

**Area 61 Assembly  
Via Zoom  
April 10, 2021 Minutes**

Opened with moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer.

Area Chair 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.

Area Chair explained roundtable procedures, including that all members present may vote on roundtable issues, regardless of whether they are eligible to vote on Assembly actions.

**Introductions** – 46 in attendance at peak.

**Archivist Report** – Don B.

Don B. reported: Continues to review inventory and place inventory and flyers into digital database. A member recently offered to donate several items. He has identified out of 40 storage boxes, 9 have boxes of financial info and sees opportunity to eliminate those boxes.

Area Chair reiterated Assembly voting criteria.

**Secretary's Report** - Anne M. – Reminded all that Assembly and Area Committee minutes are on Area website. Presented minutes of January 30, 2021 Area Assembly.

**Minutes approved unanimously.**

**Treasurer's Report** - Joe H.

Joe H. presented:

- February report (Exhibit A):
  - Expenses: \$1754.91
  - Income: \$2029.86
  - \$13,483.38 over \$10,000 prudent reserve
- Preliminary March 2021 report (as of 3/15/2021)
- Finance Committee summary report (Exhibit B)
- Technology Subcommittee report:
  - Outlined technology purchases authorized by Assembly totaling approx. \$1200: printer, laptop, DVD writer; laptop lock; cassette recorder/converter; tv stand/trolley; external hard drive for backup; smart tv. Set up BestBuy Area Account to take advantage of tax exempt status. \$800 remains in approved tech budget. Installing Fios combined services today, including replacement of Ring Central.
    - Question about training to conduct hybrid meeting (for committees). Suggestion to have hybrid meeting for hybrid training. Currently room accommodates 20 people without tables. May also record meeting and circulate for those unable to attend live.

**Treasurer's report accepted unanimously.**

**Delegate's Report** Steve L. reported:

There will be a reduction in shipping costs for a five-month period, beginning on or about May 1 Monday 4/19 at Conference will be a Trustee-at-Large caucus. Steve has written piece in support. Regional Forum videos available. American Sign Language Big Book and Twelve and

Twelve now available on YouTube. Steve presented 2020 projections: GSO budget surplus of \$641,387; Grapevine projected deficit of \$354,225; La Vina projected deficit of \$401,790. GSO January contributions \$687,377, February contributions \$891,607. This year projected surplus. Grapevine projecting deficit. Viewed eight Trustee farewell videos – large overhaul that includes replacement of GSO general manager in the coming months. There will be a Delegates’ conference training, so Conference should go more smoothly. Northeast Regional Forum will take place 6/4-6 virtually. Registration will open 4/26 on aa.org. He has worked to ensure as much transparency as possible with Area and Alt Delegate in this process. Expressed thanks to past delegates and to the current Area Committee for support, and to roundtable secretaries. At times he may not appear to care about certain things, but he has learned that everything will always be alright

**Alternate Delegate’s Report** – Alison H. reported:

Thanked Steve for his service and love of AA. Referred to Area Guidelines revised at January assembly, noting that they are available on aainri.com. Hard copies will be available at the Area office, and members wanting hard copies may also reach out to Alison.

**Presentation: How General Service Conference works – Ken D.**

Reiterated history leading to formation of the General Service Conference. Noted upside-down pyramid, and power of the purse (power rests at the group level). Also explained the three legacies (sides of a triangle): steps, traditions, warranties, and how they are protected from hasty amendments. Outlined Conference structure of approx. 134 individuals, noting numbers of delegates, trustees, and GSO staff. Also outlined composition, scope, and relationship of committees to the full Conference.

Explained who can bring agenda items to the Conference (just about any AA member, group, Area, etc., but vetting prior to submission is encouraged), and the process by which agenda items may be brought to the floor for a vote. Outlined voting (third legacy procedure), emphasizing the importance of the minority opinion mechanism.

Committees then take approved actions to explore implementation. Delegate’s report back to Area is confirmation that process is working as it should.

Expressed thanks to our Delegate and to the Area Committee.

**Preconference agenda items: Policy/Admissions - J:**

Consider requests regarding participation of online groups in the General Service structure.

Steve facilitated:

Outlined issue facing online groups, which are automatically placed in separate Area that has no voice.

Item 1: J.1 - Consider a request from a local district that recognizes “Online Groups” as voting members of the district and asks that the Conference take action to grant “Online AA Groups” the same privileges as “Brick and Mortar Groups”.

- Steve noted that Area 61 includes the one online group as part of the District in which the meeting originated. Seeking comments from members from AA@8 and others:
  - Would be nice to have an official group number and be part of the registry. Virtual meeting has kept this member sane throughout this year. Some members still may not be able to attend in-person meetings beyond the pandemic. He is open to a virtual Area, but most importantly, virtual groups should be recognized as a group like any other.
  - Member notes that we've seen that virtual meetings/process are effective at bringing in money.
  - Member would love to see virtual meetings include in Area 61, not as its own Area. Virtual meetings should get to choose whether they want to be part of virtual area, or their geographic area. Agrees that they should be recognized as groups with GSO registry.
  - Virtual groups have been great. Need to come up with some guidelines regarding how they operate within an area (e.g., what if a group member is from CA, and then wants to stand for Area office such as delegate. Is that fair representation?). Need to move forward with this.
  - Agree that virtual meetings have become an important part of how AA works. Should be part of our Area, but details do need to be fleshed out, particularly regarding members who do not reside within the geographic area.
  - Consider that some formerly in-person meetings may remain virtual – need to accommodate those groups.
  - Consider that an increase in groups may open the door to greater participation in Area standing committees – a good thing.
  - One member participates in a group of 4000 attendees. Group contributes significant amount of seventh-tradition funds to service entities, but does not have a vote and is not otherwise connected.

Item 2: That the General Service Conference consider allowing participation of all virtual groups, not affiliated with a physical meeting space, by creating a 94th Area to our Service Structure that will encompass those A.A. groups.

Every year, our districts go out to meetings that are not registered/part of service structure with moderate/little success. Contrast to virtual groups who are clamoring to be included.

- Allow Virtual or Online Groups to register under their respective district and Area instead of the Online InterGroups.
  - Consider if only one virtual Area – minimal representation (only one delegate?) representing potentially thousands of members. Unbalanced.
  - AA needs to find “infrastructure” for virtual groups, noting global participation in the thousands of many virtual meetings. What will happen when in-person meetings resume?
  - Member notes that she attends 4000-member online group based in Canada, who do not know about general service happenings, except from her
  - Adding a virtual district (effectively like our current District 8) would work well for accessibility issues, rather than a separate virtual Area.

Item 3: Adapt the General Service structure to recognize online-only groups as official groups. Without that recognition, members have no voice and are denied access to service opportunities.

Background material includes letter from Portland virtual group.

- Discuss current procedure of referring non-face-to-face Groups to an entity outside of the A.A. Service structure to be listed.
- Consider creating a Traditions-based policy that meets the needs of the Fellowship and its Groups.

Item 4: Consider allowing virtual or online groups to register under their respective district and area instead of the Online Intergroup.

Item 5: Consider holding a discussion about how to give online only (virtual) meetings a voice and a vote in the General Service Structure and access to General Service Offices (GSO) services.

J.6 - Discuss the current procedure of referring non-face-to-face Groups to an entity outside the A.A. service structure to be listed and consider creating a Traditions based policy that meets the needs of the Fellowship and its Groups.

Steve reviewed additional background material, noting what various other countries are doing.

- Not enough information yet – would like more before being able to inform her opinion.
  - Steve noted that this is in formative/discussion stages.

**Trustees Agenda Item F - Review the “Statement of Concern and Motion to Censure for Submission to the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference”**

Steve L. presented: Iterated definition of censure. Presenting in the spirit of transparency:

- Issues regarding procedural issues at 70<sup>th</sup> Conference, including deeming a trustee candidate ineligible; cessation of deliberations before an informed group conscience could be reached; and notification issue regarding Google AdWords.
  - Steve noted that delegates were aware of time constraints. All delegates agreed to rules/procedures beforehand (that had been modified for this first virtual Conference) beforehand. 71<sup>st</sup> Conference will resume regular procedures.
- Enterprise Resource Planning process and budget. Report presented late.
- Allegation that AAWS was >\$800K over budget. AAWS was actually \$600K over, which was addressed in subsequent reports.
- Manuscript litigation: no tenth step/reconciliation and lack of transparency. General manager subsequently issued apology, noting that certain aspects could not be disclosed at the time. Drawdowns from reserve fund – seeking accounting and explanation.

Clear that the letter was directed at GSO general manager, who resigned, effective 2/1/2021.

Four NE regional delegates signed. Steve did not, citing love and tolerance as our code.

Discussion:

- Must consider the uncertainty and changes in the pandemic. Does not believe we should censure, citing love and tolerance.
  - Steve also noted that Board chairperson is rotating out.

- Does not believe in shaming, but does believe it's important for members should make their voices heard. Just not saying something is not sufficient. Some bad behavior happened, and it should be acknowledged. Need to have AA be the best it can be.
  - Upshot – delegates have seen unprecedented transparency. Trustees and others from GSO have been attending NERD meetings. If they cannot answer NERDs' questions, they generally respond within a week.

### **Registrar's Report** – Donna T.

Granted access to Fellowship Connection in February. Database shows for Area 61: 239 active groups; 172 inactive groups; 69 unknown groups – total of 480. Next task to verify information. Attended each district meeting in March, and provided workbooks. Provided reports to ISC for review and reconciliation. Working with Area to update GSO info on standing district committee chairs and alternate chairs. Revising group change forms and procedures to align better with Guidelines. All new GSRs (within the last 10-12 months) have received GSR kits in hard copy or digital form. Contact her for questions, kits, etc.

Question regarding “unknown” group status – GSO does not know whether active or inactive.

### **District Reports**

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

April reported: District 1 meeting was held on March 9 via zoom Tricia hosted 13 in attendance.

Donna our Area 61 registrar presented the Fellowship Connection District 1 workbook to update group info. we will form an ad hoc for that search. Archives and Convention Committee

Representatives needed. These are posted on the website under service opportunities. Steve shared the dates for the roundtables and schedules have been forwarded twice. NERAASA attendees were reminded to fill out the survey and convention registration.

District 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday 7pm) – Nat S. – DCM / – Vacant ADCM

Nat reported:

- For Jan, Feb, and Mar we had 15, 15, and 13 attendees, respectively.
- District 3 discussed ideas on how to use excess funds and decided we thought it would be beneficial to put them towards computer needs and buying information services to support the online/hybrid meetings from the area.
- Thank you everyone who showed up to the Roundtables or talked to Steve regarding GSC agenda items!
- Donna stepped down as treasurer due to taking on Area Registrar. Melissa stepped up as the new district treasurer. Chris stepped down as D3-DCM, I stepped up as the new D3-DCM.
  - Donna, Melissa, and I met at Citizens Bank to swap over the bank account. Chris has also since gone to the bank and taken his name off the account.
- Have been meeting with other DCMs to try and come up with a plan to reach out to more people/groups to get more involvement.

- We have also continued to go through the concepts as a district!
- We still have quite a few Area Committee positions open, hoping we can get them filled soon!
- Formed subcommittee on outreaching to D3 groups and helping our new Registrar
- Open Area Committee Positions
  - Archives
  - CPC/PI
  - Grapevine
  - RI Convention
  - Information Services
- Shout out to:
  - AA @ 8, a virtual meeting, celebrating 1 year on Pi day (3-14)
  - Garden City Group celebrating 52 years on March 17.

District 4&2 - vacant – DCM / vacant – ADCM

Not present - No report. Alison noted that Area will keep district meetings going in the hope of attracting greater participation and a new DCM.

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

Jackie reported – One committee represented in District – Treatment/Accessibility. All committee chairs welcome to attend and solicit participation. Attendance varies 6-10. Some meetings are in person (young people) – following all covid guidelines, and meetings well-attended. One group has begun resuming coffee and cookies. A couple of additional meetings have formed that are not registered groups.

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

Kurt reported: Reporting on March/April meetings. Discussions around how groups will meet going forward. Heard committee reports at district meeting. Discussed some roundtable issues. Reported on DCMs gathering and meeting as a group, and perhaps using a Joy of Service to reach out to District 4/2.

District 7 (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday 7:30pm) – Tina B. – DCM / Nancy H. – ADCM

Tina reported: Averaged 15 in attendance. New AltDCM, Nancy, will spearhead ad hoc committee on group information. Four openings for district coordinators, listed on Area website. Members are actively participating in Phoenix House commitment. All groups but one are still meeting virtually, except for one hybrid group. Expressed concern regarding GSR participation at Assembly – sees the need for “Service 101” outreach.

District 8 (1<sup>st</sup> Thursday 7pm) – Enrique S. - Chair of Spanish Intergroup

Not present, but Pride reported that district is struggling due to pandemic, but they remain in touch.

### **Committee Reports**

Archives (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 7pm) – Nancy R. – Chair / Vacant – Alt. Chair

Nancy R reported: Longtimers’ Spring Panel will be on 5/15 via Zoom. They have two panelists so far. Panel will consist of members who got sober in RI, but have moved to

Florida. A flyer is ready to go. At next meeting, will draft questions for this (different) panel. Committee needs Alternate Chair.

Corrections (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday 6pm) – Pride I. - Chair / Felicia – Alt. Chair  
Pride reported: ACI now allowing limited visitation with proof of negative covid status – for family, so unclear regarding volunteers. ACI optimistic that volunteers may be allowed within the next 30-45 days. Coordinators are reaching out to volunteers, as clearances need to be updated. Seeking to coordinate with Treatment for Bridging the Gap. Interested members can reach out to him for workbooks.

CPC/PI (4<sup>th</sup> Thursday 7pm) – Bob H. – Chair / Vacant – Alt. Chair  
Bob H. reported: Spoke to Anthropology in Addiction class at Brown in February. Most students headed for medical or social work careers. Encouraging to see inclusion of AA in their training. Students are very aware of who/what AA is/does. Big questions are around how to talk with addicts. Also working with housing wellness coordinators that could evolve into a commitment. Third year they are running ad in Bristol July 4<sup>th</sup> booklet (circulation@13K). Great participation at March meeting – initiating program to reach out to all public libraries to offer to donate Big Book and 12&12. Already receiving positive responses. Members are also planning to stand for Alt Chair and secretary positions. Good momentum going.

Grapevine (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday 7pm) – Kerra – Chair / Bob P. – Alt. Chair  
Kerra reported: Our last meeting was held on March 8, 2021. 7 people were in attendance, including Tricia, our Area Chair who hosted the virtual meeting. Our focus of the meeting was reviewing and discussing the six Grapevine agenda items for the Roundtable Discussions and the Pre-Conference Assembly.

- We currently have 9 members on the committee:
  - 1 Chair and 1 Alternate Chair
  - 5 Grapevine Representatives
  - 3 Grapevine Coordinators (Districts 1, 3, and 6)
  - A call to DCMs in Districts in combined 2/4, 5, 7, and 8 to encourage participation at the Grapevine Committee, held virtually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month.
- 2021 Carry the Message Project is ongoing.
- A Grapevine presentation was given at the RI Convention.

Treatment/Accessibilities (1<sup>st</sup> Monday 7pm) – Jason D. – Chair / Dean P. – Alt. Chair  
Prescott reported: Talked to Butler last week, which may transition back to in-person commitments. Would like to keep schedule that was in place before the pandemic – has been a challenge to fill all time slots. Phoenix House commitments have been going really well. Could really use district coordinators, as in-person commitments resume. Butler has also expressed an interest in virtual commitments as well. Committee discussed hosting a virtual meeting for all facilities to attend as an alternative/additional option to going into facilities (scheduling issues). Community Care Alliance (CCA) has 7 pm in-person, and needs support. NA has commitments going to AdCare, but Committee is having difficulties coordinating with that facility. Encourages members to reach out to Jason (committee chair) for questions.

Information Services (2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 6pm) – Andy L. – Chair / Becky T. – Alt. Chair

Andy reported: Busy time. Grateful to all members of ISC for their participation. Almost 10K individual sessions per month; 27-30K page views per month. Subscribers up to almost 1400, with approx. 50% opening the email contents. Enjoyed working on Convention and with Convention Committee. Meeting coordinator working closely with registrar. Making a request for groups to provide up-to-date information, particularly as group formats are fluctuating. ISC receives approx. ten requests/week for updated information. Encouraging committees to continue to provide information to ISC they would like to see on the web. ISC has reached out to Spanish Intergroup, so that information is now listed on Area home page.

Convention (1st Wednesday 7pm) – Mary K. – Chair

Mary K. reported: Thanks all of RI for participation, which is what made convention successful. Thanks to standing committees, and for their great presentations. Surveys were largely positive – will address comments that were not. Live convention committee meetings will resume 5/5 in Area office. Need greater participation. Hoping for live convention in 2022. Would like to go Newport – exploring - and in negotiation with a couple of hotels. Will be a smaller convention (approx. 600). Theme may relate to 2020 and some sort of vision. Committee started with around \$5000. End of convention balance with no outstanding debts was \$5910.10, \$350 of which is designated for scholarships. Committee will therefore only need approx. \$1700 from Area to replenish Committee's prudent reserve of \$7500, instead of the \$2500 approved by Assembly. Virtual aspect to the 2022 convention would be a great deal of work, but is possible. They would need more support.

RISCYPAA, (1st Sat, 1pm) – Sam G. – Chair / Brian - Alt. Chair

Brian reported: Moved to hybrid format as of this month – meeting at Area office. Figured out solution to some of the hiccups. Still bidding on ECYPAA (conference East of the Mississippi). This year's will take place in Pittsburgh. Everyone is welcome to attend RISCYPAA meetings, and may join in accordance with its bylaws.

Central Service

Hebert reported: Full steering committee – all slots filled. Delegates meeting coming up, where they will discuss listing in-person meetings on Central Service website. Planning to continue with golf scramble. Decision made to hold intergroup/central office annual meeting virtually, will take place in September. No commitments currently at Roger Williams detox, or CCRI drunk driving classes. Office is trying its best to operate as close to normal circumstances as possible. Office is relying on its prudent reserve. Wants to address possible misconception shared by one person from Area that Central Service has a "slush fund."

Southern RI Intergroup

Ed reported: Intergroup office remains closed, but functional, as they make arrangements to pick up literature and coins on request, etc. On borderline of having to use prudent reserve, and encourages groups to contribute. Working on getting Venmo account, and on creating a website.

**LUNCH BREAK**



**Report-backs from Roundtables** [Exhibit C]

Area Chair will close survey this evening, and compile results into binder for delegate for reference.

Discussion: one member feels that gender neutrality is an outside issue, and not for AA to address. Additional discussion regarding use of the words “equanimous” and “equanimity” in background materials.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

None

**Group/District Concerns**

Training on how to conduct hybrid service committee meetings was discussed earlier, but member is wondering if there’s a plan to conduct training for groups wanting to hold hybrid meetings. Problem is that circumstances for each group may differ (equipment, connection, etc.).

Meetings that are currently meeting in hybrid format have two listings on Area website meeting guide. ISC has plans to expand functionality to allow hybrid indication. Encourages people to include meeting descriptions when they forward meeting info to ISC for website (there is a field in the current form). ISC seeking volunteers for website.

**Ask-It Basket**

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

**Upcoming Events**

- General Service Conference– April 17 - 24, 2021
- Finance Committee Meeting – April 19, 7pm
- Area Committee Meeting – April 26, 7pm
- Longtimers’ Panel – May 15, 10 am

**Anniversaries**

Jackie R, March 12, 7 years  
Linda D, Feb 9, 5 years  
Judith C, April 7, 3 years  
Michele A, March 10, 9 years

Happy Wanderers 61<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Sunday, May 16, 11am virtually. (Seeking speakers)  
New Way of Life, mid-forties, April 26 8pm virtually

AA@8, 1 year, March 14

Meeting closed with Responsibility Declaration.

(Minutes prepared by Anne M., subject to approval at June 2021 Area Assembly.)