA@8 group for training – fantastic. Service workshops are open to all, starting at 7. They are going back to Traditions, will tackle a couple per month. They have a couple of new GSRs. Attendance has evened out at 14, about half of in-person

attendance. Difficult to understand the lack of participation. They continue to reach out with information, etc. Confusion could be with groups vs. meetings without GSO group number. Looking forward to seeing what comes from NERAASA.

District 8 (1st Thursday 7pm) – Enrique S. - Chair of Spanish Intergroup
Not present - No report.

Committee Reports

Archives (4th Wednesday 7pm) – Nancy R. – Chair / vacant – Alt. Chair
Nancy R reported: Still seeking Alt. Chair, and participation in upcoming events. Met on 1/27. Attended by four. Planning Convention slot – geared around bringing history of AA in RI alive. Seeking ideas for, and help with, doing so in a virtual environment. In action phase of spring Longtimers' Panel. (Fall went very well.). Committee is inviting four Floridians to participate – who got sober in RI, but now live in Florida. Tentative dates: 5/15 or 5/22, 10-11:30 am. Joe H. has agreed to be Zoom host again.

Corrections (3rd Wednesday 6pm) – Pride I. - Chair / Felicia – Alt. Chair
Pride reported: Grateful to serve in this position. Opened eyes to Traditions, Concepts. Thanks to Steve for sending info on carrying the message via tablets “inside the walls” and helping to connect to resources. Visitation in corrections facilities currently shut down. Pride acting as gatekeeper. Expressed thanks to those doing legwork liaising directly with facilities (Linda, Bob, Peter). Still meet every Wednesday at 6, which allows participants to attend 7pm meetings. Still working on literature, which cannot be distributed within facilities due to Covid. Shout-out to DCMs – need district-level coordinators. Has been communicating with Hispanic Intergroup, which hopes to get Spanish-speaking meeting into ACI. Will keep everyone posted. Thanks to the officers who open the meetings.

CPC/PI (4th Thursday 7pm) – Bob H. – Chair / Vacant – Alt. Chair
Bob H. reported: Met on 1/29. Four in attendance. Struggling with membership, and encouraging others to attend. Will give talk on Feb. 9 to Brown Medical Students. Renewing ad in East Bay newspapers, geared toward “high-bottom” alcoholics. He’s been reaching out to connect with other Areas, which are also struggling with attendance and interest. Looking to connect with school guidance counselors, health teachers, etc. Has been speaking with Area 11 for collaboration. Still in need of Alt Chair.

Grapevine (2nd Monday 7pm) – Kerra – Chair / Bob P. – Alt. Chair
Kerra reported: Last met on 1/11, with 7 in attendance. Current committee membership is 9, including D1, 3, 6 coordinators. Shouting out to other districts for coordinators. Carry the Message project is continuing into 2021. Info on Area website. Convention slot is 5pm on Saturday at Convention.

Treatment/Accessibilities (1st Monday 7pm) – Jason D. – Chair / Dean P. – Alt. Chair
Dean reported: Met on 1/4 with 6 in attendance. Virtual commitments are happening at Phoenix House. Due to Covid, Phoenix House had not been able to get virtual meetings into units, since units cannot participate together. Meetings required employees to use their personal devices, so meetings were inconsistent. Committee purchased a tablet, and received a laptop donation from AA member. The devices can interface, so

commitments have returned. DJ is in discussion with AdCare to get meetings into the facility. Have received confirmation that they can start, but AdCare HR needs to process and finalized, so Zoom info can be shared, and commitments can start. Anticipating a few days a week at 7pm. Will likely start by reaching out to Districts, to in turn, reach out to individual groups. Committee may try to set up AdCare the way it did Phoenix House, and is soliciting donations of old laptops, etc., wiped clean. The Phoenix House equipment is a loan from Area, and expectation is that devices will return to Area when no longer needed. Devices are each labeled as such. In-person meetings are helpful for those who do not have access virtually. Inviting members to email him if they know of in-person meetings, and are willing to take residents to and from.

- A member in a commitment group is looking to resume their old commitment at Phoenix House.
 - Member should email Treatment Chair. There is currently a considerable number of groups on Phoenix House commitment calendar. Encourages all members participating in commitments should review virtual commitment guidelines - on the Area website.
- Corrections Chair had good, smooth experience with connecting and bringing a commitment. Also noted that AdCare is currently not segregated, and they do have devices that have been used to participate in meetings of another fellowship.
- Prescott reported regarding Butler schedule, which is suspended until further notice. Encouraging all to keep Butler schedule in mind, as those meetings will resume.
- Member reported that her group has been trying to resume their commitments in Phoenix House and AdCare – had unsuccessfully tried to coordinate directly with facilities. Grateful for Committee leadership, as residents are very grateful for the commitments.
- DCM asking for guidance on soliciting devices that will help to anticipate questions. Asking Committee for something in writing for guidance.

Information Services (2nd Wednesday 6pm) – Andy L. – Chair / Becky T. – Alt. Chair
Andy reported: Exceeded 9000 unique sessions in past 30 days (traffic remains up), which translates into 25,000 page views. Friday update subscriptions almost at 1100. Notices are opened at rate of over 41% (typical statistic is @30%). Busy time. Majority of effort currently focused on convention.

Convention (1st Wednesday 7pm) – Mary K. – Chair
Mary K. reported: Convention coming up quickly! Thanked ISC for their work on convention, and getting registration info and form online. Have brought in approximately \$1500, but goal is \$6100 by March (ultimate goal is \$7100). Scholarship contributions are coming in – encouraged others to contribute . This will be 45th convention. Need volunteers to help with convention behind the scenes – to make calls, usher, co-host, and Zoom support. Will have meeting on 2/10 for those wanting to volunteer – will send Zoom invite. They need 20 in total. Participation can be “minor,” including minimal tech. Volunteer work defers the costs of tech support. Will be fun convention. Multiple breakout rooms will be available to join folks for coffee, during dinner, etc., plus some entertainment. Great speakers. Will have marathon meetings, and 45-minute play, “The Sound of Boozing,” available on Saturday and Sunday. It will be fun - please come!

RISCYPAA, (1st Sun 2pm) – Joe B. – Chair / Alex D. Alt. Chair

Alex reported: Not much to update. Elections will be held virtually Sunday 2/7 at 2pm via Zoom. All positions are open. Looking forward to seeing where people land, and what projects they will take on in the coming year.

Central Service

Hebert reported: Incoming calls have increased tremendously. Literature sales are generally down, but January sales increased. Group contributions enable Central Office services to continue – office, phones – thank you to the groups. New steering committee convened in January. Central Services DUI classes at CCRI and detox units – no changes – nothing happening in person. CS still not listing in-person meetings, per CS delegate reinforcement of decision from last month. CS keeps physical list of in-person meetings, members can obtain if they call the office. CS will send or give that list, together with Covid safety guidelines. Delegates meeting changed from 7:30 to 7pm in virtual environment. Open mic gathering on Saturday nights will continue. Info on CS website.

- Member on Intergroup phone hotline asking whether there a list of phone-only meetings?
 - Contact Sue C. during office hours for information.
- Hotline participant asking about Spanish-speaking meetings (virtual or in-person) had nothing to offer.
 - Hebert will pass along to Sue. Not sure of status of Spanish Intergroup.
- Member noted that every Zoom meeting is accessible by phone. Member can ask specifically for phone info.
 - Most numbers are “long-distance” – so those participating via landline may be charged for that call.
- Central Service and Intergroup both have Spanish Intergroup phone number available to share with those who want it.
 - Hebert will confirm with Sue whether those messages are received.

Southern RI Intergroup – Not present, no report.

Old Business

Bylaws Review

Anne led discussion and walked through the proposed revisions.

- **Motion: To approve amended and restated bylaws as presented.**
- **Seconded.**
 - Discussion regarding standing committee provision, and whether that should be in Guidelines or Bylaws. Amendment to bylaws clarifies that process. Historical perspectives added – traditionally done through Guidelines revision, but bylaws now contain express provision. Assembly must approve changes to both Bylaws and Guidelines.
- **Motion passed 32-0-0.**

LUNCH BREAK

Old Business, Continued

Area Guidelines Review

Joe H. led discussion, and walked through the propose revisions.

Discussion:

- Comment on website mission: would like to see changes to initial mission statement - can be addressed in motions after the full document review.
- Various suggestions to reorder provisions in mission statement.

Motion: To table the revised Area Guidelines discussion and approval, and revert to Ad Hoc Guidelines Committee.

Seconded.

Points of order:

- Is this agenda item a motion, having come from Area Committee? No, but an agenda item can be tabled. [But see later.]
- **Motion** should not include additional language, and therefore becomes: **to table Area Guidelines discussion and approval.**
- Chair can select anyone as parliamentarian.

Motion failed 9-16-5.

Guidelines should have been presented as a whole first, then if voted down, wordsmithing can happen.

Chair clarified: **Motion to approve Guidelines has been seconded, and is on the Assembly floor by virtue of having been recommended by Area Committee.**

Motion: to approve specified changes in Mission paragraph, reordering elements of purpose to prioritize Area content.

Seconded.

Discussion:

- Isn't Central Service the keeper of the meeting list?
 - Discussion regarding paper vs. digital lists.
 - ISC Chair emphasized purpose is to enhance.
- ISC member notes that mission statement presented aspects in specific order for a reason.

Motion passed 27-3-1.

Why two domain names? When started, committee was unsure of whether to be .org or .com; also wanted to keep mail server (.org) separate from website server (.com).

Motion: replace instances of “website committee” with ISC or Information Services Committee, with grammatical adjustments as appropriate.

Seconded.

Motion passed 29-1-0.

Discussion to clarify Section III, Composition regarding Past Delegate being appointed by Area Chair.

- Any other committee chair appointed by Chair?
 - Yes, Finance Chair.
- Is Finance a standing committee?
 - Distinction drawn between Finance Committee, as Finance composition is largely by virtue of elected position, with additional members appointed by Area Officers serving on Finance Committee. Prefers ISC proposal that ISC and Area Chairs mutually agree on Past Delegate. It is in the spirit of past practice, and unity.

Motion to change language to change to Past Delegate is mutually-agreed upon by Area Chair and ISC Chair.

Seconded.

Discussion:

- Website serves as face of AA, and is therefore inherently different. Important that there is oversight. Having ISC participate in that decision nullifies the process.
- Point of order: Should Area Chair not share opinions in discussion of a motion?
 - Chair may share, but is not permitted to vote.
- Current ISC Past Delegate – cart before the horse. Current ISC approached him before selection was made. A group of volunteers feeling they are part of the process is important.
- When committee started, reason for past delegate involvement was to ensure technology use was consistent with Traditions – e.g., social media - major sweeping change that would affect anonymity; etc. Important on ISC end – so they don’t get so far technologically advanced that they lose sight of that.
- From another past delegate: not a large pool of past delegates to pick from. Would therefore make more sense for past del, Area Chair, and committee to mutually agree. They all have to work together. If they were past delegate, they would not want to be appointed yet unwanted by ISC. Mutual agreement is important.
- Another past delegate – arrangement will not work if it’s not a relationship. Raised issue of content, not just technology. There is no policing, we trust people to do their jobs, but sometimes things go wrong.
- Designate immediate past delegate? Wouldn’t always be a good fit. Also, immediate past del is Convention Chair – they already have a job.
- Another past delegate – everyone who has a big job should understand the commitment involved. But everyone is in the position to work for “us” – i.e., AA members. Would like to see more excitement on website; convention information was not visible until recently; would like to see committee sit down to evaluate how content decisions are made. Need not be an IT person to create content.

Motion passed 28-0-4.

Members wanted to confirm which Guidelines document is the primary, superseding document.

ISC member question regarding content and process. Should guidelines contain a process for ISC to include content?

Member noted punctuation errors.

Sense of the meeting that non-substantive corrections will be made and accepted.

Raising issue of competing priorities. ISC needs input on content, because even within Area 61, work must be prioritized.

- Point of clarification – how does existing language constrain?
- Asking for mediation source for “all parties.”
- Assembly is mediation body?
 - Problem is that Assembly only meets quarterly.
- What about time constraints? Can time/and resource priorities be shifted (e.g., meeting list)?
 - Great deal of time is spent on aspects other than meeting list. One person dedicated to meeting list.
- Has our website gotten too big for number of volunteers to handle?

Call the question.

Seconded.

Question called 26-4-1.

Motion: to approve revised Area Guidelines as amended by Assembly.

Motion passed: 29-3-1.

Excess Funds Review Findings

Joe H. presented. Recommendation to form subcommittee to refine.

Motion: to buy the big scanner.

Seconded.

Improper Motion.

Discussion:

- Purpose of subcommittee? To act on these recommendations.
- Question regarding amount available. \$14K in excess of prudent reserve.
- Total cost of proposals is approximately \$7K.
- Suggestion to take Grapevine item last, as other items are more succinct.

Clarification: **Motion to approve finance recommendations has been seconded, and is on the Assembly floor by virtue of having been recommended by Area Committee.**

Discussion:

- Clarify convention seed money – was to make whole to ensure convention spending does not end in deficit.

- How can we approve or disapprove without a bottom line – particularly Grapevine subscriptions and scanners.
- Suggestion: to cap total recommendations at \$7K.

Motion passed 22-10-0.

Listing in-person meetings on Area Website.

Discussion – we are doing disservice to AA community by not listing in-person meetings. We should be

Motion: Area website continues to refrain from listing in-person meetings until next Assembly can further discuss in April.

Seconded.

Discussion:

- Changed mind from last time – is having a hard time answering phones at intergroup without being able to refer them to a website.
- Does not think we should put off until next Assembly. The time is now.
- Difficult topic, but when they were getting sober, willing to go to any lengths.
- Great to have both, but reservation is that making sure that in-person meetings are following state guidelines.
- Must this be done at Assembly, or can it be done in next Area Committee meeting? Would like to be able to have input from GSRs.
- Doing a terrible disservice to newcomer by not listing meetings on website. Another obstacle a newcomer would have to overcome.
- We can't tell a group how to run, so how to ensure groups follow health guidelines?
- Torn between principles of primary purpose and autonomy, noting can't harm AA as a whole. However, unaware of AA receiving negative publicity from in-person meetings. Supports listing in-person meetings.
- Not feasible to ensure each group's compliance with Covid guidelines; therefore recommends against taking the risk.
- One member described how his in-person home group meets. Currently not that difficult to get newcomers information on in-person meetings. Not an issue for this member, as his meeting is currently at capacity.
- Against "silencing in-person" meetings, noting technology-averse members. There is now a directory of "non-organized" meetings that may not have been vetted.
- Another member – whether their group could rigorously follow Covid guidelines and procedures. Is interested in seeing disclaimer on website.
- "We are the only state" not listing in-person meetings. Not listing in-person meetings speaks to excluding people. Focus should be on helping another alcoholic, not hiding from liability.
- From a Treatment standpoint, Treatment centers would like to have a place to send released individuals. Although treatment centers have the ability to get information, it is difficult. Some people are indigent and can't get on Zoom.

Call the question.

Seconded.

Question called 23-5-1.

Motion fails 2-24-3.

**Motion: To post face to face meetings on the website.
Seconded.**

Discussion:

Understand that some do not have use of technology, but not seeing the logic that necessitates need for online meeting list, when members can call Central Service and receive the information they need, as they did pre-technology.

**Call the question.
Seconded.**

Question not called. 20-10-2

Discussion continued:

- Not sure where the information that we are the only state not posting in-person meeting. Member has viewed other websites, and confirms that RI is not the only state not listing in-person meetings.
- Reiterated request for opportunity to bring to District. Representatives at this meeting are supposed to be representing others. Can this be approved by Area Committee in the future?
 - Area Committee cannot override Assembly actions.
- Member read disclaimer on in-person list. Reiterated concern that “underground meetings” are occurring.
- Member noted that venue will set cleaning guidelines, not AA.
- If we listed in-person meetings on website, that could mitigate against “underground meetings.” We are beating a dead horse.
- Member noted that Central Service is still listing virtual meetings only online, and maintains a physical list. Regarding “policing” groups, these are different times.

Motion passed 26-5-3.

ISC members requesting folks to reach out to groups to ensure accurate information for website.

- Minority opinion:
 - splitting AA in half, with one website listing, and another not listing. Problem is unity.
 - By not listing in-person meetings, we are not preventing people from attending meetings. Members can still call Central Service or Intergroup and get the meeting information they need.
- No motion to reconsider.

New Business

Budget Increase for Rent

Signed new lease for rent increase, but in different increments; therefore, budget should be adjusted accordingly.

Motion from Area Committee: Increase rent line item to \$16,000 in the budget.

Seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

Area Registrar Submission to the Assembly

Area Committee recommended Donna T. as Area Registrar. She qualified with general service experience, and demonstrated commitment to service.

Donna T. unanimously approved as Area Registrar 26-0-1.

Ask-It Basket

No virtual ask-it basket, but members can ask questions. No questions submitted.

Upcoming Events

- Finance Committee Meeting – February 15, 7pm
- NERAASA – Virtually, February 26-28
- 45th Annual RI State Convention- Virtually, March 19-21
- Area Assembly April 10, 9 am (Roundtables prior – please register w/ Chair)

Anniversaries

Prescott, 27 months

Donna, 23, 1/12

Pride, 13 years, 12/7

Mary K, 40 years, 12/23

Westerly Friday Night - 73rd Anniversary on February 26.

Meeting closed with Responsibility Declaration.

(Minutes prepared by Anne M.)