

# Trustee Line – Current Issue

August 2019

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## Thoughts From The Trustees – Current and Past

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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

Subjects that receive submissions from at least 13 different people, will trigger an email blast to all the current and past Trustees, signifying a 'Hot Topic Alert' on the Trustee Line.

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Louisville Item #24

July 31, 2019 – 7:14am

Unfortunately, I had to cancel my trip to Louisville at the last moment. I knew as the agenda was being compiled, that this was going to be an important Trustee meeting, and I wanted to represent an additional Trustee from the area that appeared to dominate the controversy that was contained within the Trustee meeting agenda.

Our area's Intergroup meeting is held on the last Monday of each month. 30 minutes before, the 6 Trustees get together to discuss issues that may need the attention of the Trustees. During this last meeting, the question of what the International Trustees in Louisville deemed to be a violation of Area 12's local Guidance Code regarding the requirements for being a Trustee, appears to still be unresolved.

To reiterate, the provision in question basically states that the requirements are for 39 WEEKLY meetings, 2 years, and 27 meetings in Area 12 rooms. After the Louisville meeting, I asked about this and the response was that the only thing the Trustees found as a violation was the insertion of WEEKLY. I further asked about the 27 meetings, to which I was told that it wasn't an issue. The subject came up at this past month's Area 12's Trustee meeting, and the statement was once again reaffirmed. The use of the word WEEKLY was the violation, and the 27 meetings in Area 12 meetings was just a 'matter of interpretation'.

When a Show of Hands was requested in Louisville asking if the above provision in the Area 12's Guidance Code was a violation of the GA Guidance Code, the result was virtually unanimously in favor that this Area 12 provision was a violation of the Guidance Code, with just 2 dissenting votes. I am still baffled as to why a motion was not made to clearly affirm this position.

Having said that, I have spoken with numerous other Trustees who were in attendance in Louisville, and their version of what happened was to the contrary of what I have been told locally. They said that the 27 meetings in Area 12 was the primary focus. Sure, the thoughts out there for those who are reading this posting may be that I have only spoken to Trustees with whom I have a relationship. Yes, I do know a lot of Trustees, but the basis for my question to each of them, was what they found to be a violation of the Guidance Code. They all filled in the blank, uniformly, it was the 27 weeks in Area 12 meetings. The 'weekly' provision was mentioned, only after I specifically asked them about it.

I am looking at the agenda minutes, more specifically item #24. With what was evidently a very heated topic, the result is "Discussion Only". That is inexcusable for such a serious matter. Non-Trustees looking at the minutes are asking why such an important topic of violating the Guidance Code, resulted in no action by the BOT.

No disrespect to the author of the item, but the item was poorly structured to result in proper motions, specifically because there are 2 items contained within the sourced provision that are specifically in need of validation of whether or not they individually constitute violations of the Guidance Code. Concordantly, you will see 2 items on the Montreal agenda that will settle this issue with a roll call vote; 1 for the insertion of the word 'weekly' and the other for the insertion of the '27 meetings in Area 12'.

I am also irritated that phrasing surfaced after the meeting that the BOT only 'directed/instructed' Area 12 to come back to Montreal with a change to the Trustee requirements in the Guidance Code. That is untrue, because the BOT never instructs any member, Intergroup or Area on anything. The BOT either has discussions, which are opinions of individuals, or motions that are binding decisions of the BOT. Saying that a discussion was the source of 'instruction' is disingenuous.

Because of this 'discussion only' result on item #24, and a few other such decisions coming out of the myriad Area 12 Louisville agenda items, we now have the beginnings of anarchy within the Fellowship. Members, Intergroups and Areas can now violate any provision without any concern of corrective action by the BOT. Enforcing that thinking was the 29-38 vote to nullify the Area 12 Trustee election of last year. That goes in direct opposition to the earlier 8-90 vote to do away with the Guidance Code. So, we want to keep the Guidance Code, but not allow the BOT to enforce its provisions? This is a bigger problem than many people realize. But that's for another posting on the Trustee Line and more importantly other conferences.

If you were in Louisville, why don't you tell us how you came to whatever decision you have on item #24?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

### Canada Visa Rules

July 31, 2019 – 5:09pm

A member at the Louisville conference raised the issue about "potential" problems with changes to Canada Visa rules and regulations as it pertains to those of us with "slippery" criminal histories. I submitted an advance request for entry (to attend the Montreal conference) and was rejected based on my criminal record. I also know of two individuals who were returned (at their own cost) and another that was held in Montreal for five days before being allowed to return, also at his own expense. I encourage anyone travelling to Montreal who has a previous felony (and certain misdemeanors) conviction apply for a tourist Visa ASAP so you won't encounter any problems with your travel plans.

Bob C., Area 3A, California

August 17, 2019 – 11:06am

A fellow member has information that may be helpful regarding this issue. If anyone wishes to receive this information please contact me (Steve P., Area 6B) via e-mail and I will share the link he provided with you individually. My e-mail address can be obtained from the Confidential Trustee Listing.

Steve P., Area 6B, Florida

### Unity Step 6

August 1, 2019 – 2:19pm

Gam-Anon is a fellowship which contributes to the recovery of many of our brothers and sisters, and is dedicated to helping our loved-ones. I personally have benefited directly from the love that Gam-Anon shares. I believe that all GA members (GA as a whole) do.

Gam-Anon is referred to in more than a couple of pieces of our literature; we even have a link to their web site on ours'. All of these are technically violations of Unity Step 6, yet we, who are

specifically charged with guarding our Recovery and Unity steps from corruption, have been allowing this to go on. I remember a motion about 15 years ago to remove the link to Gam-Anon from the GA web site. After being warned by the Chairman that the link gave the impression that we approved of and endorsed Gam-Anon (an 'outside enterprise') we (me, too) still voted to leave the link there.

Since then there have been several motions to remove references to Gam-Anon from our literature. All motions failed, indicating consistently that the Board of Trustees recognizes the value of that fellowship to ours', and WANTS the connection.

I believe we have an OBLIGATION to not only endorse Gam-Anon, but to advertise their existence and purpose as another 'tool' in our 'recovery tool box'. They do only good for us. Let's stop treating them like adversaries.

In closing, I've always been in favor of adding those 6 Magic Words: "With the sole exception of Gam-Anon" to the beginning of our Unity Step 6, and intend to submit a motion to that effect for our agenda in Montreal. Let's stop treating them like an 'outside issue', and instead recognize them as allies in the war against our addiction.

Do you want to DO something for the good of the entire fellowship of GA? Please support my effort to change Unity Step 6 in Montreal.

Your friend in recovery,

John B., Trustee, Area 13, Pennsylvania

Montreal Agenda; Item #8; "Weekly"

August 15, 2019 – 3:23pm

In my opinion, insertion of the word "weekly" into anything doesn't really have anything to do with anything. All of our groups "meet together on a regular, weekly scheduled basis" or they're not considered a group.

The real problem that should concern us (the BOT) is that the Area (number omitted) has made its own rules to even be nominated for trustee. Our Guidance Code doesn't address nomination of members to serve as trustees, only elections.

If a member meets the requirements set by Area (number omitted) for nomination, he/she would also meet the requirements in the Gamblers Anonymous Guidance Code to be elected a trustee. Hence, the election of that member would be valid, even though the nomination process was obviously a means to block anyone that Area (number omitted) deemed undesirable.

So, I guess the question is: Does an area or intergroup have the right to set their own requirements and responsibilities pertaining to the nomination of trustees other than those contained in the Guidance Code or the Responsibilities of International Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous as listed in the Gamblers Anonymous Information Package? For example: "must have attended ALL intergroup meetings in the previous 12 months; must have attended ALL area banquets, picnics, mini-conferences; and any other intergroup functions in the previous 12 months.

I realize this is all semantics, but the way we word one thing can change everything.

Food for thought.

John B., Trustee, Area 13, Pennsylvania

August 19, 2019 – 10:53pm

The insertion of the word “weekly” definitely DOES impart a distinct meaning to the 39 meetings requirement, and people who are wondering whether this makes local area Trustee requirements stricter than what is currently in the Guidance Code should pay close attention to the nuance. The Guidance Code only requires that 39 meetings be attended in a given year. It doesn’t say how this requirement is met and conceivably (although not likely), it could be met by attending 7 meetings/week for any 6 weeks out of a 52-week year.

By adding the word “weekly” into the equation, the implication is that a Trustee must show up on someone’s “roll sheet” (if one is maintained) for 39 out of 52 weeks. Conceivably, this would preclude a Trustee from taking 3+ months of travel in any given year. It doesn’t take much to see how much more restrictive this is than what is in the Guidance Code. We really need to pay attention to the fine print here because words DO have meanings.

Jack R., Area 1A, California

August 20, 2019 – 1:30pm

A guy walks up to a deli that advertises “Deli Open 24 Hours”. The door is locked, but he sees an employee inside, sweeping the floor. The guy knocks on the door and the sweeper says they’re closed. The guy points to the sign and says “it says open 24 hours”, to which the sweeper answers, “yeah, but not in a row”.

Just as “Open 24 hours” implies “in a row”, that’s not always what it means. However, the “deli” is always a “deli”. Since all of our groups meet on a weekly, scheduled basis, my interpretation of “39 meetings” is just that: 39 meetings of groups. If someone wants to attend a meeting per day for 39 days, or 1 meeting a week for 39 weeks, either way it still adds up to 39 meetings.

The beauty of a stream like the Trustee Line is that we can discuss “Nuance” and “implication” before the BOT meeting, rather than restricting the arguments to 2-minute time limits.

As an addict, I am inclined to try to “interpret” a rule to agree with my opinion, thus making it easier to accept. Consequently, “right or wrong” becomes “maybe or maybe not”. Interestingly, in an effort to maintain our assertion that this is a “suggestive program”, the authors of much of our literature have left many terms that could be important open to discussion and/or “interpretation”. If anyone wants to see where this can lead, they should come to a BOT meeting and watch us beat a word to death.

I don’t particularly like a lot of rules, but I certainly need structure in my life; and it was severely lacking for a long time. I need guidelines, and I need them to not be ambiguous. If we’re going to put something into our Guidance Code, it should be clear and, if it’s a requirement, it should be enforceable. No “maybe – maybe not”, if it’s “right” it’s “right”.

Lastly, there’s some pretty important stuff on this month’s Trustee Line; what a shame that only 5 people care enough to contribute.

John B., Trustee, Area 13, Pennsylvania

Looking Forward to Seeing

August 23, 2019 – 10:30 PM

Hi to all trustees. Looking forward to seeing all of you again at the Montreal BOT. It is completely amazing to me that somehow, though our opinions may vary, we still manage to work the process and complete much. I know sometimes it gets tough in the meetings, but we manage over and over again to “place principles before personalities”. Be safe in your travels.

Clair W – Trustee Area 2B – Greater Sacramento