

The Assembly Reporter

General Service News for the Group

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**San Diego – Imperial
Area 08 Assembly
of Alcoholics
Anonymous
(SDIAA)**

www.area8.org

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73rd Annual General Service Conference

Each year around this time, 93 areas within the U.S. and Canada individually gather to review the upcoming General Service Conference (GSC) proposed agenda items. This is far removed from a modest task, with approx. 180 items to consider, and over 1,000 pages of background information to review. It's truly an act of love for A.A. and a sense of

fulfilment of responsibility to devote one's time and interest to learn and participate in this essential process. Quoting one member's point of view, "it's a very high form of twelfth step work as we attempt to communicate to our groups the vital need to participate in general service and to inform our fellows of these matters at hand, at the

same time contribute to the preparation of our delegate to bring to the conference our groups conscience." The groups conscience accounts for 2/3rd of the Conference voting members, represented by the 93 delegates. The remaining 1/3rd are the trustees, nontrustee directors from A.A.W.S. the Grapevine / La Viña, and GSO staff members. – Editor



Why We Need a Conference

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chairperson of the board of trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting:

"We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in

the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life.

"We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can ever invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing over integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

"We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is."

*A.A. Service Manual
(Chapter 6, pg. 40)
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Alcoholics Anonymous
World Services*

How the Conference Operates

Generally speaking, the General Service Conference follows *Robert's Rules of Order*, and proceeds on as informal a basis as possible consistent with the rights of all concerned. It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Conference to conduct its business; rules exist to allow the Conference to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Fellowship by reaching an informed group conscience. Over the years the Conference has adopted some exceptions to *Robert's Rules*, which help it to proceed more closely in accord with the spirit of A.A. Tradition.

Conference Quorum

A Conference quorum — two-thirds of all registered members — is required to conduct Conference business.

Committee System

To the extent possible, important matters to come before the Conference will be handled via the “Committee system.” This assures that a large number of questions can be dealt with during Conference week. Members are encouraged to trust the process. Each Committee has considered carefully the items before it and presents its recommendations to the Conference as a whole for acceptance or rejection. Recommendations of Conference committees are automatically motions that have been made and seconded. Members are asked to refrain from spontaneously amending the work of the Committee; there are no “friendly” amendments under Robert’s Rules.

Substantial Unanimity

All matters of policy (Conference Advisory Actions) require substantial unanimity, that is, a *two-thirds majority*. Any actions, including amendments, that affect an Advisory Action, or motions that might result in such an action, also require a *two-thirds majority*. Because the number of members present in the hall during the week of Conference varies from time to time, the phrase “two-thirds majority” is taken to mean two-thirds vote of the Conference members voting, as long as the total vote constitutes a Conference quorum.

Minority Opinion

After each vote on a matter of policy, the side which did not prevail will always be given an opportunity to speak to their position. If the motion passes with two-thirds vote, the minority may speak. If the motion receives a majority vote, but fails to pass for lack of a two-thirds vote, the majority may speak.

Remember that saving “minority opinions” for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is a time-waster, for it can force the Conference body to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around if it had been thoroughly examined from all sides.

General Rules of Debate and Voting

(Agreed to at the beginning of each Conference)

- People who wish to speak line up at the microphones and address their comments to the chair.
- Each person may speak for two (2) minutes.
- No one may speak for a second time on a topic until all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
- *Full* discussion of a recommendation should take place *before* each vote.

- Everyone is entitled to express his or her opinion. However, if your perspective has already been stated by someone else, it is not necessary to go to the mike and say it again.
- Our experience is that premature actions such as amending motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question can divert attention from the subject at hand, confusing and/or delaying Conference business.

Motions Made During Conference

When making a motion, come to the microphone and address the chair. There are various types of motions we use to help reach an informed group conscience. The specific rules governing each are on the next page.

Tabling a Motion

Tabling a motion postpones discussion to a later time during the same Conference.

Motion to Recommit

The motion to recommit returns a motion or proposal to the respective trustees’ committee for further consideration. A motion to recommit must be seconded, is debatable and can be amended.

Calling the Question

Calling the question brings debate to a halt while Conference members decide whether to proceed directly to a vote (the question) or go on with the debate.

Reconsideration

A motion to reconsider a vote may be made only by a member who voted with the prevailing side, but it can be seconded by anyone. If the majority votes to reconsider, full debate, pro and cons, is resumed.

Floor Actions

It is possible for a Conference action to come from the floor, but any matter which falls within the scope of a Conference committee ought first go through that Conference committee, so that the topic may receive due consideration. Floor actions may be introduced at any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions. Any floor action regarding a piece of committee business that has not yet been concluded will be considered out of order. When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action.

Declining to Consider a Floor Action

A motion to decline to consider a floor action is made without comment.

A.A. Resources

box 459

GSO Newsletter

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A.A.

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Text & Audio
12 & 12

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traditions](http://www.aa.org/twelve-steps-twelve-traditions)



Area Assembly

4-1-2023

MOCK SESSION OF THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

To the credit of our area officer's leadership, the April 1st assembly simulated a mock session of the Annual General Service Conference Committees' process of reviewing and deliberating agenda items.

General Service Representatives (GSRs) and other assembly attendees were assigned to 1 of 12 committees, one less than the actual Conference. The area standing committee chairs presided over each committee.

Each committee must determine what to do with each of their assigned agenda items. They have several options: 1. Send the item to the floor of

the Conference in the same wording in which it was submitted; 2. Amend the item and then send it to the floor; 3. Provide an additional consideration, which returns the item back to the General Service Board for more action; or 4. Take no action, which means the item is dead.

The fundamental work and purpose of the Conference is to create the resources for 12th Step work that ensure the A.A. message reaches people who may need it. Many alcoholics first hear A.A.'s message of hope that was formed by the work of those who voluntarily serve at the Conference. The decisions

of these committees are the first step in gathering the collective conscience of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada. This is Concept II.

The mock session proved to be useful to GSRs in particular, to better and effectively communicate information back to the groups, having gained a deeper understanding of the agenda items and the Conference's focus towards the future of A.A. in terms of moving the Fellowship forward and relevant to generations to come. It is not necessarily, what we who are here, prefer for ourselves. – Editor

Pre-Conference Material

Selected
Agenda Items
For Discussion

Summary
Background
Information

General Service
Conference
Timeline

Pre-Conference Workshop

COME AND SHARE WITH OUR AREA 08 DELEGATE

There was a healthy turnout for the second Pre-Conference Workshop that I attended in North San Diego County. Area 08 Delegate, Monty C., spoke about proposed agenda items and took questions and comments both from the room and online.

There were several proposed agenda items discussed, including the Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) pamphlet for mental health professionals and "a new form of communication to address anonymity on social media." Also, from the Trustee's CPC com-

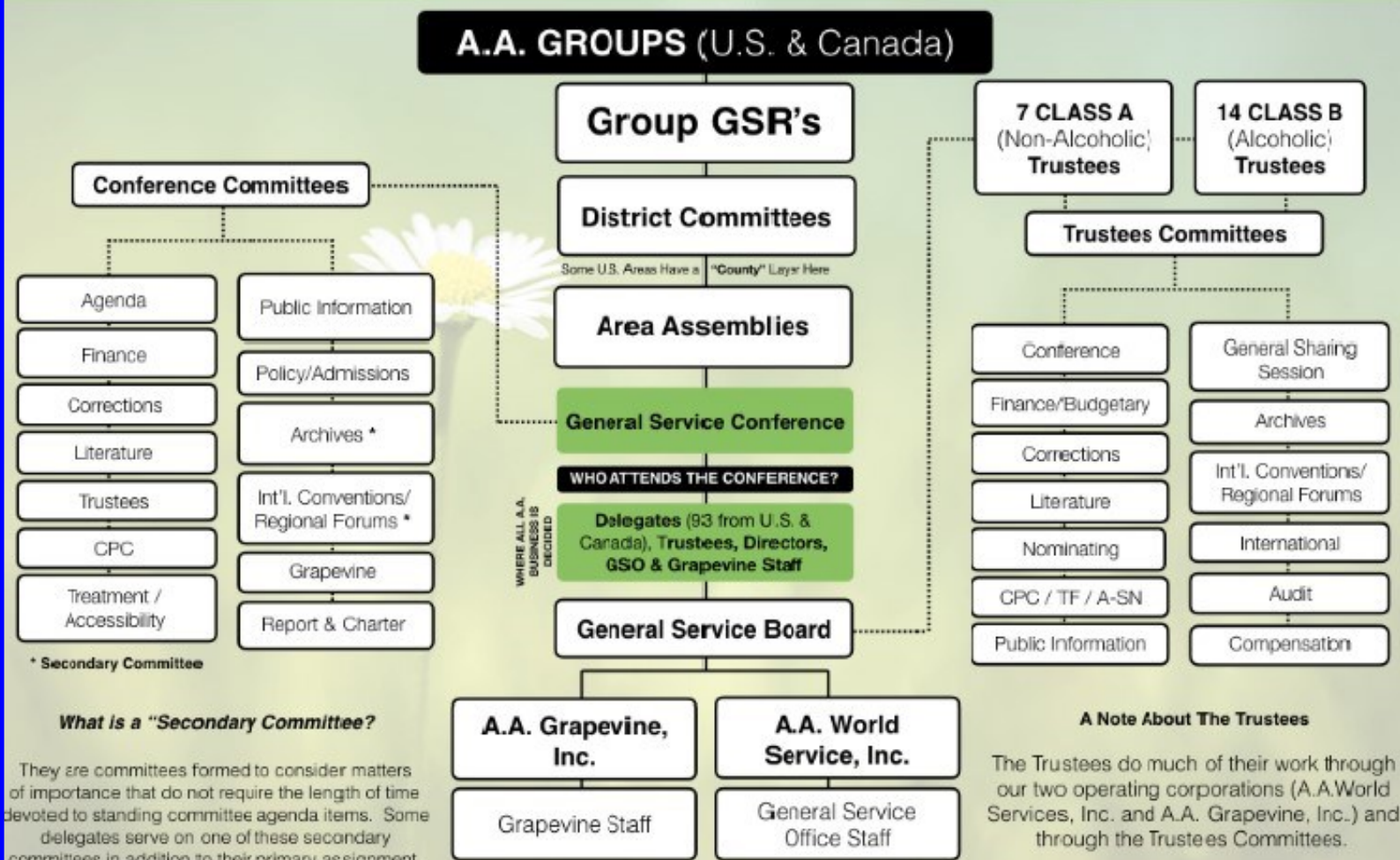
mittee comes a proposal to retire the pamphlet, *A Member's-eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Corrections will consider "sponsorship of persons in custody by outside members of the Fellowship." Literature wants to revise the pamphlet, "Young People in A.A." Other and likely hot-button items include providing "all area alternate delegates the same Conference materials as sitting delegates," and "carrying the message to alcoholics with intellectual or information processing challenges, communication challenges and diverse

neurological abilities." Guidelines for remote communities to consider how we close (i.e. what prayer, etc.) at the big meetings at the 2025 International Convention are also up for discussion. There is more on the proposed agenda item list. (See the link on page 2.)

Discussions of these agenda items and more were continued during the April 1st assemblies mock General Service Committee's (GSC) session where the area's group's conscience was brought to our Delegate in preparation of the GSC next month.

– Link S., GSR-D-23

The A.A. General Service Conference Structure



General Service Conference



A.A. members can submit **proposed agenda items** (similar to a motion) to the Conference Coordinator at G.S.O. (it is suggested to first run it through the home group, district, and area, when possible).

The appropriate committees review, discuss, and determine what to do with the item - send it to the floor of the Conference, make a recommendation that's referred to the General Service Board for consideration and possible action, or take no action.

Those decisions become part of the collective conscience of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada. (Concept 1)

So, really its all about communication!



Now you're getting it!

Concept 1

The Ultimate Responsibility for A. A. World Services Belongs to the A. A. Groups

A Delegate's Conference Experience "Lessons Learned"

At a turning point in my sobriety, being involved in General Service was a suggestion, eventually leading to the position of Delegate for San Diego/Imperial Panel 64, (2014) and attending the General Service Conference. I had much to learn about committee work.

Having some financial issues in sobriety I was fearful about what committee I would be assigned. I was thinking, "Please God, not Finance." But as we often learn, God doesn't necessarily give us what we want, but certainly gives us what we need. Before the first conference, I was sent a message, "Welcome to the Finance Committee." You can imagine how I felt after that first conference when I became chair of the Conference Finance Committee. I would learn many lessons from being on the finance committee, particularly in my second year at the Conference.

I learned to remember that I worked for the groups; they did not work for me. I learned how important it is to lead a committee, putting unity first. The Finance

Committee had a motion we recommended that year that became controversial. It ended up in front of the entire Conference for 5 and 1/2-hours during discussion. It was very important that I understood it was my committee that would be involved in the decisions as questions were asked. The motion did not pass that day, though it was unanimously supported the previous year. I believe it was tabled after hours of discussion, and the following year it didn't even come out of committee. That was another hard lesson for me to learn. The wheels of Alcoholics Anonymous can be slow. I try not to refer to conferences as "productive or not productive" based on items passed. I now know for every item passed, there were years of hard work and discussion by other conferences paving the way to an item eventually passing. It was important that our committee stay united.

Another lesson learned was that committees are not the ones who carry out the work. In the case of a Conference Committee, most of our deliberations happen

at the Conference, then Trustees Committees take over. Seeing this helped me realize that even at the Area level, committees have little chance of doing the work themselves. Another lesson learned was to encourage committees to reach out to those they serve (the groups), and to allow the groups and their members to take roles during committee work, without being actual committee members.

Leaving the Conference that second year, my takeaway was that we will rarely remember what specific section of literature was changed, nor will we remember what business rules were used or not used during a heated discussion, and we may not even remember the items passed. But we will remember how important it was to treat each other well as we did our jobs. After all, we are all in some stage of our recovery and you never know when the person at the other end of a discussion will need our help, just to save their life or our own. — Dean B., Area 08 Delegate / Panel 62 (2014)

Twelve Concepts for World Service

Do you have trouble understanding the Concepts? Are we taking them into our hearts to practice them in all our service affairs? The **Twelve Concepts for World Service** are described in long form, short form, and in the **Contents** within the A.A. Service Manual. The contents page may be easier to follow.

Contents Page

- I. The Ultimate Responsibility for A. A. World Services Belongs to the A. A. Groups
- II. The A. A. Groups Have Delegated Complete Administrative and Operational Authority to Their Conference and Its Service Arms
- III. The "Right of Decision" Makes Effective Leadership Possible
- IV. "Participation" Is the Key to Harmony
- V. The Rights of "Appeal" and "Petition" Protect Minorities and Insures That They Be Heard
- VI. The Conference Acknowledges the Primary Administrative Responsibility of the Trustees
- VII. How the Legal Rights of the Trustees Are Related to the Traditional Rights of the Conference
- VIII. The Trustees Function as the Direct Managers of Over-All Finance and Policy: Also as the Custodians but not as the Immediate Managers of the Active Service Corporations
- IX. Good Personal Leadership at All Conference Levels Is a Primary Necessity. In the Area of World Service, the General Service Board and Its Leaders Must Necessarily Replace the Founders of A. A. This Is the Most Critical Structural Problem That We Still Face
- X. Service Authority Should Equal Service Responsibility Executive Authority Should Always Be Single: "Double-Headed Management" Should Be Carefully Avoided
- XI. A Description of the Primary Committees and Service Corporations of the General Service Board: The Personal Status of Corporate Directors, Executives and Staff Members
- XII. The Spiritual Foundation for A. A.'s World Services—"Article 12" of the Conference Charter.