



ICSAA  
Secular AA

**BOARD MEETING**

17 September 2017

3:00 pm Eastern Standard / Noon Pacific

<https://zoom.us/j/761561311>

Call To Order by Sam at 12:06 pm

Roll Call - Present

Sam E. – Chair  
Martin D. – Vice Chair  
Geri B. – Secretary  
Joy R. – Treasurer  
Courtney S. – IT / Web  
Carol M. – Host Committee Chair – Toronto 2018  
Thomas B. – Outreach  
Nigel S. – Newsletter  
Dianne P. - Emeritus Member

Not Present

Patrick Y. – Mission / Vision

Chair's opening comments

- Adherence to AA Concepts, Traditions, Roberts Rules, AA Service Manual and our Bylaws as applicable.
- Committee process – Status reports at board meetings and set tasks to be done in committees. Board to function as oversight and hold committees responsible to the collective group conscious. Whenever possible work to be done in committee. Create opportunities to involve more of our full membership in service.
- Agenda - be prepared to table new topics
- Review of 2017/18 board meeting times (all to be confirmed) NOTED THAT APRIL MEETING DATE IS CHANGED TO APRIL 3RD.
  - 9 January 2018 (2pm EST)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 (2pm EST)
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2018 (Toronto, early dinner)
  - 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018 informal open membership at large Q&A during ICSAA 2018

- 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018 formal open membership at large voting business meeting during ICSAA 2018
- 26<sup>th</sup> August 2018 (Toronto with New Board)
- 17<sup>th</sup> November 2018 (Last board meeting of this board, pass off to new board) possible in-person option in Las Vegas

#### Old Business and Chair Reports/Updates

- A. Approval of June 2017 Minutes - Thomas moved for approval, seconded by Carol.
- B. Vision Statements (Pat) - Reported that no Board members have been in touch with Pat. Martin to follow up with Pat, and will be in touch with Sam. Martin will work on the Vision Statement. Sam and Geri will work on the Bylaws.
- C. Corporate housekeeping
  - 1) Bylaws - Geri & Sam are working on revisions, with input from Carol and Julian, former trustee, who offered to consult and provide perspective.
  - 2) Board liability insurance

Sam presented results of his research: "To keep it simple I would suggest that if we decide to do this we begin the policy now as the 12 month period would bring us through ICSAA 2018 and if we think we need it than we might as well get it. I would recommend choosing the \$500,000 policy (which is the minimum available) as that would be enough to cover a nuisance suit which is all I think we really need to worry about. The cost is \$678 which includes a \$528 premium and the unavoidable \$150 brokerage fee."

Discussion followed. It was confirmed that we know of no impending lawsuits or problems, and the consensus was that it was a good idea.

Carol moved to buy Directors Errors and Omissions policy. Second by Courtney. Passed by unanimous vote.

- 3) Events Liability Insurance – Per Sam, the estimated quote will be about \$600. We may be covered under the Marriott’s policy. Carol will check if we can be named as additional insured under the Marriott policy.
- D. Nigel brought up and additional issue about our contract with the hotel and the cancellation clause. Question: can we get insurance to cover liquidated damages from the hotel if we fail to cover our agreement. Nigel will investigate and report back.
- E. Treasurer’s Report
  - 1) Report given by Joy.
 

Current report is posted on the website. Sam requested that Quarterly Financial statements be prepared and emailed to Board members prior to the next board meeting for review and be prepared to discuss at the meeting.

- 2) Budgeting - Joy reported she is working with the Toronto Committee to come up with budget for the conference.

Courtney reported the website budget is about \$1000/year. He will provide details to Joy at a later date.

- 3) Donations - Sam stated concerns that we need a simple statement on the website (about tradition 7) and a small list of things that cost us money to provide group services that we can provide on every page of our website that will link to a practice the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition page which allows us to accept donations.
  - We will need to incorporate a statement that people will need to see before they make donations letting them know that our federal non-profit application is pending and that in the event it is denied their contribution.
  - Along with AA practice and tradition we should post maximum allowable annual contributions from an individual or an estate. These limits are addressed in the draft new bylaws.
  - Also state that we are not accepting outside contributions.
- ii. Courtney reported that we are already soliciting on the website and any funds go to Joy. The Secular AA meeting will start accepting donations.

#### F. IT (Courtney)

- 1) Discussion on the John and Courtney Podcast, and should it should be included on the website. Joy moved we include a link to the podcast on the website, Thomas seconded. Passed unanimously. Here is the link:  
<https://aabeyondbelief.org/2017/03/29/episode-53-secularaa-org/>

- 2) Discussion on how to manage oversight of the content of the website. Courtney mentioned the way AA handles the situation, with a committee. The content should not be left up to the webmaster, but rather up to the committee, which is then responsible to the Board. Further suggested our committee should include all Board members as well as IT staff.

Sam stated we should incorporate a similar type of procedure in our Bylaws. Geri noted the suggestion & will follow-up.

- 3) Still looking for volunteers to help with the IT stuff. Which gives me an idea, we should consider having a get involved page on the website where people could offer their service to various committees, kind of like Job Postings.
- 4) Discussion on policy for the Meeting Lists on Secular AA.

Sam suggested we consider assigning group numbers to each listed group and providing those groups with a @secularaa.org email address, such as G1012@secularaa.org, which will be redirected to the email address of the groups choosing, as notified to us from time to time. This way we can publish contact information for each group that will not need to be updated so travelers, potential new attendees or other groups can connect.

Courtney explained how the system works with the host, GoDaddy. There will be a cost to do more forwarding than we are already doing. Sam asked Courtney to look into what the costs would be.

- 5) Keeper of the Keys – Courtney identified a need to identify a board member to hold instructions to access our websites in case of emergency. It is more complicated than we have been thinking. Ed W. (from Brooklyn) is currently the assistant webmaster and has been working with Courtney would be able to help. No changes made.

G. Conference guidelines (Martin) - being worked on

Discussion on the Bid process will be a part of conference guidelines with Joy.

Courtney asked to be kept in the loop because he has tools which may be helpful.

H. 2018 ICSAA Conference – Inclusion and Diversity (Carol)

1) Registration

Sam requested all Board members register and book the hotel ASAP

2) Attraction –flyer distribution (Nigel)

3) Program committee update

Discussion on whether the Program Committee is a sub-committee of the City Committee or a separate 4th Committee of .....

- i. Carol described the program schedule as currently envisioned. She will send out written description.
- ii. Discuss and identify the process to determine the program and speakers
- iii. Suggested speakers:
  - Michele Grinberg, the current Chair of the AA Board
  - Ami B., Executive Editor of the Grapevine (who was not permitted by the Austin Convention Board to be a featured speaker)
  - former trustees/delegates of AAWS such as, Madeline P. and Julian R
  - Former GSO manager and Trustee Greg M.
  - Bill S. is a secular minded AA member (“a firm Group Of Drunks guy for the past 35 years”) and is currently writing a well-researched book on the writing of the Big Book. I met Bill recently via email when I discovered that he owns Jim Burwell’s first edition with his personal underlines and notes, Jim’s second edition which was subscribed by Bill W. to Jim acknowledging Jim’s contributions to AA (2<sup>nd</sup> edition has Jim’s story), and most interestingly Jim’s personally annotated copy of the mimeographed Big Book, just before it was published, which was circulated to various AAs, including Jim, for review and comment

by Bill. (yeah I would have bought all three if I could but they are out of my price range...) Bill S. bought them at auction a number of years ago from Jim's estate and has spent some time with Jim's niece. Apparently Roger C. and Joe C. spoke at an event Bill put on recently so we could reach out to them if we are concerned about personality.

- 4) Drunk Junk, T-Shirts etc., (Nigel) –
  - Nigel showed sample (sold for \$20 piece)
  - Will be placed on site that has ability to sell direct to public.
  - Art work will be made available.

I. 2020 ICSAA Conference Bid Committee (Joy)

- 1) Bid requirements – RFB available. Will circulate to Board for comment.
- 2) Discuss Secular AA involvement at 2020 Detroit International AA - Joy will contact Gregg, former Delegate (contact info from Sam) on how we can have presence in Detroit.
- 3) Discuss the date of our next ICSAA after 2018 -  
Do we want to do 2020 - same as Detroit International AA??  
Proposal - we do not have Secular AA 2020, and ask our members to support Detroit 2020. Thomas proposed tabled with request to expand on ideas.

J. Outreach (Thomas)

- 1) Gave update on how that is advancing

K. Newsletter (Nigel) - Has been going out regularly & being helpful for advertising Toronto. 800 on mailing list, only about 200 from Austin. Most have come from Secular AA

New Business

- A. Consider adding Vic L's AA, Religion and Secular AA article to secularaa.org website <https://www.dropbox.com/s/d6keucsg7txtero/AA%2C%20Religion%20and%20Secular%20AA.pdf?dl=0>

Sam asked all to read it so we can discuss next time.

- B. These new business topics are a result of communications I have had with a few of our members and I believe the board should consider these items, reach consensus or at least consensus on if we should form a committee to address these issues. I tried to paraphrase the discussions:

- 1) Martin will personally survey individual groups to see if they have been able to be listed in their local meeting directories.

- 2) Secular AA Events: Sponsoring (sharing experience strength and hope) for local and regional Secular AA activities. We can solicit a list of people willing to sponsor secular AA events from the conference committees of Santa Monica and Austin. I think we can promote anyone's interest in creating an event. I'm sure Courtney can come up with a mechanism on our website such as a posting that you can click on a link and have your contact info sent to the organizer (we would also capture the contact info for our overall database). We could have two sections on our website, one for upcoming events and one for proposed events looking for support. DEFERRED
- 3) Secular AA Literature: I think we should make Secular AA literature available on our website. HOWEVER, we must establish criteria and devise a mechanism for approval. We can start with an ad-hoc literature committee that I can establish as board chair. Perhaps we can find someone outside of the board to volunteer to chair such a committee and find additional committee members, Thomas could be a board member participant? The literature committee can submit recommendations with explanation to the board and if the board approves we can add the titles to our list. My personal opinion that we are considering literature that is AA conference approved (or an AA Grapevine book), such as Living Sober, or The God Word (which is UK AA conference approved), or an issue of the Grapevine, all the committee would need to do is suggest it to the board and we will likely approve. I don't think we should get into the business of selling literature (at least just not yet) but we can offer links to any 3rd party seller, such as AAWS. However if there is an easy and cost effective way, to allow people to order literature from us (fulfilled by someone else) all in one convenient place, I think that is a service we should consider at some point. It becomes tricky for literature that is not already official AA literature however I think helping secular AA members find books such as [A History of Agnostics in AA](#) is a service we should find a way to provide. DEFERRED
- 4) Regional Intergroups to facilitate more regional conferences and less formal gatherings - Courtney will expand current part of website "Start a Meeting" to include Regional Conferences.

- C. Discussion on creating an explanation which we can publish online, explaining Anonymity on our linked Facebook forums and online meetings. (personally I have not joined these meetings as my Facebook has both personal and business contacts, I'm not anonymous to anyone I meet but I do believe that if I'm not anonymous at the public level that is in violation of some really basic AA principles I strongly believe in) . No changes made.
- D. Discuss to see if we can have a consensus on the "special purpose group" identity which we have taken on the homepage of our website, personally I hate this designation and my thoughts follow the quoted text from our home page of secularaa.org :

**The tradition of group autonomy assures that every AA group may conduct their meetings as they see fit, providing their actions do not affect other groups or AA as a whole. This gives AA a rich heritage of diversity and**

**inclusiveness, and makes possible special purpose groups for Agnostics and Atheists, as well as special purpose groups such as : Secular AA, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Alcoholics, Native Americans in AA, Lawyers in AA, Medical Professionals in AA, Pilots in AA, and Young People in AA.**

Special Purpose Groups...NOT: This is my personal opinion based on my own beliefs and personal experience. I don't speak for Secular AA but that doesn't keep me from having an asshole (as the saying goes). I have never been a supporter of special interest groups because I believe that the additional requirement (actual or implied) of membership is in clear and complete contradiction of AA principles. I've never been opposed to special topic meetings at our conferences, such as: women's stags, LGBT, young peoples or even agnostics. I believe our board is 100% unanimous in our definition of secular to be inclusive of believers and "We do not endorse or oppose any form of religion or atheism. Our only wish is to assure suffering alcoholics that they can find sobriety in A.A. without having to accept anyone else beliefs or having to deny their own" is often read at the beginning of many secular meetings. Every time someone mentions secular meetings are another special interest, or special purpose group, I cringe. Recently I realized that we are clearly not a special makeup group but we are merely a collection of AA members who prefer (and believe in) the format of our meetings to be secular (without religious prayer) and thus entirely inclusive. Therefore it is my belief that the purpose of Secular AA is to hold conferences that have secular formats and provide mechanisms, such as the website, to share experiences (personal recovery and group) of a secular nature. I believe the board of Secular AA is unanimous in our hope that our example will lead to universal acceptance in AA of agnostics and atheists (whatever they may call themselves), as well as those of religious beliefs that are outside the local cultural norms. Therefore I "pray" that someday (it is going to be awhile) we will be able to dissolve SecularAA.org and our ICSAA, as there will no longer be a need since we do not see ourselves as special. I recognize that a secular AA conference and secular AA meetings are attractive to the anti-god militant atheist types so I hope that we stay diligent on practicing our principle of inclusion and diversity as well as all the principles in AAs steps, traditions and concepts. I am asking the board, and ultimately our fellowship, to consider the perspective of defining ourselves not as a special purpose group but as AA members with a particular desire of, and commitment to, secularly formatted AA meetings and events. However, if need be, I am willing and experienced in living in the minority opinion.

And here are Roger C.'s thoughts on the issue:

*Speaking to the issue of agnostics and atheists being "Special Purpose Groups" - perhaps the most debatable issue you discussed - I personally agree with the Literature Sub-Committee in 1979 which proposed a pamphlet for we nonbelievers in AA and quite correctly, I believe, stated, "This type of pamphlet does not fall under the category 'special groups of alcoholics' literature but concerns a more fundamental and worldwide problem that has resulted in much misinterpretation of the AA Fellowship." They continue with an explanation: "This pamphlet would affirm in clear and concise fashion that 'the only requirement for membership in AA is a desire to stop drinking' and that our founders and the group conscience of the fellowship does not and has never considered an alcoholic's spiritual beliefs as necessarily relevant to the*

*achievement of healthy and happy sobriety..." So we are not a special purpose group but merely asking - insisting - that AA act in accordance with its primary purpose, its mission*

TABLED

E. Other New Business

- 1) Discussion on having a place on Registration form to donate toward conference or Secular AA separately. Tabled

Executive Session –none

Adjournment at 2:14 pm Pacific