

Dear Fellowship Member,

After hearing questions in Conference Committees, Board Committees and informal discussions, the Board of Trustees (BOT) wishes to provide further background into some of the factors leading to its pivotal decision in March to hold a fully in-person Annual Business Conference/Meeting (ABC/M) in 2023.

Fellowship-Wide Services (F.W.S.) held virtual only ABMs in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic. Holding a virtual only ABC/M was not considered for 2023 as we were working toward a hybrid event (both in-person and virtual participation) based on various feedback perspectives from the Fellowship. The BOT had considered a virtual only event for 2022 and ultimately rejected it in favor of a fully in-person ABC/M after considering varying perspectives on how best to deliver the business of S.L.A.A.

The world had opened up by mid-2022 and we had the resources to safely meet in-person. The 2022 ABC/M confirmed the belief of those who have attended both in-person and virtual ABMs that a virtual only event does not offer the same opportunities as does an in-person event for identifying potential non-BOT members for Board Committees, recruiting new Conference Committee members, and building relationships through fellowship, face-to-face recovery meetings, and mealtime discussions. When decompressing from challenging discussions or votes, those connections made at mealtime or social events sustain us to continue and build unity, and encourage leadership cultivation. The ABC/M becomes much more than a business meeting.

We researched, planned, and extensively negotiated cost savings for a 2023 hybrid meeting. As the planning process unfolded, we came to the conclusion that we had to make the difficult decision to abandon the hybrid event for 2023. Each BOT member who supported that decision had their own reasons for doing so, but comments included the following:

- The extra cost of a hybrid was \$35,000 and counting. That includes \$14,698.97 for equipment needed for a hybrid. That is an exact dollar amount, not an estimate. This year's A/V contract was reduced by that exact amount when we eliminated equipment that was needed for the virtual aspects of a hybrid event. We estimated \$5,000 for travel and room and board for volunteers handling technical aspects at the ABC/M. And \$12,000 for holding a weekend of tests to assure technological success. We also included a \$3,000 contingency reserve. This extra cost was not advisable given the \$11,000 shortfall in the overall 2022-2023 F.W.S. Budget before factoring in these extra costs.
- That money could be better spent keeping the cost of the ABC/M as low as possible, despite the effect that inflation had on hotel room and meeting room prices. This cost reduction could be spread among those attending in person, which experience told us would have been a greater number than those ultimately attending virtually. For example, the basic Registration Fee (not including room and board) would likely have been \$500 or more for all attendees, including those attending virtually.
- Some of that cost savings could be used for ABC/M scholarships even though the ABM Scholarship Fund held less than \$100. The BOT approved \$5,000 for scholarships, some of which remains available. For scholarship info, email abm2023@slaafws.org.

- Cost was not the only factor. Time limitations required the BOT to make final decisions in the month of March on the format, registration fees, scholarships, announcements, opening up registration and other matters that are typically settled during the month of January. Intergroups, Groups and others needed to plan for the ABM and awaited BOT action on the format and these related issues.
- The decision was made after much effort, research, and volunteer hours that were spent looking at making this work for our Fellowship of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The BOT decision making reflects a group conscience process of speaking, listening, praying, meditating, and thinking.

We note that Boards of other 12-Step Fellowships have had to make the same decision and have chosen fully in-person events. That includes Overeaters Anonymous (OA), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and Al-Anon.

This letter is meant to help clarify some of the reasons why the Board decided to hold a fully In-person ABM this year and to inform you of our thinking. We respect those who think differently. Thank you for trusting in the Board of Trustees in this matter.

In Service,
The Board of Trustees
June 10, 2023