

Spring 2019 Virginia Area Assembly
May 4, 2019

Discussion Topic

Virginia Area Revisions to the Current Bylaws

MOTION:

That the Virginia Area Assembly agree to allow the VAWSC to complete a revision of the existing Virginia Area Assembly bylaws, with a final approval vote to be held at the next Fall Assembly in October 2019, on the condition that the final revision will be made available to the Group Representatives at least two months prior to the Fall Assembly in October 2019 to allow time for discussion in the groups prior to the final vote.

Background: Our current Area bylaws represent an exceptional effort by the bylaws committee which drafted the document in 2016-2017, driven by the need to have organizational bylaws in place in order to obtain approval from the IRS for nonprofit status. Our proposed rewrite of the bylaws adds some flexibility to the conduct of Area business while preserving the fundamentally sound principles written in the current version and eliminates some of the wording that duplicates or parallels provisions in the Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual.

Questions:

1. What do we know about the Fellowship's needs, wants or preferences that is relevant to this topic?
 - The Area Chair, the Area Treasurer and the Area Convention Treasurer have signature authority on Area bank accounts, but the current bylaws do not permit the Area Convention Treasurer to have this authority. This situation needs to be corrected in the bylaws.
 - The Area Chair and the Area Treasurer are the only two officers permitted to sign contracts on behalf of the Area. This situation needs to be corrected in the bylaws to allow temporary delegation of signature authority in the event of the absence of the key officers.
 - Some provisions in the existing bylaws are drawn from the current Service Manual. It is preferable to refer to the applicable section of the Service Manual in the bylaws rather than quoting or paraphrasing it.
 - Existing bylaws require a minimum 2/3rds majority to decide any issue before the Assembly. This provision is more restrictive than the Service Manual (See Warranty Three, pp. 216-217.) and should be brought in line with Warranty Three.

2. What do we know about the ability of the Area to support this change?
 - Adopting the proposed changes would permit smoother operation of Area administrative tasks and ensure timely reaction to external requirements for contracting and bill payments.
 - The proposed changes will have no negative impact on Area finances.
 - The proposed changes make Area operations better aligned with the Service Manual and with Concepts Two and Three.

3. What do we know about current and future items or trends that is relevant to this discussion?

- Our finances have become more complicated and require more work by the Area Treasurer because of our status as a Virginia registered nonprofit corporation.
- It is likely that this trend will only increase with time.
- Following the Service Manual by reference rather than by incorporating the language of same in the bylaws bestows the same level of flexibility on the Area that is permitted in the rest of AI-Anon.
- The revised bylaws maintain and support the Area's nonprofit 501(c)(3) status.

4. What are the implications of our choices?

Pros:

- Too many hard & fast rules in the bylaws do not allow the Assembly to determine its own comfort with the speed of change, which may differ from issue to issue.
- The Assembly voting members should be allowed to decide the threshold for approval of a voting issue in accordance with Warranty Three.
- Change in signature authority in financial matters promotes responsiveness.

Cons:

- Some members may be uncomfortable with less restrictive bylaws.
- Establishing separate written Area policies outside the bylaws (when needed) may impose a greater administrative burden on some officers and on voting members.

5. What do we wish we knew, but don't?

- What will be lost by adopting the proposed revision of the bylaws?

VAWSC RECOMMENDATION:

The VAWSC recommends that the Assembly approve this motion.