OIG TOWN HALL ON REOPENING OUR MEETINGS

Meeting Minutes

The town hall was convened the meeting with 100 signed into the Zoom "room" at 6:33 p.m. June 17, 2020

The Serenity Prayer opened the meeting.

The meeting was opened for sharing and questions at 6:56 p.m.

NOTE: Although OIG had paid for and arranged for the meeting to admit a further 100 participants, this feature was not activated and the meeting was capped at 100. For this reason, planners conferred during the meeting and announced that another town hall will be held at a future date. These minutes will be e-mailed to all who attended and will be posted on the OIG web site oahucentraloffice.com.

A member of Head Start said Joy of Christ church, where they meet, is allowing a maximum of 25 persons in in-person meetings in the sanctuary with social distancing and masking. The church has these further requirements: a signed release holding the church and its officers free of liability in case of illness attributed to the meeting and a sign-in sheet to be maintained that will allow contact tracing if a case of COVID-19 should be attributed to meeting attendance. The 7th Tradition contributions will be gathered in a bucket with a handle and counting of the money delayed for sanitizing.

A member, who did her doctoral dissertation on emerging infectious diseases, cautioned against returning to indoor physical meetings too soon; "I think it's risky," she said. She noted that travel has not yet fully reopened, meaning there is little understanding of what may happen when tourists return. She prefers that those groups who do return to in-person meetings follow a practice of smaller outdoor meetings only.

A member of Kailua Women's Stag said Zoom has been a boon to that meeting with greater numbers in attendance. They have not yet heard from their physical site about when or whether they can return. To find out more about this meeting, call 372-0343.

A member of Pau Hana said some meetings elsewhere are using a pre-registration system in which people email in advance and receive a place in small, in-person meetings of 10 persons maximum.

A member of Knuckleheads brought up the issue of cost: Some landlords levy additional fees to cover cleaning and sanitizing or pay for liability insurance. In the case of Knuckleheads, a COVID charge of $200-$250 per month is being levied plus $50-$100

for cleaning (unclear whether this is per meeting or per month). The church is requiring that their own sanitizing solutions and practices be used so their own staff or contractors must do the work. He wondered if a meeting can acquire the right products and be trained to do the cleaning to avoid such charges.

A member of Kalihi Sobriety said she'd been to a recently reopened beach meeting where people sat close together, were unmasked, didn't wear gloves and passed materials around. "There are a lot of people that aren't going to follow the rules," she said.

A member who operates clean and sober houses, said she is asking that residents in her houses not conduct indoors meetings or attend them elsewhere. "If (proper health practices are not being followed in a meeting these people attend)," she said, "my people are instructed to leave. I think in a way we are being self-centered to rush back to physical meetings. We need to stop, let God in and pray."

Via chat, a member wondered if a church requires special cleaning products and practices, those could not be purchased from the church with volunteers to carry out the work.

A member of Black Experience said that, as an immuno-compromised person, she has been ordered by her doctor to stay away from meetings at least until September. Many elders and people with chronic diseases are living under the same restrictions. But her main concern, she said, is meeting size limits that might force meetings to turn away suffering alcoholics, in violation of our traditions.

A member of Downtown Lunch, which meets at St. Peter's, said the church has just announced it is shutting down meetings completely. Prior to that, however, church officials had suggested they would require that hand sanitizer and masks be provided by the group and that the group clean and sanitize the entire meeting area and bathrooms before and after each meeting. Also that the 7th Tradition contributions be gathered only by the secretary who was to wear gloves. Hosting a meeting under such restrictions is a lot of work, he said. "I agree that we are kind of moving too fast . . . I think what my home group is moving towards is waiting until there is a vaccine."

Via chat, a member of TYG said gloves are problematic; they are readily cross-contaminated.

A member said "To me, the most important thing in all of this is respect for each other and responsibility — responsibility to myself to stay healthy and protect the health of others, responsibility to the group, responsibility to AA and responsibility to our citizenship."

A member said Kilohana United Methodist Church, which hosts three meetings, has set these boundaries: meetings remain cancelled until the end of June while policies are under discussion. It's likely that no indoor meetings will be allowed and that outdoor

meetings may be permitted with distancing requirements and numbers limits and possibly only if the sponsoring agency purchases liability insurance to indemnify the church against lawsuits. And it's likely that members will be responsible for "deep cleaning" of any meeting space or space used (bathrooms, for example). "I don't think in good conscience that we can enter into any agreement with a facility that limits the numbers at the meeting," he said.

A member of Happy, said that group will hold a group conscience soon but has agreed to continue on the Zoom platform meantime. He pointed out that a lot of people cannot go to 12-Step meetings because of prohibitions by their employers. This includes active-duty military, first responders, medical workers. "Their jobs are restricting even what they are allowed to do outside of work. Some people will be left behind (without Zoom meetings)," he said.

A member said Na Wahine O Ko'olau, which meets at St. Christopher's in Kailua, is paying half its former rent to hold their meeting space while they ponder the future. If they return, she said, the church will require social distancing (and thus meeting size limits) and cleaning. She noted that service positions can already be difficult to fill without the addition of new responsibilities such as cleaning, greeters who present sanitizers and mask and so on. For now, the meeting remains on Zoom.

A member of Happy Hour asked, if cleaning is required by facilities, is there not some way that products and PPE can be purchased by OIG or GSO or some AA agency at wholesale cost and sold to meetings that need them to reduce costs? And could AA not take out liability insurance for those meetings that are required to have it?

A member of A Spiritual Awakening said via chat that that meeting will have a group conscience "hopefully soon" and will consider all the questions, concerns and facts presented at this town meeting as they work with Central Union Church. That meeting has no Zoom presence, although many members have become associated with various Zoom meetings.

A member said Waikiki Community Center's meetings can be large, involve food service and the center may be require meetings to take people's temperatures prior to admittance and provide safety gear. These policies are under discussion.

A member of Kalihi Sobriety asked, "Is an AA meeting considered a 'gathering' or an 'event'" under current regulations? (This matters because events are allowed 50 attendees indoors, 100 outdoors, while gatherings are limited to groups of 10.) She further said the group has made no decision about its in-person future but the facility where they meet is likely to set meeting size limits and require cleaning. She said the facility was willing to provide cleaning supplies but that violates the "fully self-supporting" 7th Tradition clause.

A member suggested that any group seek competent counsel and get answers only directly from the regulatory agencies and make sure the information is up to date.

Later, a member clarified via chat that an 'event' is a one-time occurrence, a 'meeting' is a regularly scheduled, recurring gathering.

A member of XFactor said the group has had a group conscience and they are considering creating a hybrid meeting with both in-person and Zoom platforms. However, she said that a reason not to rush back is that, after the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic many people did not feel safe in public gatherings for years.

A member, who is a liaison for groups meeting at two different Windward-side churches, said Central Union Windward has given groups permission to return June 28 with no use of kitchen facilities, masks and social distancing required and a maximum of 50 people. St. Christopher's has not yet established its policies.

A member asked if a "hybrid" implied having both in-person and online meetings, but at different times?

A member clarified that hybrid meetings occur simultaneously in a physical space while also being broadcast by electronic means. This can present problems if people participating in the meeting wish not to be on camera. Further, Hawai'i's geography means that WiFi can be unreliable and video requires broad, reliable bandwidth.

A member of the Big Island concurred, saying a new hybrid meeting there dealt with control issues (those who didn't want to return to physical meetings didn't want others to do so, either), technical mistakes, compromises. "It's a lot more work," he said. "And a lot more service positions."

A member said many meetings will have no use of kitchens and no snacks or food will be allowed, as well as no coffee, a loss for many members.

A member, who has had experience of being on a ventilator, cautioned that COVID-19 can be a very serious ailment. "We need to understand what we're talking about here," he said, cautioning against moving to in-person meetings too rapidly. He said that, on the Mainland, some groups have handled the no-one-turned-away issue by admitting people to meetings up to 10 at a time, then assigning the next 10 to a location safely removed from the first (not practical for every facility).

A member, who has worked with respiratory patients, cautioned that gloves are no panacea because they're readily cross-contaminated and must be changed between every different contact. She suggested careful and frequent sanitizing is safer.

A member of Knuckleheads raised the COVID-era issue of how we reach people who lack computers or smart phones if we operate primarily remotely? How do we prevent people from getting lost and maintain our primary purpose? "I'm not expecting an answer right here, but it's something to consider," he said.

Via chat, it was reported that TYG is having a group conscience at 7 a.m. June 27 via Zoom.

In bringing the meeting to a close, the host asked that any groups that plan to return to physical meetings please inform OIG so the website physical meeting list can be updated; this is best carried out online as Central Office is short-staffed. A link to the meeting update form is on the oahucentraloffice.com Web site.

And if any member can recommend reliable sources for other ideas or materials, please email manager@oahucentraloffice.com.

The meeting was closed at 7:58 p.m. with the Responsibility Statement.