

September 11, 2005 Conference Call

AAGT Board Meeting

Present: Chuck Kanner, Brian O'Neill, Ann Bowman, Peter Philippon, Tine van Wijk, Peter Cole, Bea Mackay, Warren Weir, Ansel Woldt, Marilyn Myles, Bruce Aaron, Phil Brownell, Marcy Stern, Bud Feder

Absent: Morgan Goodlander, Jack Aylward, Sylvie Falschlunger, Alan Singer, Sylvia Crocker, Sean Gaffney

Previous Notes from emailing re: how to make the board calls more efficient

Everyone call in within 5 minutes of the start time

Limit check-ins to 1 or 2 minutes each.

Once our call has begun (which occurs once two people have "arrived") and someone else dials in, do not interrupt whatever process is going on but instead pause every 3 or 5 minutes to review who's present.

Agenda for September 11, 2005:

This is a special board meeting in which members from the AAGT community have been asked to participate in the call to decide how to best address and move forward with the following agenda items:

Item 1. Name change and 'internationalism' and how to open this to wider consultation in respect of the voices and issues raised.

Item 2. Issues around decisions made at Annual and Community Meetings.

Discuss our decision and communication abilities and how to develop these better... in particular what decisions need to be heard by the wider group and what can be left to AM, Community, Board and Executive... clear guidelines and processes to support this, including the use of an AAGT list for discussion and information

Item 3. Deal with any IMPLICIT field conditions which need to be made EXPLICIT (including those which seem to implicitly and repetitively be disruptive)

The challenge is HOW to do this in a way that does not, as a number of us have pointed out, CONTINUE TO SPLIT OUR FIELD and cause harm to individuals and AAGT as a whole. We have come up with a Covenant of Community to support us and a grievance and mediation process to support those who feel personally attacked and hurt.

September 11, 2005 Meeting Minutes

The meeting started with a discussion about how we talk with each other – sort out what is personal or even abusive and what is a good strong dialogue and debate.

History of shifting away from organizational dialogue to personal issues – as with Agenda Item 3- how do we hold this as a community?

Brian - Raised his disappointment that even though decisions are being made and minutes taken at the Annual Meetings people seem to not be aware of these, such as the grievance process developed at the Annual Meeting in New Jersey 2003. These are published in the Newsletter.

Phil – communication is the biggest challenge. Decisions are being made or discussed but not being well communicated to the wider field (ex given was the grievance committee which was started in New Jersey but not widely known to the larger community of AAGT).

Brian - Need multiple ways of communicating. Email list, phone calls, newsletters and community meetings to support agenda items 1-3.

Peter P – Decision-making needs to be when we meet face to face in annual meetings, board calls and committee meetings. Propose that all board meetings minutes and conference planning meetings minutes be put on the email list and in the newsletter.

Phil B – suggested better ways of doing the web page – like a blog – an interactive web page.

Marilyn – supports communication issues being high priority.

Peter P – wants the website to be moderated as well and covenants of community to be a part of that.

Chuck - wants more dialogue about how decisions are being made esp concern about Peter P's recent posting on emails re: being more in favor of situational democratic process and less seeking a larger consensus. Move toward consensus as priority. Don't try to change the organization from the inside out.

Peter P - How we make decisions in the absence of consensus since we expanding internationally. The point he is making is less seeking a larger consensus', but to acknowledge that, in a more disparate community, we will sometimes not be able to have it. The idea of consensus of the whole community, rather than community-as-gathered (in conference, in elected Board) is and always has been" a myth which we get hurt in trying to hold up to. So we seek consensus "where possible."

Phil B – Raised the question: are people being missed on the call. Hard to jump in the dialogue using this format. He feels more comfortable and able to collect thoughts using email format.

Brian – acknowledged both that it is hard to do email and phone calls – both have their limitations.

Ann – address the issue of the name change in Amsterdam – can a few people make such a sweeping decision for the whole?

Bruce - Indicated there were about as many people at the Community Meeting in Amsterdam as at other community meetings.

Marcy – suggested that we say our names on the phone calls and on emails.

Brian summarized:

Peter P and Chuck – on a continuum of consensus of community vs. centralized decision making and we seem to agree that we need to move up and down this as appropriate.

Ann and Phil - How do we make decisions – which decisions need the whole group? Which decisions can a small group or committee can make?

Brian - This is not always spelt out well in the By Laws and this is part of Agenda Item 2 that we need to make decisions about. Also how do we decide what is acceptable business and decisions for president, board, Community Meetings and Annual Meetings.

Peter – how do we operate as an international organization? Un-chartered waters. Legally we cannot change the name. He regrets this as many people in Europe perceive AAGT = American Association for Gestalt Therapy.

Tine – disagrees with this – she has not had this issue.

Brian – really feels we need to look at the Process. Brian says that non-Americans have been treated differently at conferences WAS an issue in the past and some non-American AAGT members were going to leave a AAGT because of this. He wants to hold both sides of the issues - there is truth in what Peter and Tine say.

Chuck - wants to know why the issue of international exclusion was brought up in a small conference like Amsterdam rather than in a larger meetings. He also mentioned that in conferences past, issues with a larger impact were carried from one conference to another conference. Priority has been set to

do this so, why was the issue of the name change not treated in that way this time?

Brian - in hindsight what Chuck says makes sense and this is another example of the implicit coming out of the field unexpectedly (Agenda 3)

Ansel – brought up the issue that IGTA was the impetus re: adding the “I” to AAGT rather than uprising from international members.

Peter – this has been part of the ground. It’s important to look at how one field looks different from another - that this process is important to look at.

Brian - talked about what happened in Amsterdam and how with hindsight it would have made sense to do this differently and reminded that we ARE still in process now about these decisions.

Bud – also wants to look at what we can learn from this.

Tine – Wants the question about power to be answered? Where is the power?

Brian - Good and a big question and we need to keep it on the agenda - loud voices/soft voices, male/female, rich/poor, race discrimination etc. We will not have a ready answer in a short meeting although he reminded Tine he provided his answer by email.

Chuck – power is defined in the by-laws. The power in our organization resides in the community and in consensus.

Brian - also raised that power resides in the board and EC. The difficulty is also about how and when to determine who and what and how decisions are made following the by laws.

Chuck and Brian engaged in a dialogue with each other and both felt heard.

Phil B – asked if on this call, a decision could be made about forming an AAGT email list.

Marilyn – Spoke for the need to find a process for how to make decisions when all the board is not present. Nothing in our bylaws about how to do this. She also wanted another board meeting before we moved to make a decision about an AAGT email list.

Brian - suggested an AAGT email list be formed as an experiment and suggested Phil to chair a committee to set this up. Also stated that a

committee needs to be formed to look at our range of communication forums and Brian offered to be chair unless anyone else wanted to.

AAGT email list

What style? Who would be moderator?

Voted (no dissenting votes from the members on this call) for a committee to be formed to make a proposal for an AAGT email list

Phil B was asked to chair this and he accepted. Tine, Peter P also volunteered to be on the committee. It was suggested that Phil ask Charlie Bowman and John Dorn to participate as they has expressed interest in this previously.

The committee will bring back their suggestions to the board before the next meeting of the board on October 9, 2005.

Peter Cole expressed his appreciation for the meeting. He also mentioned that he had attended a SW gestalt meeting and there was confusion there about AAGT name change.

Marcy – What name should be used on the Newsletter coming out this Fall.

It was agreed at this time to continue to use AAGT as our name on the newsletter.

Committee to talk about the different ways to deal with the agenda.

Next Board Meetings:

September 25, 2005 - The Board will meet at the usual time to discuss the Vancouver Conference, Scholarship Committee, and other board business to be determined.

October 9, 2005 - There will be another special board meeting in which members from the AAGT community are being asked to participate in the call to continue the discussion as outlined in the September 11, 2005 agenda items. This will be at the usual time for board conference calls.

Ansel Woldt added the following as an addendum to the minutes. This was sent in an email to the board on September 13, 2005:

Some may wonder what the Board members do in their spare time. Try guessing -- it is reading and responding to email messages!

As the Association Archivist, Ansel has been keeping an ongoing word document file of emails that have emerged on the Internet since August 10th. It begins with Tine's delightful message, "I-AAGT in Amsterdam: Afterthoughts," a heartfelt email that was sent to the members of the Amsterdam Planning Committee, of which Ansel was an active member (although not able to attend the conference). The message was not addressed to the Board. A message the following day, 8/11, by Peter Philippon posted on Gstalt-L listserv confirmed the news from Tine that AAGT had indeed undergone a name change at the Amsterdam Conference and would now be known as the International Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy. As many in AAGT know, this raised the ire of many members who were not able to be in Amsterdam and created a daily stream of email messages. Since then, most of the messages have been sent to the Board and 4 or 5 AAGTers who have maintained interest in the dialogue about changing our name and the manner in which decisions are made in AAGT.

Not including the 54 messages waiting to be read and filed at the time of the Board Conference Call on 9/11/05, the archival file was 301 pages long, using half-inch margins and #11 Arial font, with most messages reduced in size by deleting spaces between paragraphs and not including the email headings. Unfortunately, Ansel lost a number of messages while accessing AOL while on his son's computer in Ft. Lauderdale when Hurricane Katrina knocked out their electric power on 8/25/05. If those messages plus the 54 not yet opened were included, the file would likely exceed 350 pages. If headings and original spacing remained as appeared in the original messages it would certainly exceed 500 pages, with many more to follow. What a friendly welcome to the new Board members.

