

**PUBLIC – COSA WEBSITE**

**Annual Meeting**

**ISO of COSA Board and Delegates**

**Meeting Notes**

Sunday, November 19, 2023

This meeting was held virtually on Zoom.

10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M. Pacific Time / 11:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. Mountain / 12:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M. Central / 1:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M. Eastern, 6:00 P.M. – 11:00 P.M. UK

UTC 18:00 – 23:00 = Universal Time Coordinated (formerly GMT)

**PUBLIC - COSA WEBSITE**

Please fill out the Delegate Evaluation forms; see the links provided in delegate emails.

**CONVENE MEETING AND WELCOME**

The board Co-Chair welcomed all delegates; gave a general overview of how the meeting was laid out; provided instructions for using the chat function; introduced certain attendees that would be playing a role such as collecting votes, organizing sharing order on voting matters, taking notes, time keeping; stated keeping video on whenever possible, and other meeting guidelines.

Opened with Serenity Prayer

- Twelve Steps were read
- Twelve Traditions were read
- Twelve Concepts were read

**BOARD, DELEGATE, AND OBSERVER INTRODUCTIONS**

**BOARD:**

Co-Chair E  
Co-Chair J  
Board Treasurer  
Board Member  
Lit and Development Liaison Board Secretary  
Outreach Chair

DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS:

CA-09  
ONL-11  
WI-08  
ONL-12  
CA-18  
ONL-69  
CA-13  
ONL-41  
TEL-08  
ONL-46  
ONL-20  
TX-23  
TX-22  
ONL-50  
Delegate Liaison, ONL-07  
TEL-11  
TEL-01  
CA-46  
CO-04  
ONL-42  
Office Worker  
ONL-68  
SC-01  
TN-06

ONL-16  
ONL-73  
CA-29  
CA-01  
ONL-13  
AZ-01  
ONL-40  
ONL-08  
TEL-12, as Guest Observer  
ONL-50, as Guest Observer  
TX-13/ONL-64  
CA-02/ONL-62  
ONL-06  
Co-author of proposal, Guest Observer

Review of Email Attachments: Voting Guide, Rules of Order, Guidelines for Participation and Safety Guidelines, Timekeeper.

There may be friendly amendments to proposals, and then re-votes if the original proposer agrees to the amendment.

**BREAK (Please return on time as we will resume promptly)**

### **DELEGATE AGENDA ITEM #1 – DELEGATE MEETING PROPOSAL**

Proposal Presented:

I propose that our database of all current registered meetings be updated periodically by contacting every meeting in the database, and asking for confirmation that it is a current meeting, and that the members want to be listed on the ISO web site as a current registered meeting. I propose that the communication clearly states what criteria need to be met to continue to be called a current registered meeting. If no response is received in some designated time frame, then the meeting would be put on inactive status.

Straw Poll (3 min) including co-hosts

RED 7 YELLOW 11 GREEN 18

Dissenting Voice (if needed – 30 min, 2 min shares)

### COMMENTS FOR RED

Delegate — I haven't seen a "please re-register your group" form in a few years. The form needs to be updated. There may not be an active contact person, but still an active meeting. I propose this be postponed until the next delegate meeting so the form can be updated. If we are too strict, we will remove active groups.

Delegate — I agree that we table this proposal. My meeting has had trouble with keeping an email coordinator, so if COSA didn't hear from them, we are afraid they could be dropped. If one body is telling a group they can't be a COSA meeting, that could be problematic. Things can go wrong with this proposal.

Delegate — As above, and even though well intentioned, the additional COSA voices need to be heard in regards to how to vet that out.

Delegate — This is unrealistic. Not every member is digitally savvy in this world, so this may be neglecting a huge part of our members.

### COMMENTS FOR YELLOW

Delegate — offers a friendly amendment: Change it to [propose the] formation of a committee to propose requirements/methods for maintaining a meeting, to present a formal proposal at the next delegate meeting. How this might be accomplished: adding the regular methods of communicating, for example through the *Balance*, the local area intergroups, newsletters that go out to local meetings.

Delegate — agrees. I'm aware there are problems with emails going to spam. Our process needs to be thorough enough to actually divine if a meeting is occurring or not.

Delegate — I appreciate the proposal. I think there are competing needs in COSA. There are times when we want to have a very narrow funnel to do something. Other times we want to have a broad brush stroke, like with outreach, making sure everyone can get to a meeting, and also accommodating different levels of access to technology. The criteria need to not be left up in the air. There needs to be a specific timeframe, with multi modal ways of contact. We should incorporate into other processes

like Traditions, that sort of thing, as a way of determining what an active meeting is instead of relying on this. We should have as broad a definition as possible.

Delegate — I work behind the scenes to update meetings, and try to keep the site updated for newcomers. I've called people, even calling a church directly to see if a group is still meeting. Often the information is outdated. I like the friendly amendment.

Delegate — Most of my items have been raised. I mostly want to address frequency ownership, and the issue on spam email.

Delegate — I agree with the call for a friendly amendment. I also want to add that because the website is such an entry point, it's really worth looking at the wording of how to add or subtract a meeting to make sure that's up to date. We could possibly even add a generic warning about things going to spam. A committee needs to look at when/how contact was made in the past. Do we need to do it differently?

### **COMMENTS FOR GREEN**

Delegate — needs clarity about how much time is available to share. Nothing is written in stone. This may be accomplished in different ways. I think we should leave it to a committee to come up with what makes sense. Regarding the Traditions, does a COSA group equal a registered meeting? I could see where a meeting could exist, but not be listed on the website because they don't want to be listed. We need to act. I'm interested in the friendly amendment.

Delegate — Many of the comments have come from the side of the rights of the meeting, but then the list has to balance that out with serving newcomers. If that email contact is no longer active, how would a newcomer be able to reach out? The registration form could possibly have a spot that says that our meeting is still happening, and information is correct, please keep us on the list. That would be sufficient, and they wouldn't have to deal further with the form. This proposal doesn't stop any of the things that have been mentioned from happening – like a committee from doing phone calls, etc. I'm really appreciative of the focus on the experience of the newcomer.

Delegate — My group had questions about the way it was proposed. I'd also want to pull in COSAs with a survey of what meetings they attend, to see which meetings are active, and tabulate that. Does COSA have an email database, because when you join COSA, you have to send an email to the ISO and get a response back before you can even get into any meetings.

Comment — This is not a proposal for whether a group can be a meeting; that's a completely separate issue. The proposal does leave it up to whatever ad hoc committee is created to check this, as far as specific details about what form is used, how many times they call. That would be left up to the committee that does that. Also, if a meeting is active, and they don't want to participate in ISO, that's up to them. If a meeting does not exist anymore, and a newcomer tries to go, we might have lost a newcomer forever. That's a tragedy. We have to balance this out. It's not limiting who is in a COSA meeting. There's **NO** requirement to receive an email from anybody to attend a COSA meeting.

Break Out Room for Original Proposer, Amendment Proposer, and Co-Chair E, who will share the Word document, 10-minute break for all others, and there was a clarification on the process.

#### Break Out Room Follow Up

Original Proposer — I'm going to **decline** the friendly amendment as stated. I really like the first part though, which was that a committee be formed to determine the method of meeting for meeting registration as well as maintaining meeting registration. However, I feel the actual procedures determined and being voted on by the delegates as a whole seem too detail oriented and onerous. The committee should have some authority to figure out the procedures, and then another way to implement. The board typically are the ones to review, vote on contracts for hotels, budgets, outreach money, etc.

#### OTHER COMMENTS

Board Member and Past Board Chair — provided some clarification about how things were done in the past regarding proposals. There was much discussion about the agenda, what the procedural steps were, and what our voting guide states.

Delegate — I feel that we have departed from the agreed upon entrenched document that's part of our records called the voting guide. There's no mention of a breakout room.

Delegate — I'm disappointed, many might have agreed with that friendly amendment, and yet our voices were not included; I hope we can still do RED, YELLOW, GREEN voting.

Amendment Proposer — Re: the proposed modification – The original proposer did respond. She declined, and gave her reasons.

Straw Poll (3 min) voting on proposal as originally written.

RED 16 YELLOW 4 GREEN 16

Dissenting Voice (if needed) (15 min, 1 min shares)

#### COMMENTS FOR RED

Delegate — This feels important not to leave to a committee that doesn't answer back to the delegates, as we are a top-down organization. There is a real interest in how this will all be determined.

Delegate — I appreciate the spirit of this proposal, but it's a big change for us, and there needs to be a lot more clarification on the process – how it would be done, and with whom.

Delegate — one of our registered groups was called by a committee person I presume, asking if they want to still be registered. They were told that because they didn't just have COSAs (had some from AI-Anon), that they would be removed from the list. This was done during the time of COVID. So, I'm very wary that one person or small group of people could remove a meeting from the list that should be able to meet.

#### COMMENTS FOR YELLOW

Delegate — I commend the author, and see goodwill. I'm proposing a friendly amendment – to have a committee that reports to the board, but also is accountable to the delegates. They would be tasked with determining a process for how we determine what is an active group, because, sadly, the other impact of this is that so many things ride on the nature of what is and is not a registered group.

Delegate — This is a crucial function of COSA as a whole. It's different than being in a blue room, or a red room. Anyone who wants to be on this committee should be able to be on it (like maybe all of the delegates wishing to be on it). This committee should run everything past the board, and preferably by the delegates as well. I understand the sense of urgency, but sometimes doing it right is more important.

Delegate, Original Proposer — I understand the need for the committee to have accountability. Maybe there could be surveys to delegates, surveys in CITK. We don't need to be stuck on “this is the way to go.”

Delegate — I appreciate the board, and think they can figure out how to do this in a way that's fair and equitable.

#### OTHER COMMENTS

Delegate — I suggest that this be put in the hands of an existing committee that reports to the board and the delegates, for example the Outreach Committee.

Original Proposer — My feeling is instead of the Outreach Committee, it might be TechCom, because they are in charge of the technology involved in some of this outreach.

Delegate — thinks it should be put into the hands of the database committee.

Co-Chair E response says there is a database committee.

Original Proposer accepts that proposal.

### **PROPOSAL MODIFICATION 7 BREAK (if needed) (2-10 min)**

New proposal: that it will be handled by the Database Committee.

Straw Poll (3 min)

**RED 15** **YELLOW 0** **GREEN 21**

### **PROPOSAL DOES NOT PASS**

**BREAK (Please return on time as we will resume promptly)**

### **DELEGATE AGENDA ITEM #2 DELEGATE MEETING PROPOSAL**

**Note: Compulsive Sexual Behavior = “csb”**

Present Proposal: Observer and co-author, and Delegate and co-author (5 min)

In order to provide better clarity to newcomers about who it is that COSA has the potential to help, to have our language align with the actual intention of our fellowship, and to prevent COSA from being confused with recovery fellowships focused on stopping one's own compulsive sexual behavior, we propose that:

With the exception of the Steps and Traditions, the phrase “by compulsive sexual behavior” be replaced with the phrase “by another person's compulsive sexual behavior” in COSA's web pages and yet-to-be-written publications.\*

\*Because we honor and respect the work the Literature Committee has done and the desire of COSA as a whole to publish the forthcoming *COSA Recovery* book, this proposal does not concern any potential changes to that document.



## Explanation of Issues and/or Purpose of Item:

Much of the current language on our website and other documents is the same as that of Twelve Step fellowships for sex addicts, which can cause confusion, particularly among newcomers. Clarifying our language allows us to address our primary purpose as laid out in Tradition Five by stating to newcomers our organization's intended audience and what problems we address, and supports COSA unity as laid out in Tradition One. We hope it helps eliminate the scenarios of potential new COSAs thinking they have not found the right program, or of newcomers who are seeking support in stopping their own compulsive sexual behaviors mistakenly coming to COSA meetings when they are looking for a different meeting.

Straw Poll (3 min)

RED 20 YELLOW 5 GREEN 10

Dissenting Voice (if needed) (30 min, 2 min shares)

### COMMENTS FOR GREEN

Delegate — When I came in as a newcomer, I didn't know I had any problems, other than my SA husband. I want you to listen closely to this analogy. If you met a neighbor, and the neighbor said, "I have a problem with drinking," what's your thought? It's probably that they might be an alcoholic. So, for me to say I have a problem with compulsive sexual behavior (csb), it's the same thing as saying I'm an alcoholic, even though I'm really not. I have a problem with drinking because someone else in my life is drinking. For those newcomers coming in who are suffering, and may not be at the level of those longer in the program, to tell them, "You have a problem with csb," could be problematic. In the beginning, I would have left COSA in a heartbeat if I heard that. I still have a hard time trying to read that to this day. I learned that my husband was not the first person with csb in my life, nor was my boyfriend in high school. It was someone in my young life who created this problem.

Delegate — When I first came in, I was hysterical, from someone else's behavior. SAA said you're welcome to come into our meetings, but you really need to go to COSA. Because we are becoming international, we need to be very clear on our wording. I was not ready to acknowledge my own shortcomings at the very beginning. If I was told right away that it was my fault, that wouldn't help me to feel the fellowship, to feel that this is where I truly belong. I also want to know when the term "another's" was taken out. No other meeting addresses this to my knowledge.

Delegate — In my life, I've been far more harmed by people hiding and obscuring who and what they are. I've been much more helped by people being as clear as they possibly can. I think we need to be very careful of NOT obscuring things, NOT enabling others to obscure where they are, but helping others to accept who they are, helping ourselves to accept who and what we are. The clearer we can be is, to me, better recovery.

Delegate — I worked on this for a long time. I looked at Bill W.'s writings about the notion of singleness of purpose. He was very clear about the benefit to alcoholics or to anyone about having a closed meeting, and having a group that focused on what we were there to help. It's not to exclude anyone, but just to make sure that we create a safe space where we can talk about our unique issues. I'm also really concerned about people who would see our website and not realize that we're the fellowship for them and think it's a fellowship for the sex addicts in our lives.

Delegate — We did have someone misunderstand and come to our group. I've been here since 2007, and even I was very triggered by this person's sharing about her own sex addiction. I've also looked at old literature. Step One — "affected by sex addiction" — but underneath, it talks more plainly about "another." I have many other publications here. All go into how we are affected by another person's csb.

Delegate — I'm grateful for the wording of this proposal, and it's identifying the intent of what COSA is. This doesn't exclude those that belong to other meetings such as SAA, or double winners, but it's clearly defining what the intent of COSA is, and what one should be expecting.

#### **COMMENTS FOR YELLOW**

Delegate — I very much agree with the first part. I'm YELLOW because of the second part. It's dictating what future literature will say, and that's a little bit alarming to me. I have a proposal, a friendly amendment, that the second part of that is removed, and that it only references the website. Those first few pages of the website are for the person who comes in because they've been abused, neglected, betrayed by the sexual addiction behavior of another person.

Delegate — My group was divided. In fielding calls, we do get calls from SAA members. We have to say, no this isn't the right program, and then they said, oh, of course, that's someone else, and agreed. People who disagreed said this is not accepting our behavior, and that it's our behavior that needs to change, regardless of what the sex addict is doing or not doing.

Delegate — I agree with the friendly amendment that is proposed. In

addition, where it says “by another person’s csb,” to take out the word “person’s,” and have just “another’s csb.” I think it’s important that many have pointed out that we all aren’t necessarily affected by another person. It could be an institution, for example the porn industry, movie industry, the local gentlemen’s club. I think this would clearly state, and also is a little broader. I also looked on the website, and didn’t see “another” until the third tab. I think it should be front and center.

Delegate — My meeting would like to see the word “another’s” csb added to particularly the opening webpage to make it clear to a newcomer searching us out. We are very hesitant about requiring all future published literature to have this verbiage.

Delegate — It’s not clear enough. It’s making a broad assumption that we think people know if they are a double winner that they are not excluded. Add an additional sentence, that no one is excluded – ex-double winners, but make it clear that this is a program for people affected by other’s csb.

#### **COMMENTS FOR RED**

Delegate — This proposal is obscure. We already have in place how to receive newcomers, and how it can be clarified for them. I’ve been here for over 3 decades, and was here when the language changed to be more inclusive. The only requirement for COSA membership is to be affected by csb. We all have our varying degrees of recovery, and how we entered the program. This is closing the umbrella term to a select disagreement of opinion.

Delegate — My group’s overall suggestion is to not change the whole website, but move that tab up for newcomers, possibly to have a link to it. Groups are autonomous, and are free to say “another’s csb” in the script. Maybe a committee could be formed with the different viewpoints represented, and we could come back with ideas for the next delegate meeting.

Delegate — I want to make sure that we are not closing this group any further. It’s up to us to figure out if it’s the right place for us. I’d also want us to be sensitive to those who have had trauma, and have been abused. It’s hard to deal with the idea of going to a meeting where I have to acknowledge someone else and the power that they might have over me every single time. It sounds really difficult, because I feel it in the media. I just ask that we want to be a little bit more sensitive to people who have been experiencing that very kind of trauma that feels like it lives inside them. Maybe think about how we want to attract people who feel that way, and people who also might not know that they’re allowed to come to this meeting just because they don’t have an active SA in their life. I’d rather

have someone come to the meeting, not know, find out it's not the right meeting for them, and then carry our message, than have someone who could have come to the meeting think that they're not allowed.

Delegate — I represent a group of newcomers. We are growing weekly. All in my group said they had no confusion when looking at the website. They knew exactly where they were, and where they were supposed to be. All said that the new [proposed] language did feel divisive. Anytime we get into semantics like this, we get ourselves in trouble. We would like this to be decided at the meeting level, to make sure the meeting is safe for all, and that it's not dictated from above.

Delegate — I've reviewed the website, and don't find it confusing. As I go to the Traditions, and especially settle on Tradition Five, It is carrying the message to those who still suffer. In my service and participation, the intent is to be far-reaching, not narrower; to be more inclusive. In my very first group, they did ask before the meeting if I've been affected by someone else's csb. I like that about our Traditions as well, that each group is autonomous.

Delegate — I don't agree with "actual makeup and intention." We spent a year discussing this issue. Delegates voted to have the language as it is. The diversity statement welcomes all. Tradition 3 does say to put the focus on ourselves. Everyone is welcome, we don't need to identify ourselves as to what our qualifications are. I remember not too many years ago, where there were groups where they excluded men. In the 17 years I've been with COSA, I've never had a sex addict in the meeting.

Delegate — People saw language changing because there was a request for consistency, so it was made consistent. I couldn't find any history of it being different. Several times I did see inconsistent information. I think it could be clearer. I'm not opposed to a section JUST for people coming in. In 18 years, there have been a couple of times someone did come in by accident, but that person was redirected.

Delegate — Our meeting has been around for 27 years, and we've not experienced a problem like this. We have a person to welcome newcomers. People can reach us by our email address. There are a few ways to find us. We let them know who we are, and who we serve. When I look at the COSA website, on the home page, it's very clear from the get-go: "Is your life affected by csb? Are you suffering from the problematic sexual behavior of a loved one? Does nobody understand what you're going through? Are you pressured into sexual behavior you're uncomfortable with?" That's right on the homepage. There are a couple of other bullet points, but when we get to that tab at the top, it's "What is COSA?" If those questions, those 5 bullet points, didn't do it for you, we

have a section of 52 questions: “Do you sometimes feel like you’re crazy, or having a hard time separating truth from lies when talking to the sex addict?” So, to me, it’s very clear that COSA is on target and has a clear message. And also, by not excluding, we may be able to give people a different lane if they really don’t belong.

Delegate — I’d love to have magic rules where I never have to tell somebody, Oh, I’m sorry, you’re in the wrong place. In my experience of 35 years in a variety of other Twelve Step fellowships before I came to COSA 12 years ago, yes, sometimes people came into the wrong meeting. They can be redirected to where they are wanting to go. Maybe there’s something extra scary about Zoom. At first, I was scared of it, but no longer am. By csb, no one’s spoken to the words “affected by.” That has a clear meaning in the dictionary. Our Traditions and Steps do not say that we have a problem with sex addiction. It says we’ve been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. I do agree with what several people said that the welcome tabs could be made clearer. I would suggest that anybody who is looking for better clarity on the website, join me on a committee to make the website fit that wide middle road.

Delegate — I speak for the Adult Children of Sex Addicts group. The consensus was that the language should not be changed. That’s surprising, because as a whole, we were affected by another person’s csb. I’m basically a newcomer, have been in a Step study, and through a fearless moral inventory I was able to recognize my own part. I think the language is very clear for a newcomer. Groups can be autonomous. I see many in my Step study who may be double winners. They may or may not know it. I don’t. It’s not my job.

### OTHER COMMENTS

Delegate and co-author — I’ve also spoken to the other Co-Author offline, and we appreciate everything we’ve heard, and we have heard many valid viewpoints on all sides. Thank you for sharing them so honestly, but I defer to her on whether to accept the modifications of the proposal.

Co-Author/Observer — I’d be more comfortable to allow this to stand as proposed, and see what the next vote brings, with what information has been shared so far. I haven’t heard a lot of support for the friendly amendments, so I think we should go to the second round of voting.

### **PROPOSAL MODIFICATION AND BREAK (if needed) (2-10 min)**

Co-Authors have talked about modifying; decision to allow to stand as proposed, don’t change anything for the moment.

Straw Poll (3 min)

RED 21 YELLOW 4 GREEN 11

Dissenting Voice (if needed) (1 minute each), after which we can also propose friendly amendments, and the authors can choose to accept or decline. Minority voices are heard first.

#### COMMENTS FOR YELLOW

Delegate — My meeting would still want that literature requirement taken out, but would like to see the change on the website.

Delegate — wants to resubmit that amendment proposal, and is taking exception to the statement that there wasn't support for that. Many have shared they are uncomfortable with locking in that literature requirement in the future.

Delegate — I like just the first part as above YELLOWS stated. The second part: I'm not for deciding that for future literature, just do it on a case-by-case basis.

Delegate — I heard someone say another person's name. Let's hear that friendly amendment again.

Friendly amendment person — If I may, my proposal for a friendly amendment was just to remove the second section that referenced future literature, and to keep only the first section that referenced the website.

#### COMMENTS FOR GREEN

Delegate — I believe my meeting would be okay with the amendment and would want me to vote GREEN. My meeting would also want me to vote GREEN if we changed "another person's" to just "another's."

Delegate — My meeting would hesitate to take out the future literature requirement. I'd be willing to have a caveat that says: future literature still makes it clear the difference between what is addressed in COSA and other groups that address sexual behavior, sexual addiction. Other than that, I appreciate the person who said to, take that second part out and let it come up again when the time comes. But, then we're just kind of

referring to the issue on and on.

Delegate — I want to be clear, we're just talking about a second round of voting, not on the friendly amendment? When I say I have a problem with csb, what comes up for me? There's a lot of shame, because as someone who is affected by someone else's csb, I took on that it was my fault that this happened, my fault that I wasn't strong enough, and that I didn't stand up. I didn't recognize my part in it. If I would have had to say those words, I would have never come back, because I didn't even understand the amount of shame I was carrying at the time. Even talking about this now, I feel the shame which I have tried to work really hard to get rid of. I do feel passionate about this, because newcomers are who we need to reach. If you're a double winner, it's fine, but double means 2. You can go to the SAA meeting, and you can come to us because your life is in fact someone else's behavior, not your own.

Delegate and Co-Author — Thanks for all of your sincere concerns in all directions. From the viewpoint of GREEN, in some of the meetings I've been involved with in the UK, there are 2 points I think are important about the proposal: why it's written, and doesn't exclude anyone, and also why it leads to confusion. We have issues in the UK meetings with people not even knowing they can redirect sex addicts who come in by mistake, including some very catastrophic meeting events that happened with newcomers fleeing and saying they were traumatized. I'm also very concerned about the trend where people, including in the UK meetings, believe we can no longer specify that we are COSAs, and that all this stuff about being affected by other people actually needs to be changed and struck. That's what helped motivate me to co-author this.

Delegate — I actually voted RED because that was my group conscience, but I want to speak up for GREEN, because I'm – we're mostly white Americans, right (here in COSA)? I actually happen to be from South America, and I want to speak for people coming from other countries and their literature. We are going to have issues in the future when we start translating our literature. It doesn't even make sense if we don't have "another's" in there, because that's just very poor grammar. What's going to happen is that we're going to put women in danger in other countries. Please think about that. Women in South America will be going to meetings next to predators. Can we make the language clear and proper?

Co-Author of proposal and Observer — Change of any type is so hard, especially around something that we love and value like COSA. I'm hearing the friendly amendment with very receptive ears, and am willing to put my trust in the literature committee in the future to do its work as it feels necessary. I also thank those of you who've not personally observed the

pain caused by this confusion for believing in the experience of those who have observed it. I bear in mind the weight of the newcomers that never make it to our rooms because they didn't find us, because they did not find clearly who we are, and who we are here to serve. It's absolutely the intention of this proposal to draw that wide circle, that inclusive circle that includes everyone who has this shared experience. Thank you for your mindful and prayerful consideration of this proposal.

### **COMMENTS FOR RED**

Delegate — We've given a great deal of thought to this in past years. I agree with those who have said we do have clearly on our website and in the meetings the information a newcomer would need. I would hate to see us change this.

Delegate — My meeting was extremely RED on this. I think that we could do more on that tab that says "What is COSA", to be more explicit. However, to apply this change in wording to the entire website is kind of shifting and becoming confusing about who we are. It feels more like what we already do, which is in our scripts, and literature on our website. Meetings are autonomous, and meetings can always choose to change the language in their script if they feel that works better for them.

Interruption – Co-Chair E – I want to show in the screen the changes, so if you're going to be responding to RED, it will be to the amended proposal, which is instead of the phrase "csb," it be replaced with "another person's csb" in the web pages, but not in the yet to be written publications.

There was some confusion about if this amendment has been accepted by the Co-Authors.

The Co-Authors are accepting the amendment to allow webpages to say "another's csb," but to strike the requirement that it be done in all future written publications. They also would strike the word "person's," so it would read "another's csb."

### **COMMENTS FOR RED**

Delegate — I do appreciate the idea that some things just aren't clear, but I don't believe in changing the website, or (in the case of the original proposal) changing future literature, without properly addressing that the change in the language is consistent. For many people who are trying to find healing and growth and come into sobriety, consistency is kind. Having things that are inconsistent is not supportive. The inconsistency in this proposal is blatant. It's not one proposal, it's multiple proposals rolled into



one, and they're proposing to change Tradition Three's language. Without having Tradition Three changed, I don't care if you do it on the website. I don't care if you're asking for language in Literature, what's being asked is to change our Tradition. That has not been changed, and so when we are not being careful about our content, and we don't have that consistency, that's not a safe environment.

Delegate — Representing myself as a newcomer, and over 20 newcomers, it was felt that it would be best to have a wide net on the internet web level, and then filter those people down to where they belong. In COSA, we felt we are in service not just to other COSAs, but to those who seek help no matter what they're afflicted with. I do appreciate, and am sorry for anybody that experienced any kind of trauma with this particular issue. I also acknowledge that my triggers are my own to work on and represent. My group would not welcome this change in any manner to literature, or to the website.

Delegate — The intensity shows that this is an important issue, and it's too confusing to be hashed out in a proposal that's confusing in and of itself. I'm quite confused. There was a first, and second vote, then discussion between the second and third votes. Some thought that 2 amendments had been made, but I only saw them presented on the screen by the chair before the REDs were able to speak. On the AI-Anon fellowship, which I often do say COSA is like, the AI-Anon compared to AA – their First Step is that I'm "powerless over alcohol," and the understanding is that I'm not admitting I'm drinking alcohol. I'm powerless over it in another person. There are lots of nuances here that we can all help each other with, and we all deserve recovery.

Delegate — I appreciate the discussion, and would love for something to come out of this. The thing I mentioned before about having a reference on the home page for newcomers to what's on other pages might be clearer, and also to have a review of the website. Perhaps things could be made clearer, but I wouldn't agree with changing everything without careful review.

Delegate — The emphasis of not changing has been very strong. I by all means do not dismiss or dishonor any newcomers' experiences when they come in the beginning, as I had to at one point in time. We are responsible for our own triggers. Also, there's no other S. Fellowship that says what they want to say, or what this new proposal wants to say.

Delegate — My group was very RED on this proposal. It does not align with our Third Tradition; it doesn't even align with the First Tradition. I appreciate that there is something on the table. Also, on the table is to

free the hands of the literature committee to write per the group conscience of the fellowship as a whole. It's the misalignment with the Third Tradition that would keep us from voting GREEN on this at all.

Delegate — I like the spirit of this proposal, that it's about reaching newcomers. What comes to mind is like using csb as an umbrella that works for people in the organization. When I looked for COSA, it didn't pop up on my first Google search. Instead of spending time, resources, and changing literature, perhaps we put our tech committee, or financial resources into improving the SEO (Search Engine Optimization), so when people type COSA in, it pops up on the first page, because SAA does pop up.

**VOTE ON MODIFIED PROPOSAL** — The Co-Authors of the Proposal approved to take out the word "person's," when describing another's csb, to change this wording on the website without requirement of future Literature publications.

Straw Poll (3 min)

**RED 21** **YELLOW 1** **GREEN 14**

**PROPOSAL DOES NOT PASS**

Break (Please return after 10 minutes and we will resume promptly)

Moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer; Rules of Order, and Safety Guideline Refresher

**AGENDA ITEM #3: PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES FOR SECTION 8.3**

Present Proposal: (5 min) Proposed by Co-Authors: Delegate and Observer

*As per indicated in the ISO of COSA Bylaws:*

**Original Version**

## **ARTICLE VIII – AMENDMENTS**

### *8.1 BOARD OF TRUSTEES*

Except as expressly provided otherwise in these Bylaws, these Bylaws may be

repealed or amended by, and new Bylaws not in conflict with these Bylaws hereof may be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Trustees in office. The proposed amendments must be published to the delegates at least one (1) month prior to the annual meeting. Bylaws shall be amended at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees. Adopted changes or additions in Bylaws shall be ratified by a majority of delegates and the Trustees at the Annual Meeting.

*and*

### **Original Version**

3.3 TENURE A member group shall retain ISO membership until it shall voluntarily withdraw its affiliation with ISO, or as long as it shall remain a COSA group.

*The following shows the original version and proposed versions with changes highlighted. The areas highlighted in yellow were proposed by Amy S. and Sarah D. The board has proposed a friendly amendment highlighted in cyan. The board voted to approve and now brings these proposals to the delegates.*

### **Original Version**

8.3 STEPS, TRADITIONS, AND CONCEPTS In order to change the wording of any of the Steps, Traditions, or Concepts the following procedure will be followed: (Section Added in May 2011) a) A registered group (s) sends the suggested change(s) to the Board of Trustees in the form of a Proposal complete with “pro” statements.

b) The Board of Trustees finds a registered group(s) to write a “con” statement.

c) The Board of Trustees sends out the proposed change(s) together with both the “pro and con” statements to all registered groups.

d) The Proposal passes when three-fourths (3/4) of the registered groups approve the proposed change(s) in writing to the Board of Trustees within a six (6) month time frame beginning with the date of mail-out.

e) Any approved change(s) will become effective at the first meeting of the Board of Trustees after the certification of the vote by the Executive Committee.

### **Proposed Version**

#### **Section 8.3**

d) The Proposal passes when three-fourths (3/4) of the responding groups approve the proposed change(s) in writing to the Board of Trustees within a six (6) month time frame beginning with the date of attempted contact by post, email, or telephone and ending with the announced close of the voting period.

## Proposed Version with friendly amendment by the Board

### Section 8.3

d) The Proposal passes when three-fourths (3/4) of the **responding** groups approve the proposed change(s) in writing to the Board of Trustees within a six (6) month time frame beginning with the date of attempted contact by writing **or email** and ending with the announced close of the voting period.

**Rationale:** As the Bylaws are currently written, Sections 3.3 and 8.3 combine to create a situation in which meetings no longer in existence are never removed from the rolls, and yet are required to be counted in any poll of the membership that would affect changes to the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. Assuming that the Board would find it onerous and impractical to conduct a regular census of active meetings, we (Amy S. and Sarah D.) ask that the Board replace the word "registered" with "responding" in section 8.3 (change highlighted words for clarity).

We believe that the original intent of this section regarding updates or changes to the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts was to create a high bar, but not an impossible one. As we've seen in the past, even something as simple as a grammatical or punctuation change has no actual chance of passing this process. Updating the language of this section of the Bylaws (or alternatively committing to a regular, perhaps yearly census to determine which groups are still in existence) would allow COSA a reasonable path to correction of errors or consideration of updates.  
Straw Poll (3 min)

**RED 18** **YELLOW 5** **GREEN 10**

There was some confusion about who was presenting this proposal, as the board had a friendly amendment. The Co-Authors did respond to the board in writing when they suggested the friendly amendment, and have accepted the friendly amendment as the basis of their proposal. The friendly amendment is what was voted on.

### COMMENTS

Past Chair and Board Member – for By-laws, it has to go through the board, and then goes to the delegates to be ratified. Changes can be brought to board from anyone, but ultimately, the delegates need to ratify them.

Delegate –The process for changing is quite complex; I want to make sure we are not violating our procedure.

Delegate – It's the Co-Author's proposal; it has gone through the board, and they decided that they would accept the friendly amendment going

forward.

There was discussion on how as a result, this was turned into a board proposal.

Delegate – Yes, it is a complex issue. These are legal documents. The Board of Trustees are held responsible for bylaws.

Delegate – I read this as not open to amendments at this time; it would have to go back to the board for amendments.

Delegate – It did go to the board. The board did accept it with the amendment, so we can now vote on it.

Delegate – So, we are voting on a change in the bylaws, which would have to comply with the original bylaws – gaining the approval of the registered groups, which would be an IRS requirement, as we are a registered non-profit organization?

Delegate – Did we just vote on the amendment? I need some clarification.

Past Chair and Board Member – Through the process I've described, the bylaws can be changed, and basically anything else, except the Steps and Traditions, and Concepts. Those would go to a vote of groups.

Delegate when asked to speak more on non-profits – When we registered as an S corporation non-profit, the bylaws became part of that incorporation. The requirement is different for Recovery Twelve Step groups. There's a special exemption, because there is no hierarchical structure that the membership has to be identified. For the purposes of changing the bylaws, the way the membership is identified, the members must participate. So, my current understanding of the way it's written from a contract perspective is that until we resolve the issue of who's the registered member, we can't change the bylaws. This isn't a legal opinion, it's just my experience with non-profit corporation contracts, and contracts in general.

Delegate – For that additional information, my understanding is that this Proposal 3 would have naturally followed Proposal 1. Since Proposal 1 wasn't passed, I feel like we need more information and more vetting out of what our procedures are to determine our counting, and how we count our groups. That's the key, and we need to step back, and table the issue, or vote No, as written. Then we can move forward, after the committee or ad hoc for Proposal 1 has done their due diligence, and then Proposal 3 could be properly vetted, and presented to the board again.

Board Co-Chair J – It sounds like there's a lot of muddy water, and we

don't know exactly what we're doing. Rather than doing something, and then finding out we did it wrong, I propose that this proposal be tabled until the next delegate meeting, and that we spend the time in between getting clarity on who exactly is supposed to vote, and on what. We want to avoid making mistakes.

Delegate – I believe the Co-Authors had the proper vetting of how this was to go. If we have to have an attorney look at everything, and go through it, we would never be able to make any changes. I think we should go forward with this, instead of delaying. We've had extensive discussions on it, it's to be ratified by the delegates.

Delegate – I'm confused about where we are in agendas and procedures right now. It's a note of concern, and a point of order. Next, where is it in our process that we debate whether or not we even entertain things on an agenda and debate at length before even having a straw vote?

Delegate– I concede an error. So, 8.1, - the board of trustees, - the board does have the authority by a two-thirds vote of the board to make amendments or changes to the bylaws except as otherwise stated.

Co-Chair E – The reason why we had this discussion is because I needed clarity; I've never done changes to the bylaws before. I'm sure a lot of us have not as well. I think this was a procedural thing that we all need to learn.

We've already had the first poll, now we are ready for minority vote comments.

### COMMENTS FOR YELLOW

Delegate - One of the main things that my group didn't like about the revised proposal was the cutting out the option of telephone contact. So going back to the first proposal that we voted on with the issues with spam, email accounts and things not being received or heard, that there's a number of telephone meetings as well.

Delegate – I want to acknowledge the need for addressing groups – that's been addressed twice today. I'm just not sure that this is, that the registered meetings and the responding meetings and all of that has been adequately addressed. We didn't have a follow up to the first proposal, but I feel like this is somewhat linked because of that issue. However, I'm not opposed to the need for this.

Delegate – We do need to clean up the meetings first to make sure we track everybody, to make sure that all the people that do exist have a vote.

## COMMENTS FOR GREEN

Delegate, Co-Author – The co-author and I are concerned about clarity of wording, and making what COSA does match what COSA says it does, which is not the point of this proposal now being presented. The background I want to give you is that when we looked into how to change for example, Tradition Three, we saw that the existing bylaws make changing anything in the Steps, Traditions, or Concepts pretty much an impossible task. For reasons outlined in the proposal, we want to change it from an impossible task to a high bar, but not an impossible task.

Delegate – The way votes are taken in America is this, whether it's for this delegate meeting, city council, governor, etc.: you have a list of voters and a list of meetings on your voter roll. On the meeting list, there could be dead voters voting. When a vote is taken in America, it's the responding people who show up.

Interruption – Co-Chair E– You're referring to America. We are an International Service Organization.

Delegate continued – good point. My point is that the one who wins is the one who gets the vote of the responding people. If we made it that every person had to vote, nothing would be decided.

Regarding Bylaws stated on our COSA Website:

Delegate – I want to read from our Bylaws. It said bylaws should be amended at the annual meeting of the board of trustees. Adopted changes or additions in the bylaws shall be ratified by a majority of the delegates and the trustees at the annual meeting. To me, that says us, the ones who showed up here, so that is 50% plus one. It's not the 75% we usually do, but the bylaw says it should be the majority of people here; of delegates.

Response from Board Member – It said it should be two-thirds.

Same Delegate – You have two-thirds of the board

Another Delegate Commenter– and three-fourths of the delegates.

Delegate – It says, Bylaws: It may be adopted by two thirds of the trustees in office, I'm assuming that's the board, and the proposed amendments to go to the delegates by law should be amended by a majority of the delegates at the annual meeting of the majority of the delegates and trustees at the annual meeting.

Response from Board Member – If you look further down, it says three-fourths.

Delegate – Three-fourths is for Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, right?

Co-Chair E – As a member of the board, we are going to have to table this to the next delegate meeting, as we are running out of time. We have 15 minutes left, and we still need to talk about forming committees for various things. I'm going to propose that we table all of this because we don't have enough time to listen to all of the dissenting votes, RED for example. Thank you all. I'm sorry, we ran out of time. Can I get a consensus with the board members?

Delegate – I just wanted to state that if this is brought forth to the delegates as a proposal, I feel it's my responsibility to share my feelings. Yes, it can be tabled, but I think as written, we should be allowed to vote yes or no on it. That's my feeling as a delegate, and it was a proposal that was vetted out by the board. I propose that we continue the voting, and then make a decision about tabling it, because we haven't done that so far.

Co-Chair J – Thanks. It is a responsibility of the person running the board meeting to determine what the agenda is, and whatever adjustments need to be made as necessary. And there are 14 minutes left before everyone has the right to leave. There is nothing wrong with tabling something. That's one of the things that we read at the beginning of the meeting. If anyone has opinions, this will come up again, because it is tabled, not canceled, so people will be able to share their opinions.

Delegate - When the bylaws say “a vote by the delegates,” in my experience that means that then we go forward with the voting guidelines that the ISO has adopted, and that delegates have adopted for how voting proceeds. The two-thirds thing in the bylaws has to do with the board. When the delegates vote, we follow the flow chart that we have been attempting to follow. So, we need 75%, but I also agree that this is something that can be tabled.

Delegate, Co-Author - I want to voice my protests for how the last 20 minutes or so of this meeting have been conducted. It has not been following our process. Whether or not tabling it is the right decision, I think that should be subjected to a vote of all present as to whether we're agreeing to table it.

**Quick Straw vote on continue the action of voting versus tabling proposal.**

**Those in favor of voting right now 14**

**Those in favor of tabling proposal 18**



Co-Chair E – Thank you, we will table it. Thank you all for going through this very unwieldy process.

### **Committee Needs**

- **TechCom** - One of the Committees that needs help is the Technology Committee. This is also part of the Database Committee. They deal with registration. Because of possible spam issues, please feel free to email me (Eveline), directly at [Eveline.COSA@Gmail.com](mailto:Eveline.COSA@Gmail.com)..
- **LitCom** is also looking for people to submit writings and ideas, and to edit current literature to make sure it's up to date and is following our Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. We also need people to help with the *Balance* newsletter. We also are figuring out wording in our translation to other languages.
- **Outreach** – we are expanding all the time, and we need help. We can also send out emails to delegates regarding the committees.

**Survey** – Delegate Liaison will put a link in the chat box for a post-meeting survey to fill out. Please cut, copy, and paste the link, as after the meeting ends, the link won't be available. It will also go out in an email to the delegates.

Delegate – This is for the delegates – there is a WhatsApp group that's open for delegates. For people who are interested in being delegates and observers, it's a place we can all chat openly about anything in that group.

Co-Chair E– Again, thank you all for being here. We muddle through! The process of changing our bylaws is different from a delegate meeting proposal. I consider today a win, because we all gained some clarity, even if things are not going at the speed that we want. We are taking our time with careful consideration. It was a good decision to have meetings twice a year, so we don't have to wait a whole year.

**Close with the Serenity Prayer**