

The Spring 2009 Region 6 Assembly opened, as always with the new delegate orientation at 9:15 a.m. The Assembly itself convened at 9:54 a.m. and, after opening with the Serenity Prayer and welcome from R6 Chair Karin Rhodes, moved immediately into a one-hour workshop on changing the format of the Assembly to assure that all items, topics and motions are completed by the end of future Assemblies. The workshop was necessitated by a recent trend in which motions – which are discussed and voted on at the end of the one-day Assembly – don't always get a full airing and sometimes need to be tabled till the next assembly because of the lateness of the hour. The Assembly was broken up into groups of 6-8 and each group was given a worksheet with options listed for changing the Assembly. Among the options were:

1. Starting the Assembly Friday evening and ending late Saturday afternoon;
2. Starting Saturday morning and finishing either late Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening, but eliminating the traditional morning workshop
3. Starting Saturday morning and completing the Assembly Sunday noon.

Our group agreed with little dissent that the best idea was to keep the Assembly to its current time frame and do away with the workshop, which usually consumes the bulk of the morning session and – while helpful in providing a deeper understanding of program issues such as cross-talk, 12th-step within strategies and other valuable topics – has the real effect of interfering with the day's work of dealing with motions, electing officers and approving budgets and expenditures. Our small group also recommended that the individual committee meetings that historically have taken place right after lunch and are then reported on in mid afternoon be moved to the morning hours and that the motions be moved up to an early afternoon time slot. Other groups' recommendations ran the gamut from starting on Friday evening with a workshop, to holding workshops and/or motions on Sunday morning. Each small group appointed a reporter who passed in that group's recommendations to the board to take under advisement.

One suggestion from our group and several others was adopted immediately, which had the effect of shortening the Assembly that day: The board agreed to eliminate the morning roll call of the number of delegates present since no voting is done during the morning session. SCMI was represented by its maximum allowed three delegates – Penny, Sandi and Gil – and included one alternate, Margie.

Following a one-hour lunch break, the reps went to one of the eight committee meetings: Intergroup Outreach (IGOR), Convention Committee, 12th-Step Within, Newsletter, Youth in OA, Bylaws/Policy & Procedures, Public Information/Public Outreach (PI/PO) and Finance.

I was one of 19 members to attend the Convention Committee. As co-chair of the Discovery '08 R6 Convention in Plymouth, I gave the wrap-up report to start the meeting. I pointed out that the evaluations we received were overwhelmingly positive. We registered 625 persons, including more than 150 day-trippers, and netted a total of \$17,386.40. The key to the event's success, I pointed out, was visibility: one of the two co-chairs and/or a committee chair was always in the hotel lobby, or reachable by cell phone. Additionally a committee member routinely checked the meeting rooms, water stations and hospitality/lunchroom areas throughout the day to assure the rooms were properly equipped and were a comfortable temperature. My message to the convention chairs was to stay available at all times to the conventioners and to head off problems from getting out of hand. Next, the Serenity in Stamford '09 convention chairs talked about plans for the October 23-25 event in Southern Connecticut. They said registrations are slow (107 for the convention and approximately 25 rooms reserved) at that date and they asked the committee members to encourage their IG members to register early so that the committee could guarantee its minimum of 175 rooms to the hotel and thus get the meeting rooms free of charge. The chairs announced plans for a Saturday game night as an alternative to the traditional dance. So far, no IG or group of IGs have come forth to host the 2010 convention. A suggestion was made to have a company called Experient (which secured the Stamford site) help us find a suitable venue in our price range and to focus its attention on a location in Burlington, VT, Portland, ME or other North Country area. Reps from Maine, Vermont and Nova Scotia are discussing the possibility of jointly hosting the convention. One proposal to hold the convention at a completely refurbished hotel in the Catskills also will continue to be investigated for 2010. Danielle S. of Western MA IG, who is co-chair for the Stamford '09 convention, has volunteered to chair or co-chair the '10 convention if no one else steps up. The committee rejected a suggestion to hold the '10 convention in Stamford again and to make that the permanent home of the convention, since it is easily accessible from all over the region and since other regions hold their conventions in the same location annually. The group consensus, however, was that, with sagging membership, it's important for the convention to be held in different parts of the region each year to attract more interest to OA from nonmembers. Committee members will meet by conference call on June 17 at 7 p.m. to hear the progress made on selecting a 2010 venue.

The full Assembly reconvened at 2:45, starting with a credentials update. Roll call revealed there were 73 voting delegates present, plus five board members, meaning that 40 votes represented a majority and 60 votes equaled a two-thirds majority for all voting purposes. After the reading of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Service, officers, former officers, service volunteers and new delegates (reps) were introduced followed by the reading and accepting without comment of the minutes of the Fall 2008 Assembly.

The R6 officers' reports came next, beginning with the report from Chair Karin R. Her key point was that reps need to bring back copies of the Strong Meeting Checklist to their IGs and groups. Vice Chair Diana G explained the negotiations involved in securing our current venue, the Best Western Sovereign Hotel in Albany, which is more centrally located and will serve as the home for upcoming R6 Assemblies. She notes, however, that, due to a one-time scheduling conflict, the Fall '09 Assembly will be at the nearby sister hotel (Best Western Wolf Road). Diana also noted that her IG, Greater Metro NY had a very successful PI Blitz

campaign, placing ads on Manhattan buses throughout January 2009. During that month and a short time afterward, web site hits increased by 99% – 50% of which were new hits.

Coordinator Helen F reported that overall OA worldwide has shown a slight increase in meetings since this time a year ago; however, she noted that telephone meetings have increased by 158% in that span and that the total of Intergroups registering with World Service is down by 2.2%. She stressed the need to reach outside the fellowship to bring in new members. Web master Steve M reported that the largest share of visitors to the R6 web site in the past six months has been to the newcomers page (3520 views), twice as many as all other sections combined. He added that his term is up in September and that a new web master will be needed.

Treasurer Zazu G reported that the Region is solvent and currently has more than \$54,000 in working capital. She withheld further comment on how the money is to be allocated till the end of the day when she would make her budget motions for Fiscal '09-'10. She added that she has not heard from the IRS regarding an application for tax-exempt status, noting that such requests often take a year or more and the application was sent in approximately six months ago.

Outgoing Trustee Margaret Ann B talked about her sadness in leaving the position next month when her term expires. She also clarified the situation regarding possible crossing of picket lines during the August 2010 OA 50th birthday celebration. She explained that OA signed the contract with the LAX Hilton before the union negotiations with the hotel broke down. Despite contact from the union not to cross the picket lines, OA World Service has ruled not to break its pre-existing contract with the hotel and that the union problems constitute an outside issue.

The Seventh Tradition bags were passed and \$226 was contributed; later in the Assembly, it was announced that the money would be used toward the cost of hiring someone to translate the upcoming budget into French (see Budget motion below).

The committee reports followed. The IGOR chair noted that Allison from Western MA was elected the new chair and that the committee's focus is to attract more people to IG meetings across the region by using a variety of tools. The convention committee chair spoke next and outlined what I reported in detail above. The 12th-Step Within committee reported it has drafted a letter to the fall '09 Assembly proposing a workshop at that Assembly to focus on a back to basics approach to working the Steps. It also will propose a similar workshop to be held at the Stamford convention. Additionally, the committee plans to set up an online meeting site in order to hold monthly meetings online.

The Newsletter committee chair reported that committee membership increased from last meeting and added that reps will be asked to write on a topic at this Assembly's afternoon break, with their writings to be published in the Fall edition of the *Messenger* newsletter.

The Youth in OA committee chair reported that the committee was discussing a letter from WS that suggests each IG have two teen-friendly meetings and that parents be asked to attend dedicated teen meetings. The committee also plans to contact World Service regarding questions including liability protection for groups holding teen meetings.

The Bylaws/ Policy & Procedures committee chair noted that the committee had received withdrawal notifications of several motions that are to appear later in this Assembly along with a letter recommending that another motion be withdrawn.

The PI/PO chair said the committee heard reports of many health fairs that IGs participated in the past six months, along with reports that IGs have been giving Lifeline subscriptions to Doctors' offices. The chair added that PI/PO has money available for IGs wanting to mount PI efforts and that reps needed to go back to their IGs and inform members of this information.

The Finance Committee chair reported that the committee reviewed the R6 treasurer's job and made changes in the treasurer's responsibilities, as well as reviewed the budget motion. Additionally the committee looked into the costs of translating the budget into French.

The Assembly break lasted from 4:10-4:30 during which time reps were asked to write on the topic: How OA service has helped me be willing to get comfortable outside my comfort zone.

After the break it was announced that NY Metro IG has gained approval of a \$3,000 PI Blitz request from PI/PO. A discussion ensued regarding why so much money was needed for the proposal but no further action was taken.

The Assembly next considered seven motions followed by the budget approval motion

Motion 1 sought to increase R6's donation to World Service from 10% of convention profit to 15% -- equal to an additional \$650, making the total contribution \$1,950. Treasurer Zazu G said before the vote, "We can afford it; vote yes." The motion PASSED BY ACCLAMATION.

Motion 2 sought to add language to clarify what practices a group or Intergroup must follow to be considered a member of R6, language that would bring the requirements in line with World Service bylaws. The Bylaws committee moved to withdraw the motion because the proposed text made no changes in the meaning or intent of the R6 bylaws as they stand. The move to withdraw the motion was PASSED BY ACCLAMATION.

Motion 3 sought to amend R6 bylaws to put a cap on consecutive years of service on the R6 board to 12 years. An amendment to the motion was made and passed to eliminate the words "or trustee" from the motion since the stipulation only applied to board members. The bylaws committee, in making the motion, noted that, under the proposed motion, a person could serve the maximum of two two-year terms in three separate positions (for example, coordinator, vice chair and chair) for a total of 12 years. "Then you should go home and rest," said Bruce from Ottawa, speaking for the Bylaws committee. The motion passed easily but not unanimously, as a minority wanted the number of years able to be served reduced to eight.

Motion 4, the most controversial motion presented to the Assembly, sought to change R6 bylaws by inserting language that would require all regional representatives or their alternates to possess "at least six months of current continuous abstinence" before qualifying to cast a vote at Assembly. The Bylaws committee, which had this motion sent back to it after the Fall '08 Assembly to rework the wording, moved to withdraw the motion but the Assembly did not approve the withdrawal request unanimously, so the motion was brought to the floor. The "pro" comments in favor of the motion stated that no rep who is still under the effects of compulsive eating should be allowed to vote. The "con" comments noted that a small Intergroup might not have someone with six months of current continuous abstinence and therefore would be shut out from having a voice at Assembly and also that the motion does not honor the Fourth Tradition of autonomy of individual Intergroups to make their own decision regarding a member's worthiness to be a regional rep. In a hand count, the Assembly voted, 46-24 in favor of the motion; however THE MOTION FAILED BECAUSE IT LACKED A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY.

Motion 5 sought to add the word "continuous" to the phrase current abstinence, so it would now read "current continuous abstinence" of at least two years to be eligible for nomination as an R6 officer and World Service Business Conference delegate. The proposal also clears up a grammar issue in the wording and changes "should" to "shall" in describing abstinence requirements. The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion 6 was a housekeeping motion to change wording in the procedure removing an RT6 officer from a four-of-five votes needed to a two-thirds vote needed, now that the board has six, not five members. The change also eliminates the necessity of altering the wording again should any future change in the number of board members occur. The motion PASSED BY ACCLAMATION without discussion.

Motion 7 sought to add the wording "current continuous" abstinence in four places involving regional officers and delegates. The Bylaws committee moved to send the motion back to committee to rework the wording for clarification, instead of simply putting in article and section numbers in the motion. After discussion, the Assembly voted to deal with the motion as it was written, since the intent was clear. THE MOTION PASSED EASILY.

Following the motions voting, the '09-'10 budget was taken up. Treasurer Zazu G explains reasons for wanting to amend presented budget of \$63,950 to a total of \$70,950. The chief reason is a \$6,200 one-time cost to translate the budget into French for the benefit of our Region's 100-plus French-speaking Canadian groups. Another new budget item added was a \$3,000 board discretionary fund in the event an unforeseen expenditure arises. Such an incident occurred in Fall '08 when the board had to make the unorthodox move of borrowing \$1,000 from '08 R6 convention profits to cover the hotel down payment for the '09 R6 convention. After 15 minutes or so of discussion, the Assembly approved the budget as amended.

Following the vote, Zazu noted that the Region 6 treasury currently has \$54,000 in working accounts.

The meeting closed with the Serenity Prayer at 5: 53 p.m.

--Gil Peters, SCMI rep