

Spring '08 Region 6 Assembly Report

Submitted by Gil P

The Assembly started on Saturday, September 29, 2007 at 9:15 with R6 Trustee Margaret Ann addressing 21 Blue Dots (so-called because, as first-timers, they have small blue circles stuck to their name badges). The full Assembly convened at 9:51a.m. starting with the Serenity prayer in French, then English and proceeding to the roll call. At the morning session we had 66 delegates registered and seven eligible voting board members, meaning a simple majority equaled 37 votes and a two-thirds majority equaled 49 votes. SCMI was represented by two delegates, Bob P and me, of a total of three allotted to our IG.

The Assembly approved adoption of both the Standing Rules and the day's agenda, then the Assembly moved immediately into a one-hour explanation and open discussion of irregularities in the Region 6 financial issues over the 12 years prior to Fall 2006. During that time one member had been treasurer for eight years while his wife had been the treasurer for four years in between.

For a clear summary of the issues described and explored during the session, please review the well-documented summary submitted by Michael P (attached to this report and available on the South Coastal Mass. web site at www.scmioa.org). The gist of the report is that: Region 6 did not have non-profit status during that period, as it had been led to believe by the treasurers, nor does it currently enjoy that status; \$6,900 in R6 funds from September 2005 through August 2006 are unaccounted for...and the board has decided not to spend hundreds of more dollars to pay the bank for the previous 11 years' worth of activity on that account to determine if more money is missing; a check register from that account shows that two checks of \$2,000 each were written to World Service, yet the WSO reports it never received either check; and personal and R6 funds were commingled in that account.

Again, please refer to Michael P's fine reporting work for a more complete summary of the workshop. I wanted to give you a short version of the proceedings, however, as backdrop for what happened next at the Assembly. After a half-hour of going over the situation, with questions and comments coming from the floor, the chair sought to move on. At that point I raised my hand and asked to speak to the Assembly. I told the gathering that I felt it was necessary to point out that this episode marked the second time in a year that improprieties by a treasurer has rocked Region 6 and I briefly restated what had happened with our own IG in 2007...all the way down to commingling of funds in an account purported to be used solely for OA business. I went so far as to mention both the name of our former treasurer and the name of the former R6 treasurer, which up to that point had been kept out of the discussion. I told those in attendance that I believed it is important for all of us to know these names so that we can minimize the risk of being victimized again in the future should these individuals seek to take positions of responsibility within one of our service bodies in the future. (I was told after the Assembly that the R6 board was advised by its insurance carrier not to mention the name of the former R6 treasurers, so I won't do it here.)

Following the workshop, the Assembly broke for lunch, then 1:45 of committee meeting. Every delegate had a responsibility to serve on one of the eight committees: Intergroup Outreach (IGOR), Twelfth Step Within, Young People's, Finance, Convention, Public Information, Newsletter, and Bylaws. As co-chair of the upcoming Discovery '08 convention in Plymouth, I attended on the Convention committee, which included 17 members and was headed by Chair Roberta L. Much of the meeting was spent with co-chair Barbara B and me outlining the details of the October 24-26 convention. We told the committee they we are on schedule with all aspects of the convention and that the convention hotel already was full, six months ahead of the event. We also noted that 50 rooms have been set aside at the nearby Cold Spring Best Western Hotel for those still wanting to attend. We added that meal plans are not available for those staying at other hotels but noted that many restaurants are conveniently located and that the convention hotel's restaurant will be open for all five mealtimes during the event. We gratefully took a suggestion that the convention web site (oaregion6.org/2008) include a "frequently asked questions" section.

The committee also heard a report from Ruth W of Greater Syracuse IG, who is the chair for the 2009 Convention, October 23-25 at the Holiday Inn Electronics Parkway in Liverpool, NY. Ruth noted she is looking for a co-chair but still is moving ahead, stating she has had three planning meetings to date and already has mock-up versions of registration forms and raffle tickets. The contract with the hotel is being refined and soon will be ready for the signature of R6 Chair Karin R.

The committee was asked to seek out volunteer Intergroups to host the 2010 R6 convention.

The Assembly reconvened at 2:45 with a credentials update: As of the afternoon roll call, 72 delegates had registered, along with seven board members, meaning a majority of 40 was needed and 53 votes would be needed for a two-thirds majority. Next came the reading of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Service, followed by the Introduction of officers, former officers, service volunteers, new delegates and visitors. Minutes of the Fall 2007 Assembly were amended and accepted. The officers' reports followed. Chair Karin R pointed out that July 22 is the deadline for seeking scholarships '08 as well as for placing motions before the Fall Assembly. That date also is the deadline for PI Blitz proposals, applications to run for vice chair, treasurer, and secretary and Region 6 trustee. Zazu gave a detailed treasurer's report and touched on upcoming motions later in the day aimed at providing checks and safeguards against further improprieties in handling the treasury. Using her balance sheets and projected budget for the coming year, she assured the Assembly that we are on firm financial footing despite the recent fiscal difficulties. Vice Chair Diana G reported on the plans for an OA booth at the American Psychological Association conference in Boston this summer. Diana, who is spearheading the effort, noted that New York Metro and Metrowest Intergroups have donated \$1,000 each; SCMI has contributed \$600 to pay for the booth and materials. She asked delegates to seek volunteers to staff the booth; requiring two people for each of the 28 hours over four days. Coordinator Helen Floyd informed the Assembly that Region 6 oversees 45 Intergroups and 55 unaffiliated groups for a total of 1,053 individual groups, which is down six from last year's total. Steve M, the web site and publication coordinator talked about updates and improvements to the R6 web site and said that it contained links to World Service as well as the region convention pages. Margaret Ann B. gave the trustee's report, noting her term ends at the WSBC in April 2009 and that and reiterated that anyone wishing to run for the trustee's position must submit nomination papers by July 22, 2008. She added that she is conducting a number of service and traditions workshops over the next several months and still has money in her budget to do more; any interested group can contact her to set up a date.

The board announced that the Seventh Tradition collection would be used toward funding an OA information booth at the APA conference in August. A total of \$205 was raised.

The Assembly next had an afternoon break/writing session. Delegates were asked to write and submit a short article on the topic of "developing and maintaining trust." The topic was selected in light of the revelation of improper banking practices by the former Region 6 treasurers.

Upon resumption of the Assembly, a member of each of the committees that met earlier in the day gave two-minute reports. The IGOR committee plans to set up a communication tree between Intergroups; send reports of the Spring Assembly procedures to Intergroups that did not send delegates to the Assembly and send thank you notes to the Intergroups that did. The Twelfth Step Within committee noted that eight Intergroups responded to packages sent to every Intergroup in fall '07 regarding the staging of a sponsorship workshop and two Intergroups actually held such workshops; the committee also came up with many new initiatives and made plans for the Twelfth Step within workshop to be held at the upcoming Region 6 convention. The Young People's committee plans to review Ala-teen literature for ideas and to disseminate all available resource information to all Intergroups. The Finance committee discussed the three treasurer's motions to be presented at this Assembly and discussed the viability of having an independent review vs. an independent audit of R6 finances; the committee also voted to increase mileage reimbursement to 30 cents a mile. The PI committee discussed plans to staff 28 hours of booth time for the August '08 APA conference. The Newsletter committee focused on getting the next issue of *The Messenger* out 45 days prior to the Fall '08 Assembly. & Procedures committee discussed accountability and responsibility issues, specifically whether to recommend a six-month abstinence requirement for all voting delegates to the Assembly.

The motions were next on the agenda, listed here in the following order as they were presented:

Motion 1 reflects a bylaws change to add language that calls for inclusion of latest completed tax forms, current insurance policies and original financial documents including receipts, bank statements check stubs, etc. for use in perform audit of the R6 treasury. A floor amendment was passed to include the Finance committee in the audit. The amended motion **passed**.

Motion 3 was rewritten on the floor of the Assembly, per recommendation of the Finance committee, to read that the treasurer will act as a liaison not only with the accountant but also with "federal state and local authorities and ensure that the annual tax forms are prepared and submitted in a timely manner as required by law." The motion **passed**.

Motion 2 sought to add a line item to the budget, adding \$1,660 to the 2007-08 budget to pay an IRS penalty for submitting a tax form late; the previous treasurer had not submitted the form. The motion **passed by the necessary two-thirds majority**.

Motion 4 sought to amend the Region 6 logo that appears on material produced by the Newsletter committee that would add an accent (aigu) over the "E" in the word, Region 6, to make the logo more inclusive, given the portion of our Region that includes French speaking groups. After debate, the motion **passed**.

Motion 5 sought to amend the nomination and election of officers in the bylaws in order stagger the election of officers and WSBC delegates so they are not all held at the same Assembly and also to insert a mechanism whereby those appointed to fill an unexpired term of an R6 officer would have to stand for election at the next Assembly in order to serve out the term of that office. A floor discussion ensued on whether to refer the proposed amendments back to the Bylaws and Procedures committee. No action was taken on the motion and the vote on whether to refer it back to committee was tabled after 20 minutes of discussion.

The R6 board also presented a motion (PI Blitz proposal) to set up an Intergroup Support Fund. The plan would be for the Region to fund up to \$2,000 yearly to allow a vibrant Intergroup to put on workshops for a smaller, struggling Intergroup (called "inreach"). The motion was **defeated**.

The Assembly next voted to work with a replacement budget that adds \$500 for needed accounting services. After money was added to account for the possibility that three trustee nominees might need to be sent to the 2009 WSBC, the 2008-09 budget of \$144,1000 was **passed**.

The Assembly also approved the dates for the 2009 Assemblies: April 18 and October 3.

The Assembly then **adopted** an emergency override budget for this year that included an additional \$250 to the treasurer's budget to straighten out past fiscal irregularities, \$1,000 earmarked for use in running a booth at the APA Conference in August, an increase of \$340 for professional accounting services to recover old financial records, and a \$250 increase to the Newsletter committee budget to cover increased printing costs

Lastly, it was agreed to change the name of the Young People's committee to Youth in OA to bring the name in line with the World Service title for such a committee.

The newcomers then stood and removed their blue dots from their nametags, signifying they no longer were first-timers at Assembly and the group adjourned with the Serenity Prayer at 6:10 p.m.