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Trustee Line for May 2015

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 5/31/15.

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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We All Make A Difference

5/1/15 - 9:46 AM

With the 2015 Spring Conference only a few weeks away, the Committee is hard at work dotting the I's and crossing the T's in order to make this conference a memorable one for all attendees.

Under the heading "Cherry Hill Conference Info" on the home page you will find fliers for the WALK-A-THON, GOLF OUTING & all 3 EXCURSIONS. All 3 excursions are less than 20 minutes from the hotel and all the excursions will start on Wed. for our guests that have planned to come in early.

The staff at the hotel are well prepared for us and the beautiful pool area will be open. Although the temperatures may change drastically, the average low this time of year is 60 degrees with an average high of 80 degrees. So bring your bathing suit and your sun screen!!!

We have 2 fabulous banquets planned for you with great entertainment, food and a guest speaker Saturday night that I'm certain you will enjoy. Our workshops will begin on Friday night and we will have workshops all day Saturday.

Everything aforementioned for the most part are about unity and fellowship. The relationships I have made with my brothers, sisters and my higher power at these conferences have helped to shape me into who I am today. They have given me strength in situations that I never dreamed were possible. I'm forever grateful to these conferences for the overall experience, strength and hope I have gained through the numerous workshops I have attended, the lifelong friends I have met and the countless hours spent in therapy rooms in the middle of the night.

Let's not forget the main purpose of our gathering. The Trustee Meeting! The Trustee meeting is hosted by the sponsoring area who through the hotel provides meeting space, coffee, equipment, etc.

Guidance Code Article VIII, Section 7: The Board of Trustees primary function

shall be to ensure the most effective exchange of thoughts and ideas between all Gamblers Anonymous groups and to act for our Fellowship in an official and executive capacity on all matters affecting Gamblers Anonymous as a whole, except in matters coming under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents or International Executive Secretary.

The last conference to be held in Cherry Hill was in 2011. The trustee meeting last well into Friday night. Most trustees missed out on the festivities that evening, ex. entertainment, workshops, meetings and fellowship outside of the trustee meeting room. With the large agenda facing all of us, history could repeat itself.

The Cherry Hill Conference Committee is well prepared for this. Friday night banquet will be held in a different location in the hotel so as not to interfere with the trustee meetings in the event they go into a 6th session.

We are doing our part because it is our responsibility to the fellowship.

We trustees also have a responsibility to the fellowship as a whole, our local areas and to one another to come to this and all trustee meeting prepared. Most of us will have read through the agenda and all of it's attachments. Most of us will have read the Committee reports. Most of us will have a discussion and/or a debate with one or more persons in regards to all items on the agenda. Most of us will study the By- Laws, Guidance Code and Rules and Procedures among a few GA publications. Then there are those who will not. For those who do, Hooray!! for those who do not, perhaps it's time to take responsibility for the important job you have taken on. It's not too late to get on board, no pun intended, and become a well informed driving force in the Board of Trustees.

Many will return home after the Conference and reflect on the BOT meeting. Their determination on whether or not it was a successful meeting may entirely depend on the outcome of individual items or the length of time it took to finish. Having participated in many trustee meetings, I always find myself reflecting on the agenda, my behavior and the behavior of the fellowship as a whole. In a discussion I had with another member a month ago, he said something I had never heard before, or maybe I never listened... He said "I mean what I say, I say what I mean and I try not to say it meanly". If we all agreed on everything and thought the same, there would be no reason to have a meeting or discussion, we would just pick someone to make the changes knowing they would be the same changes we would have made. This is not the case. As passionate as I may feel about an item, there is going to be an opposing view equally as passionate. Am I right, am I wrong? That's for the body to decide for the good of all. My reaction is the only thing in my control.

I'm looking forward to seeing old friends, new friends and friends I've yet to meet. I'm looking forward to a healthy exchange of ideas and thoughts at the trustee meeting that ultimately will make our fellowship stronger.

Love you all and can't wait to see you in Cherry Hill !!!

Andy R. - Area 13B, New Jersey
1st Co-Chair BOT
on behalf of the 2015 Cherry Hill Spring Conference Committee

How Deep Is The BOR Quicksand

5/2/15 - 3:13 PM

I had the occasion to look at the BOR minutes from the April meeting, and one thing struck me as disturbing.

All the items that deal with the BOR were reviewed in the New Business section. 2 of the items, which were tabled in Tampa, deal with a more comprehensive method of handling the minutes of decisions made by the BOR. They are items 19 and 20 for Cherry Hill. Basically, it is an effort by Odie B, our brother from Area 36, Ireland South/East, to get the BOR to explain why items get rejected or deferred (tabled).

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised at the outcome of the vote by the BOR at 0 in

favor and 7 against. This caused me to once again think about the resistance the BOR has with true transparency. Stating in the minutes that the board discussed an item is not enough. Why can't we know who said what about it and any other item?

The BOR members get elected based on little if anything that has to do with business experience, and we only know how the BOR members vote on any item of business, nothing more. Why can't we know who is just sitting their for each meeting and those who are actively coming up with questions, ideas or explanations? Why can't we know why any item fails or why the item is tabled?

The Board of Trustees passed an item a few years ago for the BOR meetings to be on a conference call for other GA members to listen in. Attendance was low, so the BOR unilaterally shut it down. The technology exists for simple solutions for conference calls. BOR members from outside 200 miles have to call in. Why can't the ability for people who want to listen to the BOR meetings to do so without affecting the meeting itself? It can easily be protected from the general public, but no one on the BOR wants this, so it doesn't happen.

Getting an item on the BOR agenda is hugely different than what we had with previous BOR administrations. Yes, I can give the BOR credit where it is due. But back then it was solely up to the Chair, as to whether or not the item would be heard. Thankfully, the current BOR Chair takes every item and puts it on the agenda, when he gets them. However, the limitations are still there that the non-BOR member can't even pitch the item to the Board unless they are physically present. Such a stance has negatively impacted those items. There is no rationale for that posture. The BOR doesn't seem to be in any kind of hurry to open up those procedures and allow for changes that would help that process.

I understand that some issues need to be private, such as a review of employee salaries and other related items, but for the rest of the business of the BOR, we are not aware of any of the reasons cited why things are voted on the way they are. A unanimous decision to vote against Odie's 2 items, effectively kills them before they are let out of the box. It is my hope that Odie still pursues these items to the point of shaking some sense into the BOR to open up the minutes with detailed explanations as to who, what, where, when and why.

No doubt there will be some BOR members who will say that the Board of Trustees doesn't do this. I hope that doesn't happen, because it will be embarrassing for whomever it may be to bring up that example. This agenda is 77 items in length. The BOR generally has 3 to 4 items. These decisions of the BOR affect the Board of Trustees. We don't need a quick summary from the BOR Chair at the conferences, we need details from each BOR meeting so that the authors may possibly amend the items before the agendas close.

If you have ever noticed, the minutes of the BOR meetings are generally 4-5 lines long. That's because a template is used for the minutes with an allocated amount of space. Sorry, but that doesn't work for me and many other GA members. If outlining the discussions regarding these few items is too difficult for the Recording Secretary, then we need a new Recording Secretary. We are not talking about extra costs in printing longer minutes. It is distributed via the Internet. It has also been printed in the monthly Bulletins. That could all be a moot point if we go to a digital version of the Bulletin. But it looks like that Cherry Hill agenda item is also dead on arrival because the BOR voted against item 66 from Area 8 with results of 1-5

While we are at it, Bill B. from Florida has an item on the agenda to put the Combo Book into electronic form for sale. That also went down on a vote 1-5. If there are reasons for that, why can't we know before the conference so we can respond accordingly based on the reasons discussed by the BOR? Oh, wait a minute, isn't that where I started this posting?

I got chided last month for complaining about another issue with the BOR and was told to put my name on the ballot for the BOR election if I had so many great ideas. This way I could walk the walk. I explained why that wouldn't happen, but the evidence from the April BOR meeting minutes continues to confirm that the BOR is still a closed environment. That's not who we should be or how we should act. But then again, I am only one person. Does anyone have any ideas about how to break through this wall of granite?

5/8/15 - 8:45 AM

Greetings All,

This would be funny if it were not so serious an issue, so let me get the light – hearted stuff over with before I start getting serious, really serious.

It's not important that my items 19 and 20 were defeated 7 zero at the BOR stage, in fact the BOR vote should not play any part in how the BOT views or votes on these items. not just because the current BOR makeup will change, nor because no consideration was given to my point of view nor any of the items below, which, by the way are not merely my opinion, but are for the most part contained in Roberts Rules, mainly because after seeing all these factors combined, any BOR which produces a unanimous decision against the items having reflected on those facts would not only be disregarding the principles of this fellowship but also writing a whole new bunch off the top of their head, no doubt claiming a common sense alien to the rest of us, one that is neither common nor sensible.

Indeed the seemingly standing practice and now inevitable, predictable and customary attempts by consecutive Chairs of the BOR to influence the vote of the BOT on these or other items should be rejected in the clearest possible way. I'll certainly resist them in the strongest possible way.

The point is, the vote on any item by the BOT should not be influenced by a BOR vote.

I'm not saying we should pass these items to spite the BOR, just that we should open our minds before we make up our minds, not have them closed by undue influence by the BOR, which I will resist in the strongest possible way, if that doesn't make me sound like a parrot.

Speaking of parrots, after all, expecting the BOR to pass these items would be akin to asking turkeys or ducks to vote for Thanksgiving, which begins with a capital T, just like Transparency.

Unless of course the BOR took the trouble to understand it's responsibilities, perhaps even take heed of Robert's Rules guidelines or, dare I say it, bother their heads with the point of view of their fellow members.

Speaking of parrots, turkeys and ducks, don't think for one minute I am suggesting the membership of the BOR are or behave like headless chickens.

Speaking of parrots, turkeys, ducks and headless chickens, please nobody get on their high horse and write in complaining this is an attack on the members of the BOR, I don't do personality stuff, I'm referring to the entity and the corporate culture passed on and inherited, which, by its inherent self-defeating nature worsens with each passing and as such, we all take the responsibility as we elect and we define what we accept.

Now, let's stop monkeying around and really get into serious:

The wall is indeed double layer granite, which leaves little hope of it ever being breached, but the quicksand moat around it is shallow, very, very shallow so if we can get a message through that moat, there's a light there somewhere.

It's a lot like the green pepper problem, until you realize a green pepper is in fact just another pepper that has not yet matured, it's the skin that's indigestible, just peel off one or two layers and everyone's happy.

We have allowed the BOR as an entity to develop into a self-serving unit which is trapped in the twilight zone where it neither understands nor implements its responsibilities. There is no chink of light through which the most basic, fundamental facts can enter and transcend the thought process, honed and developed as a protectionist measure over many years.

Those simple facts include, you must be a member of this Fellowship to be a member of The corporation, therefore you are obliged to be more than a little mindful of the principles of Recovery, unity and guidance.

The primary purpose of standing rules are to enhance the functional operation and application of the By – Laws.

If the B. O. R. are doing this they should proudly display their brilliance not keep it hidden like a secret formula. The spike in hope, confidence and transparency would be an immense benefit.

Standing rules are specifically for administrative and functional purposes, they can be adopted by a majority present, suspended at will in the same way, rescinded or amended.

They are ALWAYS superseded by the By-Laws, therefore their use MUST be recorded in the minutes, for the purposes of transparency and as a safeguard, period.

The ISO may be entitled to use standing rules for administrative and functional purposes, but those standing rules must be visible, clearly accounted for in any records or minutes, their origin, use, amendment, suspension, revision or rescission must be documented and available to members, transparently.

The BOR is probably not so entitled to have standing rules and is most definitely not entitled to conceal anything from the membership, least of all use of a tool that allows making it up as you go along and is likely to look non-transparent.

Standing rules (SIC Ongoing rules) in the case of the BOR should be in the By-Laws and their use MUST be in the minutes.

The undocumented use of standing rules by the BOR leaves it looking ever more non transparent, this has the same negative effect on the morale of an organization as if it were actually non – transparent. It does little to offer HOPE to the current or prospective membership. It does not fit in the democratic or spiritual foundations of this fellowship and it is very bad business for this corporation.

Unless my memory or thinking is impaired, I believe you must be a member of this fellowship to be a member of The Corporation, well worth remembering by both those who run or ran for the BOR, particularly those of the mindset that common sense as dictated by any single member somehow takes precedence over the guidance code and unity steps. (Direct rejection of the very idea of accepting outside contributions)

What does offer HOPE to this fellowship and Corporation is the fact that there are people who ask questions and seek answers, wherever they may be and whenever they may come.

Is it the case that these standing rules are or have been used to influence votes or voters without any record? That would be truly astonishing.

The functional relationship between Standing rules and the By–Laws is something that should be understood by the B. O. R. in order to prevent even the semblance of possibility of abuse of process, if it looks unpalatable it probably is a green pepper.

All the more reason to consider the need for business oriented qualifications or experience as a requirement to go on the ballot.

That allows me to segue to this train of thought, wherein I feel lies the starting point to sorting out the Behemoth that is the entity called the Board of Regents, to dig it out of the quicksand before it drags the whole show down with it, peel off the layers of well intentioned but completely misguided protectionism and short cut taking, the ugly veneer of opacity clouding the fact that, as things stand, it makes little difference who we elect to the BOR, until it changes from an entity that operates with a false sense of power and disdain to the membership, to one that realizes this, without the corporation there would always remain a fellowship, without the Fellowship, well, even the entity called The BOR can work that one out.

So, keeping it simple, what I started out meaning to say was this, I have some ideas, for example, doing a searching and fearless SWOT analysis on the Corporation / BOR / corporate culture which should quickly reveal the need for

an urgent change in Corporate culture far beyond the reach of the long time personality driven entity that is the BOR, but fortunately well within the capability of many members of our fellowship.

As a starting point, a suggestion only, if any past, present or prospective BOR member doesn't know what a SWOT analysis is, why is or was your name even on the Ballot in the first place?

Just a miniscule taste of what a basic SWOT analysis would reveal, the experience, strength and hope offered by the fellowship is a real strength, bolstered by the Wisdom and open minded willingness of our members and leaders. Conversely, the experience and stated position of the BOR, where common sense over – rules equally the principles of recovery / unity and Guidance, on a whim, depending on the makeup of a closed to the membership BOR meeting, is a real weakness.

So, is it a dead duck or do we have the guts ? Open your mind before you make up your minds.

Looking forward to seeing all in Cherry Hill, speaking of parrots, ducks, turkeys, headless chickens and horses, I'll be flying over, beats getting saddle sore and anyway, my horse can't swim. Actually, I don't own a horse, never did.

Odie. B. - Area 36 Trustee, Ireland S - East

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|-----------------------------------|
| Official Telephone Meeting |
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5/23/15 - 9:04 PM

Normally I believe that Past Trustees should be seen and not heard. However, as my prerogative, I wish to address one issue: the Telephone Meeting Guidelines. I would to see the guidelines removed and re-written so that more meetings could be listed, as long as they are compliant with the Unity Program and Guidance Code.

I must admit that while I was a Trustee I cautiously voted for guidelines because I felt that getting one phone meeting would lead to others. I couldn't have been more wrong. Based on the guidelines (please read them on this site) it is almost impossible for any group other than the present to be able to start a listed meeting. I did attend another unofficial meeting and loved it (Max H, Joey A from Brooklyn, and Louie "The Pipe)". What an amazing wealth of program and wisdom in those three.

I also must admit I frequently attended the phone meeting in the beginning. I moved to Arizona and the nearest available meeting to me was at least an hour and half drive. I enjoyed the sharing and it was fun to hear other members I've known for many years. I was also strengthened by hearing newcomers share. When the honeymoon ended, I noticed becoming upset at the procedures and tone (depending on who was chairing) and decided that for my own recovery it wasn't worth attending anymore.

The first thing that got to me was the topic. I don't mind topic meetings, but I did mind be told how I was supposed to share on the topic (again depending on who was chairing the meeting). Next were the comments. One meeting someone shared that they had a meal at a casino. The chairperson encouraged the group to reflect harsh comments. But the thing that got me the most were the direct violations of the Unity Program and Guidance Code.

First of all nowhere in the Unity Program, Guidance Code, or any other literature does it require a member to declare their abstinent date. Also, and even more egregious is changing the rules without a group conscious. I enjoyed hearing new members share, however the committee, on their own decided to create a newcomers meeting. One of our most basic principles in the Unity Program reads "Our leaders are trusted servants, they don't govern". In this case they governed. They easily could have taken a group conscious at the end of the meeting when the phone lines are open, but I guess they know better than the fellowship.

If this is our only meeting it should be inclusive and set a tone that the Program

(Unity, Recovery Program and Page 17) speaks for itself. (Attraction rather than promotion). It doesn't need demigods to micromanage their experience.

I tried to put something on the Agenda to gut the Telephone Guidelines and make the listing of meetings based on adherence to the Unity Program and Guidance Code. The Telephone Committee's mission would have the function of making sure meetings were in compliance and to offer technical assistance when needed. And, if they do, their first job would be to declare their own meeting invalid.

I submitted the item in time, but was told it was not given in proper format. I think it was in proper format. I asked the Chairman to let me know if the changes I made were okay the evening of the deadline. He didn't respond till the next day and I was told I had a 5:00PM Eastern Time Zone deadline. This was impossible because of my job and a three hour time difference. I asked the Chairman to be reasonable and allow me 5:00PM my time, but was told he wouldn't be able to do it. Enough said.

I'm hoping I will have the opportunity to address the BOT in Cherry Hill and make a case for Item 62 on the Agenda. As stated, I do believe it violates the Unity Program. Then the BOT can rewrite the Telephone Meeting Guidelines, based on what worked and what didn't, to truly reflect the Group Conscious of the fellowship, not just the 5 members of the Committee. I would welcome any feedback while I'm at the Cherry Hill Conference.

With Serenity,
Marc L. - Area 3D, Prescott, AZ

5/24/15 - 9:09 AM

I wanted to reply to this posting as there were a number of things I disagreed with.

First off I disagree with the feeling that Past Trustees should be seen and not heard. Although, I don't feel they should bring agenda items forward at BOT meetings I would I hate for the fellowship to lose all of that experience from those that have served in the capacity.

As a Committee Member, I'd prefer to hear unbiased opinions (either here or at Cherry Hill) from others so I won't comment on the specifics of the bulk of the content. I will say I unquestionably disagree with most of it.

I would like elaboration on the following:

"I submitted the item in time, but was told it was not given in proper format. I think it was in proper format. I asked the Chairman to let me know if the changes I made were okay the evening of the deadline. He didn't respond till the next day and I was told I had a 5:00PM Eastern Time Zone deadline. This was impossible because of my job and a three hour time difference. I asked the Chairman to be reasonable and allow me 5:00PM my time, but was told he wouldn't be able to do it. Enough said."

Is the implication that there was intent on the part of the BOT Chairman to block you from having your item added to the agenda? My take is (from your words) that you participated on the call for an unspecified period of time. The meeting started on or around February 2014. Even if you stayed with the call for 6 months, you still had 7 months to put your item on the agenda. You wait until seemingly a day or 2 before a deadline that was in place for close to 6 months and it becomes either the Chairman's fault or by the enough said remark again potentially an attempt to stonewall your item?

Please explain because it is that apparent type of reference that takes the focus off the item itself and questions the transparency within the processes for a Board you served for a considerable period of time.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Cherry Hill,

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island

5/25/15 - 3:54 PM

Dear Trustees,

I would like to bring your attention to Agenda Item #59, which is a new 4th Step Guide. As you ready yourselves to meet at Cherry Hill, I'd like to point out a few items of interest concerning the Agenda Item:

The agenda item will be changed to reflect that this new guide will be available in addition to the existing 4th Step Guide.

The worksheets attached to the item are adapted WITH PERMISSION from the publisher.

Please read the Guide before examining the worksheets. The worksheets do not — and should not—make sense unless they are used by implementing the Guide itself

Looking forward to seeing you in Cherry Hill, where the author of the Guide and I will be available to answer any questions about the Guide or the Worksheets.

Your Grateful Sister in Recovery,
Jeannie B. - Area 8A Past Trustee, Minnesota
