REPORT OF FINDINGS

DISTRICT 6 AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR HYBRID MEETINGS

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PROCESS: BRIEF HISTORY

▶ Before April 2020, in-person attendance was the only option at District 6 Business meetings.

▶ Due to closings related to the Covid-19 pandemic in late March of 2020, virtual attendance became the only option starting in April 2020.

▶ In October 2021, in-person meetings resumed with virtual attendance remaining an option.

▶ While our meeting place had the technology for virtual or hybrid classrooms set up, little was done to facilitate the Hybrid meetings.

▶ During the next year, challenges and limitations were identified and this committee was formed in September 2022 to recommend best practices.

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PROCESS: FOUNDING MOTION

That an ad hoc committee be formed with the purpose of recommending best practices for hybrid business meetings, including but not limited to elections, voting on motions, expectations for attendance, and how to best integrate in-person and virtual attendees to promote unity and fellowship. This ad hoc hybrid meetings committee will meet monthly for up to one year.

Motion 646
passed in September 2022*

*A group of district 6 members, including most committee members, met in August 2022 and discussed whether to continue hybrid, which is not the stated purpose of this committee.

PROCESS: COMMITTEE ACTIONS

➢ **DISCUSSED** whether or not to continue hybrid. This discussion produced a "Hybrid Pros & Cons" list. [A]

➢ **DEVELOPED** lists of needed hybrid meeting improvements from both in-person and virtual perspectives. These lists were followed by lists of possible solutions. [A]

➢ **PREPARED** Hybrid Election Procedures for panel 73 elections. [B]

➢ **ADDED** a tripod and "active USB extension" to free the camera from the podium. Our meeting place's built-in technology is a major blessing but it limits us to keeping our technology aspirations simple. [A]

➢ **OUTLINED** duties of a hybrid meeting facilitator and meeting hosts. [R&B]

➢ **SCRIPTED** host actions (following our literature committee's example) and made further incremental improvements via trial and error. [B]

➢ **DETERMINED** recommendations and their backgrounds. [R]

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A – shown in the Appendix   B-shown in Best Practices   R – shown in the Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **PLACE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HYBRID MEETINGS WITHIN THE WEBSITE COMMITTEE**
   and consider renaming it the Technology Committee.

2. In addition to the positions described in our General Committee Guidelines,
   CREATE THE POSITION "HYBRID MEETINGS COORDINATOR"
   within the Technology Committee.

3. Also **CONSIDER CREATING THE POSITION OF WEBMASTER,**
   with the responsibility of making updates and additions to the website.

4. **PROPOSE ADOPTION OF BUSINESS MEETING PROCEDURES**
   which focus on accessibility for all.

5. **ADOPT PANEL ELECTION PROCEDURES** which were in place
   for Panel 73 elections.

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RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

- ✓ **PLACE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HYBRID MEETINGS WITHIN THE WEBSITE COMMITTEE** and consider renaming it the Technology Committee.

- ➤ The website committee has maintained and facilitated our teleconferencing since we started using it in 2020.

- ➤ Along with the ad hoc hybrid committee, the Website committee has operated largely in a silo during the trial-and-error phase of learning how to make hybrid meetings work.

  - As such, this committee is best prepared to produce our initial training materials.

  - The Literature committee also worked on its own to develop structure for its workshops & information sessions. The Literature and Website committees have been working more closely since the beginning of 2023. All District 6 members and committees are welcome to become more involved.

RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

- ✓ **PLACE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HYBRID MEETINGS WITHIN THE WEBSITE COMMITTEE** and consider renaming it the Technology Committee.

- ➢ Due to the shortage of members interested in Technology positions, there may not be enough interest to staff both a website committee and a Hybrid committee.
  - There may come a time when the district has enough members interested in Technology and dividing the committee in two could be reconsidered.
- ➢ Renaming the committee would reflect additional responsibilities of maintaining a teleconferencing system for hybrid and virtual meetings, managing a video channel for digital media and other interactive components on the District's website.

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RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

✓ **CREATE THE POSITION HYBRID MEETINGS COORDINATOR** within the Technology Committee.

➢ There are specific recurring requirements for hybrid meetings.

- Someone <u>must</u> bring the webcam and set up the room Audio/Video system or virtual attendance is not possible.

- The meeting experience is <u>enhanced</u> by having someone do the following:
  - Operate the camera to always show the person speaking (this also enhances the audio)
  - Watch the screen for raised hands among virtual attendees and alert the chairperson
  - Watch the closed captioning to assure the microphone is picking up the speaker
  - Monitor disruptive behavior and remove any "meeting bombers" when needed
  - Mute virtual attendees as needed
  - Manage "Chat" to give information to virtual attendees
  - Screenshare to facilitate the meeting

RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

- ✓ **CREATE THE POSITION HYBRID MEETINGS COORDINATOR** within the Website/Technology Committee.

- ➤ In our experience, the meeting tasks listed on the preceding slide are too much for one-person to handle.
- ➤ This position of Hybrid Meetings Coordinator would be responsible for the following:
  a. Maintaining hybrid meeting equipment and purchasing replacements or upgrades as needed.
  b. Recruiting, training, and scheduling virtual "hosts" and in-person facilitators for meetings.
  c. Creating and updating training materials for hybrid meeting setup and hosts.
  d. Giving a verbal report to the body and providing a written report to the recording secretary.

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RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

- ✓ **CREATE THE POSITION HYBRID MEETINGS COORDINATOR** within the Website/Technology Committee.

- ➢ If Area 15 creates a standing Hybrid Meeting Committee, the District 6 Hybrid Meeting Coordinator should be defrayed for one night's stay at the area assembly. Otherwise, it is debatable what benefit the district or area would receive from this person attending unless they are otherwise defrayed.

RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

✓ **Also** CONSIDER CREATING THE POSITION OF WEBMASTER, with the responsibility of making updates and additions to the website.

- Having a webmaster is typical of Technology Committees. The webmaster would be responsible for updating the district6aa.org forwarding emails as well as making updates and improvements to the website. Meanwhile the committee chairperson would set meeting agendas, give reports and oversee the committee.

- There is certainly value in the webmaster attending Area 15 website committee meetings. As such, this position should be defrayed for one night's stay at the area assembly.

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RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

✓ **PROPOSE ADOPTION OF BUSINESS MEETING PROCEDURES** which focus on accessibility for all.

➤ These procedures would cover areas that are normally the Chairperson or Alternate's responsibilities, such as:

- Asking in-person reports to be given from the front of the room
- Asking other speakers or come to the front of the room or the person who is up front (e.g., the motion maker or report giver) to repeat the question.

➤ Procedures would also cover everyone else's responsibilities, such as

- How the virtual meeting hosts communicate with the Chairperson or Alternate in the least disruptive manner.
- Limiting interruptions from other members to "point of order" and "point of information."

These procedures would be guided by our code of love & tolerance with the goal of maximizing everyone's meeting experience.

RECOMMENDATION BACKGROUND

✓ **ADOPT OF PANEL ELECTION PROCEDURES** which were in place for Panel 73 elections.

➤ As these procedures were already approved for panel 73 it might be a formality to include them here. The basic principle is to make in-person and virtual voting procedures as similar as possible.

- For example, on regular motions we raise our hands in-person and on the virtual platform. We can see who is voting to verify they are a voting member as it is not anonymous.
- For third legacy procedures, we use anonymous ballots. As such we need safeguards to assure that only voting members are casting votes and non-voting members & guests are separated in-person and virtually.
- See the appendix for more details regarding the hybrid election procedures.

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RECOMMENDED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE ORG CHART

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BEST PRACTICES

BEST PRACTICES: HYBRID OVERALL

➢ Bestow the same rights and responsibilities for in-person and virtual attendees wherever possible.

- For example, virtual attendees are not automatically muted and like in-person attendees, they have the responsibility to speak only when appropriate.

➢ Make participation similar whenever possible.

- For example, when in-person attendees vote by raising their hands and being counted, so do virtual attendees, rather than using a poll.

➢ Recognize when differential treatment by method of attendance is more practical.

- For example, virtual attendees automatically have name tags on our platform. In person attendees are not expected to wear name tags and it wouldn't help virtual attendees identify them if they did.

Goals for overall best practices:

- Keep it simple in terms of financial commitment and tasks for trusted servants.

- Pass it on by documenting what, when, how and why we arrived at these recommendations.

- Provide the best overall meeting experience for   both in-person and virtual attendees.

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BEST PRACTICES: HYBRID MEETING COORDINATOR

- ➢ Schedule trusted servants in advance to make sure the following meeting tasks are covered:
  - Webcam set-up and operation (in-person)
  - Hosting chat - posting information specific to virtual attendees (virtual preferred)
  - Hosting screen shares – with information for all attendees (virtual or in-person)
  - Watching the screen for raised hands among virtual attendees and notifying the chairperson (in-person)
- ➢ Create and update manuals, checklists or other training materials for hosts and attendees, including:
  - How to set up the audio/video system in-person
  - How to chat and screenshare
  - Directions for attending virtually on our virtual platform, such muting/unmuting, raising/lowering your virtual hand, viewing the closed captioning, and paying attention to the chat
  - Virtual GSR orientation
- ➢ Have a small pool of trusted servants trained for each task.

Goals for hybrid meeting coordinator best practices:

- Have a pool of trusted servants prepared to help make the hybrid meeting work.
- Make sure everyone involved is prepared before the meeting.

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BEST PRACTICES: HYBRID MEETING COORDINATOR

➢ The Hybrid Meetings Coordinator's report would include the following:

- Who will be Hosting next month's meeting (and/or asking for volunteers).
- Asking committees and officers to please provide their screen share requests as far in advance as possible.
- Notifying the body of any updates.

➢ Script the timing and content of chat posts and screen shares.

- Meet with those hosts to review the scripts before the meeting.
- Details regarding the scripts appear on the next slide.

Goals for hybrid meeting coordinator best practices:

- Have a pool of trusted servants prepared to help make the hybrid meeting work.
- Make sure everyone involved is prepared before the meeting.

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BEST PRACTICES: HOST SCRIPTS

- The **CHAT** script will be specific to Virtual attendees and will include:
  - Our naming convention (and helping with renaming)
  - Information the Registrar needs from new members
  - The web address for GSR orientation
  - Web address and password for the meeting agenda
  - Web address for help using our virtual platform.
- The **SCREENSHARE** script will include items seen by all members, including:
  - District 6 motions
  - Area 15 motions or GSC consider items
  - Reports, such as this one, as needed.
  - Flyers or other items to complement verbal reports (upon request)
  - The Declaration of Unity and Responsibility Statement
- The **SCREENSHARE** script will change from meeting to meeting while the **CHAT** script will be mostly static.

Goals for our host scripts:

- Provide information to members, facilitate motions, support reports, etc.
- Simplify the task of hosting by providing the timing of chats and screenshares, as well as the content to copy/paste for chats, or specific images, files and web addresses for screenshares.

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BEST PRACTICES: ADDITIONAL MEETING TASKS

➢ Webcam setup:
- Attend the previous meeting in-person and take the equipment home to avoid scheduling a transfer.
- Arrive early enough to set up before most other members people arrive, even if the room is locked when you arrive.
- Set up the camera near the front of the room but back from the podium.
- Wherever cables or cords are on the floor, use a table to block members walking over them.

➢ Camera operation:
- Adjust the tripod height as high as is comfortable to operate from a sitting position.
- Turn the camera toward the person who is speaking and adjust it up or down to show their face.

➢ Additional tasks for the camera operator or another volunteer.
- Watch the participant screen and raise a yellow hand on a stick to indicate a raised hand among virtual attendees.
- Watch the closed captioning and indicate whenever the microphone does not adequately pick up the speaker.

Additional Goals:

- Timely set-up
- Room safety.
- Helping virtual attendees see and hear the room.
- Helping virtual attendees participate when the chairperson has their back to the participant screen.

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BEST PRACTICES - HYBRID ELECTION PROCEDURES

The "Hybrid Meeting Election Procedure" which was approved for Panel 73 elections includes the following:

- Non-voting virtual attendees are moved into a breakout room during ballots, and non-voting in-person attendees are seated apart from voting members in the room.

- The list of candidates is screen shared from a computer spreadsheet rather than written on the blackboard, which improves visibility, legibility, and record keeping.

- The number of votes is also on the screen share, with a computer spreadsheet adding up in-person and virtual votes and calculating percentages.

  - This provides full transparency that the number of votes does not exceed the count of virtual, in-person, or total voting members.

  - It calculates and shows percentages, which minimizes disputes about what represents substantial unanimity.

- Third Legacy procedure is shown below each ballot (meaning the procedure as it applies to the 1st ballot is shown below the first ballot and so on) and conditional formatting specific to each ballot indicates if any candidate achieved 2/3 majority and if any candidates are withdrawn for not achieving the minimum.

- Each sheet can be saved for a complete record of the election and given to the Archives Committee.

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APPENDIX

Details of Action Items from Slide 5

Pros	Cons

All inclusive, including:
  + Health compromised
  + Mobility challenged
  + Remote communities
  + Work conflicts
  + Vacation / travel
  + Visitors from outside D6
  + GSRs who otherwise
    wouldn't attend
 	
Our current meeting place is already set up
 	
The virtual meeting platform is also used for Committee meetings and literature workshops
	Lack of Camaraderie / Fellowship/Unity
	  - Challenge communicating between the room and virtual attendees
	
	Lack of inclusion
	 - No GSR orientation
	 - No physical handouts
	
	Are people who attend virtually showing less responsibility?
	  - GSRs who otherwise would attend in-person
	  - D6 members going to less effort to attend
	
	No basket is passed on the virtual platform
	
	Adds time to the meeting
	
	Hybrid screen is distracting

APPENDIX - ACTION ITEMS: HYBRID PROS AND CONS

Goals for our Pros and Cons list:

- Determine how we can accentuate or make the most use of the positives

- Resolve or alleviate the negatives

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Improve for virtual attendees	Improve for in-person attendees
Can't hear the person speaking if they are not near the microphone

Can't hear when multiple people are talking

Can't talk among ourselves without it going over the speakers in the room

Not everyone knows how to use the meeting platform | No communication between the room and virtual attendees.

Don't know virtual attendees

End the meeting on-time

Have to do extra just for virtual attendees
- going to the podium to speak
-repeating questions from the floor if they are not heard by virtual attendees
 - Being interrupted by virtual attendees |

APPENDIX - ACTION ITEMS: HYBRID SHORTCOMINGS

Goals for our shortcoming list:

• Make improvements wherever possible

• Recognize limitations where patience & tolerance are the best course of action

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In Room	Virtual (preferred)
Before the Meeting Suggest to Chairperson speakers come to front of the room and questions be repeated as needed. **During the meeting** Using a tripod with a swivel, point the camera at the person who is speaking. Watch for raised virtual hands. Repeat questions that are not picked up by the microphone or remind the chairperson as needed.	Turn on and follow closed captioning to confirm if questions are picked up by the microphone. Notify chairperson when the speaker is nor heard.
	Virtual or In Room
	Rename participants Restrict participant chat and manage chat Assist registrar as needed New GSR orientation Remind all that love and tolerance is our code and to treat everyone with respect whether we agree or disagree with them

APPENDIX - ACTION ITEMS: MEETING FACILITATOR OR HOST DUTIES

Goals for our host duties list:

- This was an initial list quantifying meeting service requirements for hybrid meetings

- At the time this list was made, "meeting facilitator" was used to describe what we now refer to as "hosts"

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▶ Our meeting place is equipped with a computer, projector & screen, and ceiling speakers.

+ We only need to provide a webcam to conduct a hybrid meeting.

- There is only one USB input. As such, use of multiple microphones would require more complex hardware, such as a mixer.

- Regular USB extensions did not work.

+ An "Active" or "Repeater" extension works well to reposition our webcam away from the podium.

Goals for our tech needs:

• Make it easier for virtual attendees to hear people who are not at the front of the room.

• Give in-person attendees more flexibility regarding where they give reports or ask questions / participate   in discussion.

Our equipment: Tripod & webcam | Cord protector | USB Active Extension /Repeater Cord | Power supply for USB Active Extension | Grounded extension cord

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APPENDIX – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

12 STATEMENTS OF TECHNOLOGY *(from the 2014 NATIONAL AA TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP)*

1. We suggest implementing technology **where it supports our primary purpose** of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers

2. We are responsible and assess value when using **self-support** funds for technology initiatives

3. We are responsible where **anonymity** is more vulnerable to a wider audience with increased speed or new sensation

4. An **informed** group conscience is paramount to technology decision--making

5. We strive to understand where **Individual versus Group values** are different

6. We perform due diligence and rely on **demonstrable A.A. experience**

7. We record **non-technical requirements** before making technology choices

8. We take care to understand the **property value** and **legal** implications of technology used for A.A. purposes before making binding decisions

9. We are responsible for **transparency** in discovery, process, & implementation

10. We use technology to make information **available**, not to limit it

11. We communicate and support the **intended** service level

12. We consider how best to **Pass it On**

APPENDIX – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(From the Forward to Fourth Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous, first published in 2001)

While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.'s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.

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