General Service Board Meeting

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. held its quarterly meeting via videoconference on Monday, November 1, 2021. Linda Chezem, chair of the General Service Board, presided. The chair warmly welcomed all present. All committees met during the weekend. Highlights of committee reports appear below:

Archives

The committee received a verbal report on the status of the updates to the Archives Oral Histories Kit. In discussing the item, the committee referenced outdated text and suggested incorporating resources on digital platforms that might be used to conduct oral histories in the present environment.

Conference

The committee reviewed proposed agenda items, some of which were related to participation of virtual groups in the service structure. While these items were not forwarded to Conference, the committee agreed to send the background for these items to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee that is exploring ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure.

The committee received a progress report from its Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload (EDW). The committee continues to discuss the effectiveness of the translation of background. An upcoming survey of area delegates will provide better perspective on the topic.

Cooperation with the Professional Community/ Treatment and Accessibilities

Cooperation with the Professional Community: Analytics on LinkedIn show we have over 1,500 followers, from fields such as Civic and Social Organizations, Marketing and Advertising, and Hospital and Health Care. A focus group of professionals who work in the field of mental health is being put together to explore what questions professionals may have about A.A.

Treatment and Accessibilities: The committee agreed to continue reviewing the draft pamphlet revisions for “Bridging the Gap” and will continue to review stories for an update of “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic.”

Corrections

The new Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.) database successfully launched on September 28. The database will greatly improve the process of matching persons in custody with outside members. It was also reported that the assignment provided AA Grapevine with a list of members in custody to be added to the Carry the Message program and receive free subscriptions to Grapevine/La Viña. In addition, the committee discussed a request to reconsider using the language of “person in custody” to describe an inside A.A. member in A.A. literature and agreed to forward this item to the 2022 General Service Conference.

Finance

G.S.O. Financial Results

The committee reviewed the G.S.O. unaudited financial results for September 30, 2021. Gross literature sales year to date are $8,613,803 which is 76% of the 2021 budget of $11,400,000 and $1,477,745 more than last year. September gross sales were $746,519, the first time since June that monthly sales did not exceed $1 million. Gross sales are averaging $957,089 per month compared to a budget of $950,000 per month. To meet the budget, monthly gross literature sales need to average $928,732 over the last three months of the year.

Contributions year to date are $7,416,647, which is 74% of the 2021 budget of $10,000,000 and $293,439 more than this time last year. Contributions are averaging $957,089 per month compared to a budget of $950,000 per month. Monthly contributions have declined from $940,632 in July to $762,965 in August to $736,734 in September. To meet the budget, monthly gross literature sales need to average $928,732 over the last three months of the year.

Total operating expense for the period ending September 30, 2021, is $11,543,559 which is 73% of the budget amount of $15,887,354 and $512,887 less than last year. Adjusting for depreciation, total operating expense in 2021 is $652,671 less than last year. Payroll and benefits are...
year to date are $6,978,975, which is 73% of the budget amount of $9,518,557 and $567,919 less than last year.

The combination of the above revenues and expenses resulted in G.S.O. reporting a preliminary surplus of $1,448,089. This compares to a budgeted surplus of $747,312 and a deficit of $612,104 at this time last year.

The G.S.O. financial report was accepted by the committee.

**Grapevine Financial Results**

Francis G. presented the unaudited year to date results for the period ending September 30, 2021. Average paid circulation of the Grapevine magazine was 65,975. This compared with a budget of 67,658 and 2020 actual of 68,982.

Total income for the first nine months of the year was $1,500,920 which is $402,655 more than budgeted and $270,313 more than the $1,230,607 achieved in 2020.

Total costs and expenses of the magazine for the first nine months were $1,221,103, which were $115,347 lower than budgeted and $229,715 less than the $1,450,817 in 2020.

After adding interest earned, there was a net income for the period ending September 30, 2021, of $279,817 compared to a budgeted net loss of $238,185.

The Grapevine financial report was accepted by the committee.

**La Viña Financial Results**

For the unaudited results for September 30, 2021, average paid subscriptions for La Viña were 6,392 compared to 5,675 budgeted and 7,500 in September 2020. Income from magazine sales was $48,801 compared with a budget of $19,647. After deducting the costs and expenses of $308,821, a shortfall between revenue and expenses of $260,021 resulted for this service activity. This compares with a budgeted shortfall of $288,515 and a shortfall of $269,648 for 2020. The shortfall for the La Viña service activity has been funded by a transfer from the General Fund of the G.S.B.

The La Viña financial report was accepted by the committee.

**Grapevine and La Viña preliminary 2022 budget**

Francis G. gave a verbal update on the Grapevine budget process and indicated that materials would be provided to the trustees’ Finance and Budgetary Committee at its next meeting in January 2022.

**Reserve Fund report**

As of September 30, 2021, the Reserve Fund balance net of Grapevine subscription liability is $12,806,277, which represents 8.48 months of G.S.O. and Grapevine expenses. (Target is 9-12 months.) The balance includes the $250,000 the G.S.B. voted in July to transfer to the Reserve Fund. We are currently in a multi-year process of transferring the funds of the Reserve Fund from one bank to another.

**A.A.W.S. report on self-support**

The committee met on October 18, 2021, and discussed gathering shared experience on virtual baskets. The committee also reviewed the updated Self-Support Communication Plan draft, noting that it moves away from a pandemic focus to how the Fellowship’s contributions provide services to give A.A. members resources to do their Twelfth Step work.

The committee also discussed the Self-Support Card, suggesting a review by the 2022 Conference Committee on Finance for inconsistencies in the self-support packet regarding to whom contributions are sent.

**General Sharing Session**

Regional trustee Francis G. welcomed everyone to the first “hybrid” General Sharing Session and invited attendees to share on any topics people felt strongly about as well as any “elephants in the room.” With that he placed a toy elephant on the podium and invited the sharing to begin.

The G.S.O. general manager brought up several questions that could benefit from wider sharing. These included: How can we manage the enormous workload on employees and trusted servants and still find some work/life balance? Considering current budget concerns, can we return to printing and mailing our newsletters rather than just relying on digital distribution? Similarly, how can we balance budget realities with wanting to make all of our materials available in all three languages? A G.S.O. employee followed up on the topic of translation and the effect of having nearly 180 agenda item submissions, with many on a similar topic. The strain on resources could be helped by summarizing agenda items which many areas do to keep the volume of background more manageable. Another member observed that translation is a complex matter that can’t be solved by software or outside agencies. The Conference has let us know they want everything translated into all three languages but right now the desire for translation has outpaced our ability.

A general service trustee wanted to bring several of the elephants together, noting that it took two full interim meetings plus the Board Weekend meeting to address all the items on the trustees’ Literature Committee agenda. Concept IX talks about flexibility, prudence, and vision. Maybe there are creative ways to allow more space for discussion, more room for vision? A regional trustee observed that not everything needs a committee or subcommittee. Also, while she respects all items submitted, as a trustee she has a mission statement to consider what is our best use of time and resources. What is best for the Fellowship? She also expressed concern about attendance dropping off at service events in her region. How can we
The committee also discussed proposals for a Fourth Edition of *Alcohólicos Anónimos* and development of a draft Fifth Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The committee also discussed proposed development of a pamphlet entitled “Experience, Strength and Hope: A.A. for the Transgender Alcoholic” and took no action. The committee agreed that due to the overwhelming number of pamphlets currently in development or in revision, as well as the projects carried over from the 70th and 71st General Service Conferences, new pamphlet requests cannot be addressed at this time.

**Nominating**

The committee created a list of four Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee applicants to interview during the January 2022 General Service Board weekend for two vacancies and recommended to the General Service Board that Cathi C. serve as trustee director for a two-year term on A.A. World Services, Inc., to succeed Jimmy D.; and that Tom H. serve as trustee director for a two-year term on AA Grapevine, Inc., to succeed Francis G., with both assignments to take place following the April 2022 General Service Conference.

The committee continued discussion of the General Service Board “Appraisal of Board Service Roles” report.

**Public Information**

The committee discussed the podcast pilot episode in development. Next step is to develop a podcast plan. The committee discussed the post-production efforts of the two 2021 Conference-approved PSAs and noted that the target distribution date and press release is November 2021.

**A.A. World Services**

Since its July 29, 2021, meeting the A.A. World Services Corporate Board has met twice: September 20 and October 29. During this same period, the A.A.W.S. Finance, Publishing, Technology/Communication/Services, and Internal Audit committees each met once. Additionally, the A.A.W.S. chair and general manager met weekly, and the A.A.W.S. Board met twice for A.A.W.S. Board/Executive Management Information Sharing Sessions, August 26 and October 13.

**Administration**

Return to the Workplace: On average, about 32 G.S.O. employees are working from the office each day during the workweek. Due to individual circumstances, some employees continue to work from home with hybrid schedules.

The general manager attended his first A.A.W.S. Strategic Planning Session September 20, bringing forth goals to carry out office-wide. The central theme of the goals is rooted in the development of “Service Standards” that will address how services are delivered. One goal is to continue expanding the native functions offered by NetSuite. Another is to address ongoing issues of translation. These issues are not solely focused on the growing translation needs surrounding the General Service Conference but the number of translation requests throughout the office as well. A working group will begin to look at possible solutions for the strain this puts on our resources.
The Technology Services team continues to play a critical role in the ERP Project and the aa.org development project. The team began drafting an Incident Response Plan to mitigate cybersecurity risks and refine current cybersecurity practices and policies for 2022. The TS team is also working on the materials to support the Business Continuity Plan/Disaster Recovery Plan and played a critical role in the design, development and implementation of the new Corrections Correspondence Service.

Services Summary

Conference: The design, planning and implementation of the Equitable Distribution of Workload (EDW) process has overwhelmed the Conference assignment. By September 15, the Conference desk received 178 proposed agenda item forms, some on the same items, which were processed and forwarded to the appropriate committee/board for the fourth quarter General Service Board weekend.

Cooperation with the Professional Community: The committee reviewed a list of past events where we have exhibited, along with upcoming opportunities, to determine where we can be a presence in carrying information about A.A. to professionals.

Corrections: The new Corrections Correspondence Service (C.C.S.) launched September 28, 2021. Since the launch, 267 members were paired who had been sitting in the old system. Phase two will focus on added features and increased functionality.

Group Services: The ICOAA seminar took place recently with workshops and panel presentations done by G.S.O., A.A.W.S., AA Grapevine and La Viña. There were some tough conversations and challenges but there was also some connection and healing.

G.S.O. has not resumed its tours. However, participation in Area 11’s virtual G.S.O. tour was organized and facilitated by the Group Services assignment in which G.S.O. employees from different departments “greeted” and engaged with A.A. members and provided a true tour experience.

International: Since August the International desk has attended four zonal meetings including our home zone, the REDELA (Meeting of the Americas). All zonal meetings have taken place online, apart from the REDELA. On October 2 the G.S.O. in Guatemala held a pre-REDELA livestream event through their private Facebook group. Multiple countries from Central and South America participated.

Literature: Services available through G.S.O.’s Literature desk, including providing resources to local A.A. committees and secretary support to committees, continue. This is the time of year when new trusted servants are elected and G.S.O. service desks, including Literature, welcome new chairs and provide service material to support their local efforts.

Nominating: Work began on updating election materials for an in-person 72nd General Service Conference.

Public Information: As of October 2021, a draft podcast pilot episode has been recorded and is being edited within our Communication Services department.

Regional Forums: Final planning stages for the Virtual East Central Regional Forum, November 19-21, 2021, are underway. This will be the fourth and final virtual Regional Forum for 2021. Forums in 2022 will return to in-person settings and may include a virtual component.

Treatment/Accessibilities/Remote Communities: The Treatment desk continues to answer letters from persons in treatment and to send A.A. materials.
Board Committees

Finance: For details on A.A.W.S. Finance, see the report of the trustees’ Finance Committee on page 1 of this report and the summary of unaudited financial results on the last page of this report for the nine months ended September 30, 2021.

Publishing: The Publishing department has returned to the workplace, settling into the new 8th Floor workspace, effective October 1.

Preliminary Analysis of Five-month Test Pilot on Reduced Shipping Charges, began May 17 — concluding October 18, 2021: “Small Orders” (under $25), along with orders placed by Intergroups and Central Offices, and Big Book orders increased during the shipping pilot.

The Publishing department has been working closely with the TABB Committee (subcommittee of trustees’ Literature) on the development of the plain and simple language version of the Fourth Edition. A pool of candidates has been developed — demonstrating professional experience writing in the fields: health and wellness, self-help, education, spirituality, psychology, sociology, government, policy-making, and more. Writing samples will be requested and reviewed.

Members and IGCOs were notified of supply chain, paper, print and delivery disruptions. The disruptions and delays are expected to continue in 2022. This is a worldwide and industry-wide issue.

The Board approved the following recommendations brought forward by the Publishing Committee:

- That the eBook Our Great Responsibility in English, French and Spanish be sold at a list price of $9.99.
- That the reduced shipping test pilot be implemented as policy for the Publishing department and that appropriate advanced announcement be sent to Central Offices and Intergroups by G.S.O. management.

Technology/Communication/Services (TCS): The board accepted the October TCS report highlighting the following information:

Progress report on Website Activities: Development of page templates is near completion. A.A. Staff, Archives and Publishing are reviewing the new pages.

Progress report on Website Design: Development of the final dynamic pages is almost complete. Data migration from the existing site is complete.

Progress report on Meeting Guide App: The App team launched the third major application upgrade. The App team has received positive feedback regarding this latest release, which included features requested by our users and entities, as well as code updates.

The Board approved the following recommendations brought forward by the TCS Committee:

- That the 2021 Third Quarter website analytics summary, 2021 Third Quarter Meeting Guide App Report, 2021 Podcast Third Quarter Report, 2021 Second and Third Quarter YouTube reports and 2021 Third Quarter Google Ads report presented on October 29th be forwarded to the trustees’ committee on Public Information.
- To continue to review and vote on reports at the TCS committee meetings, while continuing to forward reports to trustees in advance of TCS meetings.

Internal Audit Committee (IAC): The board approved the following recommendation brought forward by the Internal Audit Committee:

- That the Human Resources RACI Matrix be submitted to the Board.

Additionally, the A.A.W.S. Board reviewed General Service Conference proposed agenda item submissions from the Fellowship for consideration.

1. The A.A.W.S. Board to create an Intergroup-Central Office Committee (IGCO) manned by a non-rotating staff member.

- The A.A.W.S. board took no action to forward this to the General Service Conference. After discussion, the board agreed there are a number of non-rotating positions throughout G.S.O. who are accountable to the IGCO offices, including the General Manager, Publishing Director, and the entire Member Services department. Also, considering that the GSC doesn’t structure the office by advisory action; however, the GM structures the office with AAWS oversight.

It was noted that while the Group Services coordinator does not rotate, there are many benefits to rotation which are cited in Concepts IX and XI as well as in the A.A. Service Manual.

2. That the General Service Conference consider a proposed agenda Item to produce the Service Manual, including the 12 Concepts, in a compact disc (CD), audio format, as has been done for the “12 and 12” and the book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

- The A.A.W.S. board took no action to forward this to the General Service Conference. Format changes are within the purview of the A.A.W.S. board. Therefore, the request and background will be sent to Publishing department for consideration.

3. For the General Service Conference, thus the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, to discuss the most equitable and fair pricing model for both A.A.W.S. and Central Office/Intergrups.

- A motion to table the submission for discussion during the December A.A.W.S. Board meeting was seconded and carried.
AA Grapevine

Since the quarterly board meeting July 31st, The AA Grapevine Board of Directors met in person in NY for Strategic Planning meeting over September 17 and 18 and again at the quarterly board meeting on October 29, and an executive session on October 29.

The following committees met virtually: Nominating and Governance met on September 9 and 7; as well as October 6 and 7 to interview non-trustee director candidates; Finance and Budget did not meet this quarter; Strategic Planning met on August 10, 31, September 8 and 24.

**Strategic Planning Meeting:** The full board met on September 17 and 18 for Strategic planning. The meeting was facilitated by Molly Anderson, Class A Trustee. The board reviewed: Organizational Values and Guiding Principles, future state of the Grapevine and conducted a SWOT analysis (*Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats*). Future goals were developed. It was determined that La Viña may have different needs and therefore different goals from Grapevine for achieving success. To support this a La Viña Strategic Planning session is scheduled for December 3-4, 2021.

**Overview**

- Financially, AA Grapevine is trending ahead of budget and ahead of prior year on sales of both subscriptions and literature. Costs are both under budget and prior year. La Viña is trending ahead of budget on subscriptions and on budget for costs which are below the year prior.
- Outreach via Instagram and the new Podcast have generated fantastic traffic increases to both website and store. Website traffic increased by 20,000 new users since July and is holding at over 72,000 as of September. Store traffic increased from 7,893 to 10,424, to 15,064 over July into August into September.
- 5,200 people have listened to the Podcast. The Instagram account for AA Grapevine has 4,752 followers as of today and has had 110,000 impressions to date. La Viña’s Instagram has just over 500 followers and is trending interestingly at about 10% of the English version which is comparable to what we see in print and online.
- Outreach through our partner Ingram has added $122,283 YTD sales in physical and digital books.
- The new book *Prayer and Meditation* is a proving to be a popular success. We have sold 4,079 at our online store and 757 through Ingram.
- Thanks to the fantastic cooperation of the Corrections Desk and Grapevine Staff we are now receiving directly the list of inmates who have reached out to help from A.A. and can report that we are officially at a deficit of Carry the Message subscriptions. We received a list of over 2,000 requests from the Corrections desk and have only 1,200 English Carry the Message Grapevine Subscriptions and 401 La Viña subscriptions in the pool.

**Board Committee Activity**

**Finance and Budget:** The Treasurer reported the committee did not meet this quarter. The Treasurer and Publisher have been working together preparing 1st draft of 2022 GV and LV budgets.

**Nominating and Governance:** The chair reported AAGV, Inc. received 37 resumes for the nontrustee director position and narrowed it down to 11 candidates. The final candidate’s name will be presented to trustees’ Nominating Committee.

**Strategic Planning:** The chair reported on the September Strategic planning meeting and reviewed the corporate Goals that came out of that meeting. The chair created an ad hoc Outreach committee to develop a Composition, Scope and Procedure that will address some of the strategic plan goals. A La Viña Strategic Planning meeting will be held in December.

**Board Actions**

**September 17, 2021:** Approved the minutes of the June 25 and June 26, 2021 board meetings. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer’s report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer’s report. Accepted the September 2021 financial report.

**October 29, 2021:** Approved the minutes of July 29, 2021 board meeting. Approved and accepted the AA Grapevine treasurer’s report. Approved and accepted the La Viña treasurer’s report. Additionally:

- Approved the 2022 Board meeting calendar.
- Approved a request from Chile to print and distribute *The Language of the Heart* and *Best of Bill*.
- Approved a request from Colombia to reproduce and distribute *Happy, Joyous and Free* and *One Big Tent*.
- Approved a request from Latvia to translate *Young & Sober* and *Voices of Women in AA*.
- Approved 990 tax return.
- Accepted Marks, Paneth as the AA Grapevine, Inc. auditor in 2022.

**Financial**

For details on Grapevine Finance, see the report of the trustees’ Finance Committee on page 2 of this report and the summary of unaudited financial results on the last page of this report.

**Circulation, Development and Outreach — Highlights**

- Launched GV Podcast on October 4;
- Posted GV Podcast announcement on the Meeting
Guide App and AAWS website;
• Sent email to English and Spanish IGCOs and Literature chairs regarding Free Shipping Nov. 1 – Dec. 31;
• As of October 15, a total of 1,639 GV and LV gift certificates purchased;
• As of October 15, sales for Free On the Inside: 3,104; Mujeres en AA: 1,879.

**Editorial Advisory Board (EAB): Grapevine and La Viña**

The Grapevine EAB met on September 14. A new member was added from the Southeast Region. The La Viña EAB met on October 7.

**Editorial Report: Grapevine**

Grapevine issues currently in production: November (Prayer & Meditation); December (Remote Communities & Holidays); January 2022 (Day Counters/Beginners); February (Getting Through Tough Times); March (Emotional Sobriety).

Other publishing: Fun in Sobriety book in production (Spring 2022); GV Workbook rough draft being edited, updated, and revised.

**Editorial Report: La Viña**

La Viña issues currently in production: November/December 2021 (Family); January/February 2022 (Acceptance); March/April 2022 (Newcomer Issue).

**Grapevine Web Report**

Monthly web traffic in the 3rd quarter averaged 81,647 new visitors; 11,147 returning visitors; and 354,635 page views.

**General Service Conference**

The AA Grapevine Board reviewed agenda item requests and agreed to forward the following to the 2022 General Service Conference Committee on the Grapevine:

• Discuss the wide-ranging impact the Preamble change has had on the A.A. Fellowship.
• Review progress report on AA Grapevine Workbook revisions.
• Review progress report on the Grapevine and La Viña Instagram accounts.
• Consider the list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2023 or later.

**FINANCIAL DATA:** For the nine months ended 9/30/2021 (All figures pending final C.P.A. audit)

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| **AA GRAPEVINE, INC.**   |             |             |             |
| Sales less costs of products | $1,433,633 | $1,478,420 | $1,585,759 |
| Interest earned — Reserve Fund | 30,000     | 22,500     | 30,000      |
| Total Income             | 1,463,633   | 1,500,920   | 1,615,759   |
| Expenses                 | 1,817,859   | 1,221,103   | 1,914,458   |
| Net Operating Surplus (Deficit) | (354,226)  | 279,817    | (298,699)   |
| General Service Board Support of La Viña shortfall | 401,970 | 260,022    | 385,771     |

For comments or questions write to: Staff Coordinator, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163