

May 20, 2007 Board Meeting

AAGT Board Meeting

Present: Ann Bowman, Peter Philippon, Dan Bloom, Jenny Edwards, Sarah Fallon, Phil Brownell, Tine van Wijk, Marcy Stern.

Absent: Jack Aylward, Marilyn Myles, Morgan Goodlander, Bud Feder, Robert DeVos, Peter Cole, Brian O'Neill, Silvie Falschlunger, Ansel Woldt.

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Manchester Conference (Jenny and Sarah)**
- B. RCP (Tine)**
- C. Treasurer's Report (Peter)**
- D. e-Newsletter (Marcy and Phil)**
- E. Committee on our Process – Task Force on Decision Making (Dan)**

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING TIME – June 10, 2007 at the same time as this one. Please note Europe, USA, Canada and Bermuda are now in Daylight Saving Time, while Australia is not.

Welcome

Manchester Conference

In an email sent prior to the call, Sarah and Jenny wrote:

CPC Report for 20/05/07:

1) The PPC:

Discussion here this month has been about keynotes and invited presenters. After much processing and debate the committee has settled on inviting Gaie Houston and Malcolm Parlett, moderated by Peter P, to do the keynote address. Also to approach Daan Van Baalen (from Norway), Margherita Spagnuolo-Lobb, Lynne Jacobs and Daniel Stern to be invited presenters. We will further structure around the responses we receive. Dan has offered to make use of the diplomatic channels available to him re getting a (hopefully positive) response from Daniel Stern who, apparently, doesn't often respond to/acknowledge offers (Thanks, Dan).

The PPC have also decided to accept a proposal made by Charlie and Seán to facilitate the opening plenary. I think I posted some initial details about this when Charlie and Sean originally mentioned this some time ago. I'll add them here to refresh our memories:

Charlie and Seán have proposed a variation on Charlie's TIMELINE as an experiential opening Plenary. I understand that some of you have had a taste of something similar at previous conferences.

This time the proposal is to make it an INTERNATIONAL TIMELINE - making our history and development in an International context more figural. They would be doing this with a facilitator team which reflects our diversity - the geographical and gender aspect of this having been specifically mentioned - but, I imagine, would be inclusive of more.

“We have no idea where this will go – it is, after all, experiential and experimental. We see it as an awareness-raising entry to the conference, with whatever consequences may arise as typical of who we all are in at an AAGT – AIC Conference.” (Charlie and Sean)

Thanks for all your work on facilitating these things this month, Phil. I have admired, and appreciated, your tenacity.

2) Discounted flights from the U.S.A:

Dan has negotiated some discount on our behalf with an American airline. As he said, “these savings are not great, but not nothing, either”. This is true.

Details:

The best offer came from Continental Airlines and gives discount travel from the US to the conference.

We need to note that we have to use their ad in our advertising. Their contact also suggested we include the code in our ad as follows “Discount Code ZBWS BY8QYG”.

Phil – please could you add this info to the website?

I will also include the contract for this from Continental airlines as an attachment (hope it works!).

Thanks, Dan for researching this and sorting something out.

**** Note: in a separate email prior to the call an attachment was sent to the board outlining Continental airlines discounts for the Manchester Conference.**

****There was a Board discussion regarding the discounts offered by Continental. There was an error with the dates on the contract (2007 instead of 2008). Dan will follow up with Continental about this. Dan - This contract is on par with other airlines though they don't take a percentage like many other airlines do.**

3) UK Scholarship Fundraiser:

Bud's fundraising workshop at Manchester is now fully booked up! This should raise £1600 (\$3200) before any expenses are taken out.

Other fundraisers (New York and South of England) are in earlier stages of planning. We may have more information about them next month.

****Board discussion: Peter will be doing the workshop in New York and Jenny is doing one in England.**

4) Website stuff:

You may remember that Ansel recently mentioned some delegates, coming to Manchester from California, who'd like to travel Ireland and Scotland before or after the conference. They were wondering if we'd have anything on the AAGT Conference Web page about special travel packages for members who might want to travel in small groups. I was unclear whether they were also wondering about a facility on the website which would allow them to “buddy-up” with other delegates who might like to do the same? Obviously we can include some Tourist Board information re Ireland, Scotland and Wales on the website, but can you see any way of facilitating the communication aspect of this, Phil - but only if we see it as a facility which might be useful?

****Peter – Budget Airlines has very cheap flights in Europe as does Jet 2 and BMI Baby. Could put links on the AAGT website for Europeans and also for persons who may be traveling to other parts of Europe when they attend the conference.**

5) *Finance:*

If not attached to this mail, then this month's report will be forwarded to Peter C.

6) *Social Events:*

The CPC are currently discussing the social aspects of the programme. We're looking into arrangements for a Dinner and Dance for the Saturday night (and debating the relative merits of DJ, Band or Ceilidh.) Also a suitable venue/entertainment for Irish Interest Night, with the possibility of another option (such as a historical guided-walk through the city, or something similar) for any who might not want to participate. Options for the Thursday evening are still being discussed - although one idea was to hold it open for Daniel Stern, if he comes. We can continue to share other ideas for this slot whilst also holding this in mind.

**** There was a discussion between Jenny and Sarah of the CPC and Phil from the PPC regarding issues concerning primary tasks for the two committees. This began by discussing what constitutes a "social function" (which is the CPC's responsibility) and program planning (which is the PPC's responsibility). There was also a discussion about the "end time" for each day's events. Both issues relate to the Thursday evening discussion from Jenny and Sarah's email (see above).**

Phil – expressed concern that the CPC may be brainstorming ideas the PPC may need to be planning instead. He wants to make sure that the two committees aren't working independently on the same things. He expressed concern that when the CPC talks of Daniel Stern on Thursday evening, there is an overlap of the committees' responsibilities. He also noted that this event – possibility of a speaker or something happening in the evening has just come up so the PPC has not reached consensus on this. He suggested that a social event is something like harbor cruise, iig, etc. and not presenters. He had understood that the cut off time for the PPC scheduled presentations was 6PM.

Jenny and Sarah – PPC has full ability to plan events during the day. The CPC will organize each evening social event. They need to make plans for those events well in advance of the conference to ensure that venues will have space for the conference attendees. CPC is talking about possibilities for the evening times and will also of course work with PPC. They expect the PPC to let the CPC know if they have Daniel Stern on Thursday night so the CPC will not plan anything for that evening. CPC at this time is keeping the Thursday night open IF Daniel Stern has a place that evening and this was in response to the mention of this possibility from the PPC. Also, they stated that 6PM is a relative time for the CPC to look at regarding planning a social event.

Peter – general thought is that if someone has energy for something and if it conflicts with other plans, there is a dialogue about that. In this discussion, if social events get in the way of something planned by the PPC then there needs to be a discussion.

Marcy – stressed the importance of both committees working together.

Peter – Board will support the committees working together.

7) *Contacts Lists:*

Ansel forwarded the lists of hundreds of names and addresses of Gestaltists to Tali and other committee members, plus Silvie, a couple months ago as potential contacts for Manchester. These were people he had contacted regarding the Vancouver conference. Apparently, in summarizing the Evaluations from Vancouver, over 10% (14 of 110) of those completing the turned-in evaluations said either the letter or Email from Ansel was the way they learned about the conference. Ansel has suggested we refine and use these lists for sending out our Call for Program Proposals.

****Sarah – Noted the significance of Ansel’s finding that 10% of the evaluation respondents from the Vancouver Conference said they learned about the call for proposals and publicity from Ansel’s emails and letters.**

Jenny and Sarah – will ask Tali if she needs to recruit more people for publicity committee.

Marcy – whoever is doing publicity, please let Marcy know for the newsletter and copy her in all emails. She asked that the email’s have “newsletter” in subject line.

Treasurer’s Report

Peter C sent a financial report to the board before the call. This will be available upon request.

Committee on our Process – Task Force on Decision Making (Dan)

Dan: Two weeks ago sent out summary emails to the task force with good response. The following is a digest of the issues they discussed and are in dialogue currently.

A digest of the issues discussed by the Task Force on Decision Making

“On the Process of Developing our Communication Infrastructure”

I am grateful to all the members of the Task Force who have thrown themselves into this crucial discussion which not only seeks to remove inconsistencies in our Articles and By-Laws, but begins to reconsider our styles of communication and the essence of the organization as a community that needs to act in the increasingly lively global gestalt therapy community. This discussion reflects the maturation of AAGT, an international community. Our developing inevitably requires review of our Articles and By-Laws.

Ansel Woldt’s compiling of various personal opinions expressed by the Task Force was indispensable help for this digest. I omit any personal attributions for the following.

Proposals are indicated in underlined bold.

The first issue to be considered is simple. It is a about the character of the organization; we must simply change all references in Charter and By-laws which reference “international.”

Proposal: Amend Article V, sect 1, D to replace “international meeting” with “biennial meeting”; Article V, sec 2, B, replace “international meeting” with biennial meeting.” Amend Article IV Section so as to delete location of special meetings or conferences.

This is uncontroversial.

But what follows is not.

The second issue is significant: Decision Making.

It goes to the heart of our functioning as an organization and as a community. There are several issues nested within this, and, like all dynamic wholes, any decision regarding one part will affect the others.

Sub-issue 1: Notice:

What kind of notice, if any, must be given to the membership concerning special meetings, special conferences, or items on the agenda of the annual or biennial meeting?

How much notice is to be given?

Ninety days? In the Newsletter, email, and US Postal Service?

Sub-issue 2: New business emerging from the membership meeting

Since it is presumably spontaneously emergent from the members at the meeting, and the membership is specifically empowered to do so by the Articles and By-Laws, there cannot be prior notice to the membership as a whole.

Can we distinguish between those issues of immediate importance, but which do not affect the community as a whole, from those that have deeper significance for AAGT and need to be considered at greater length after notice to the membership?

Can there be “provisional” decisions that are carried-over from one meeting to the next for further consideration? Should some provisional decisions then be referred to a committee for more detailed discussion and whose report to the membership would facilitate further discussion?

Sub-issue 3: Decisions and Consensus

How intrinsic is consensus to the decision making process?

Is it a core value? Is it the core value? Is it an ideal to be sought, yet an ideal which is amenable to practical modification.

Is our current definition of consensus sufficiently clear that it is not a unanimous process?

We are agreed that consensus is a process where all voices are heard and considered so as to find their way into the final decision. Unanimity is not its goal.

Diversity of perspectives enlivens a community. Disagreement strengthens an organization

We are agreed: consensus has time and practical limits.

Our By-Laws speak to the end of a consensus process, when it is deemed not possible, or practical.

How, when, and by whom is this decided? This is the most contentious question considered.

Can we specify that when a certain percentage of the members votes that all views have been heard and considered, a decision may then proceed by simple voting. For example, when 85% of the members vote to end discussion, consensus is deemed completed and a new vote taken on the issue before the membership? The final decision must include a statement from the dissenting members that adequately represents their perspective or perspectives.

Or, is the decision that consensus is ended to be made by the president alone, or by the Board or Executive Council, by majority? Or by unanimity?

Are all decisions to follow the same procedures?

Proposal: The election of officers and board members should not be by consensus.

****Dan read and discussed the above summary.**

Dan asked from the board – what do we do next? He noted that Phil suggested that we take it to the membership list and possibly to the members by post.

Phil – take a consensus from the task force members regarding the issues and proposals (as noted in Dan’s summary) then post the summary on the membership list for discussion.

Peter – supported Phil’s suggestion and added that AAGT not do a traditional mailing due to finances.

Dan – stressed the need to keep the discussion focused on the proposals not focused on personalities when this is posted to the members list.

Phil – when this is posted to the member’s list, it needs to be presented as proposals for discussions.

Dan – agrees and added that the discussion is broken down to what needs to be decided quickly and what does not.

Peter – asked for discussion from the board about putting the following on the agenda for the annual meeting this year:

1) Proposal: Amend Article V, sect 1, D to replace “international meeting” with “biennial meeting”; Article V, sec 2, B, replace “international meeting” with biennial meeting.” Amend Article IV Section so as to delete location of special meetings or conferences.

****There was a discussion regarding the cost of changing the bi-laws and a suggestion that the board ask Ansel to talk about this as he has had experience with this issue.**

2) Sub-issue 3: Decisions and Consensus Proposal: The election of officers and board members should not be by consensus.

Peter – thanked Dan and the committee for all their hard work.

RCP (Tine)

Kathy Gray will be on the committee. They will have another call this month.

Yalta Conference (Tine)

Tine – we are going to postpone this conference to next May and connect it to the Russian Annual Conference. She needs to know how to post this on the web and in the newsletter. The only money that has been invested was for an ad in the EAGT newsletter.

Marcy – requested the information be sent to her. She will also get the information from the leaders list (from Tine’s earlier post).

Tine – Good news is that those who were considering going to Yalta next fall are now considering going at the new date.

E-Newsletter (Marcy and Phil)

Marcy – approved to sign up to use a program for the newsletter (around \$15/month) and to bill AAGT through Peter Cole. The board also approved Marcy to seek any training on this which she needs to have in order to publish the newsletter.

Phil – you can also call Cynthia Cook from GISC as they use the same thing.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING June 10, 2007 at the same time as this one. Please note Europe, USA, Canada and Bermuda are now in Daylight Saving Time, while Australia is not.