

AGA Board Meeting
August 21, 2016

Attending

Gurujeeet Khalsa (Eastern Region, Chairman)
Martin Lebl (Central Region)
Bob Gilman (Central Region)
Diego Pierrottet (Eastern Region)
Edward Zhang (At Large)
Ted Terpstra (Western Region)
Chris Kirschner (Western Region)
Andy Okun (President)
Lisa Scott (Central Region, Board member-elect)
Andrew Jackson (Western Region, Board member-elect)

Meeting called to order by Gurujeeet Khalsa at 8:07pm EDT.

Agenda

1st issue, moving towards a policy towards tour groups, fully apart from the current issues
2nd issue, executive session to get a sense of allegations of COI, blog posts & media, what is the sense of the board going forward and how should we move forward how should we communicate as the board.

GK: We want to encourage foreign tour groups to bring people to our events and help promote go, not much controversy there.

GK: Problems were a lack of transparency, information that was incomplete or inconsistent, or promised things that had to be delivered by the congress organizers, gives people negative impressions of the AGA, how can we set policy to improve this situation, formalize it to make it better for the participants.

Clarification: Are you asking for an AGA-approved organizer list?

GK: no, just a sense of

BG: Do we want to have a list of AGA recognized tour operators?

CK: What we need to do to begin with is pay more attention. One of the issues is there was a lot of advertising or promotion that we weren't paying attention to. We should ask to be informed of websites or organizations that are promoting this

AJ: The issue here is not about creating new hoops for the people providing good experiences, but what do we do about bad actors and about keeping them out. A good approach might be create a policy where we expect all tour groups to comply with XYZ, and then only if people don't do we step in.

AO: I would suggest for us to grandfather in Hyodo, for example, who has been leading groups for many many years without a problem. We would not want to set up certain rules and apply them to him unnecessarily.

GK: would we want to ask him to advise us on a tour group policy?

CK: I think we should ask him.

BG: I would endorse asking people who are offering tours to create a link to be put on the AGA website for their tour groups. They should especially do this if using the AGA logo.

AO: I think that's a good idea. At one remove, we aren't in a position to prevent people from acting as intermediaries, so if we want to influence how people are presenting us, we need to consider what materials are we providing them with to help them ... help lisa ...

DP: It's going to be very difficult to police all organizations outside the AGA. We should keep it as simple as possible.

CK: I think the nexus point on this issue arises when a tour group organizer contacts us and says 'we're organizing a group for you, aren't you so happy we'll be bringing so many people?', that's when we say 'please go to our website ... and see what our guidelines are on that' and then we have a set of guidelines that everybody deals with and then we move forward from there viz noncompliance.

General Comment: I would think that we would need a disclaimer that the AGA is not guaranteeing any of the tour providers promises.

CK: That would be a part of the guidelines.

BG: The guidelines need to be two fold: 1) for the tour operators, 2) for the users of the tour groups.

GK: Agreed. And to Andrew's point, it's not to let people know what they can't do, it's what we can provide to let people know what's out there, what services they provide, so we can help them as well. I'd like to encourage this activity in a way that's a win-win for both. What i heard from the current situation was a bit of what we were offering was not being transmitted to the actual participants. Can we let our participants know what our true costs are, what our housing options are, to make them more intelligent consumers through transparency.

CK: the advantage of having this done as boilerplate is something that can be translated once, vs. having to do it every congress,

BG: Do we have any other competitions with our groups?

AO: There are groups that attend rated events, but I do not know that there are generally organized groups -- e.g. the Jujo

BG: This may have application to other events.

GK: Is there a sense that the board should take this up? Should we direct Andy to do this operationally?

CK: Let Andy do it, board can check the policy, this is an administration problem.

AO: I can draw something up. I would welcome input, by all means. The question Andrew raised before: do you want me to do something in particular looking back, as to how we did this year?

LS: I think we can just take the lessons learned from this year into consideration when drawing up the policy.

GK: I think we should compile the specific issues with Alice Zhang this year and communicate with her about them.

BG: Does anyone know if Alice is aware of the "charges" against her and has she made any response?

EZ: I assume she is aware because she is in the WeChat group in which this has been discussed. A lot of the people in this group are AGA players.

AO: A question regarding discussing this with Alice: am I discussing this as the person responsible for next year's Congress, or for other reasons?

CK: It may be awkward to talk with her right now, before we have the policy in place.

AO: So I will plan to be in touch with her soon, after we have a policy drawn up.

BG: Someone suggested that we do this within the month, and since it is a pressing issue, I think that this is a good idea. (LS agrees)

AJ: She seems to aware of this because she is cleaning up her website and the WeChat group. Her website is not archived on archive.org

GK: I have an informational question. How does the process of issuing visa letters work?

AO: it's fairly crude. Either somebody sends me an e-mail saying 'we'd like to come to congress could you send us a visa letter?' Typically it's done at the prompting of the congress registrar, which results in us sending a formal invitation letter. Typically the letter is sent to the individual, in this instance i think we sent it through Alice.

AJ: Were the Chinese-speaking registrar and Chun Sun the same or different people?

BG: Are the visa letters sent via email or on paper?

AO: They are sent via email. This is something we need to be careful about. Someone who wants to run a tour needs to be able to cooperate with us because this letter, with the signature, is used for immigration purposes, so it is an important document. No indication it's been misused, but it has that potential.

For some reason, the people who are sent directly by Nihon kiin want to get a visa to come here, although a Japanese person doesn't need it, they like it for tax or other legal reasons we're not aware of. So we give an invitation letter for the NK -- the visa issue is only an issue for China, we have to redo our letter each year for the China Qiyuan after they pick their representatives.

BG: What about Korea or Taiwan? AO: No, they do not need a visa letter.

TT: Is there always a Chinese language registrar? AO: No, this varies year-by-year.

LS: it's a lot of work to require a separate chinese language registrar.

GK: could we solicit ongoing AGA volunteers to respond to requests for information in the appropriate languages?

CK: In general, the local organization can find someone locally who handles it, when necessary. Very often the questions relate to issues distinct to the congress, i.e., they need local information. Alice handled this rather well in 2013, we didn't have fun, but translation was not the major problem.

LS: in 2011, we had a smaller chinese group for the 1st time, and we didn't have to have special translation -- they had a person who could speak english who worked with the registrars. Hyodo makes it work. We don't necessarily need a special

AJ: Again, think that one of the major problems was that the representative of that tour group was not present – there was no one to take responsibility for the attendees.

CK: I talked to I-han Lui and he said that there was someone who Alice had engaged, but he was engaged primarily as a translator, and he was unaware of this person until much later.

AO: Any idea who that was?

CK: Nope, he didn't know either, but he was apparently being paid \$100/day. Haven't asked Matthew or anyone else if they knew who this was.

AJ: Are you talking about the NY Congress?

CK: No, I'm talking about the Boston Congress. I misspoke, I meant Walther.

BG: I understand the point about local people handling questions about local circumstances. However, it might be to our advantage to have someone doing this over multiple Congresses.

CK: This is a problem that occurs over and over. You need the local people involved. No matter how experienced the national person does not know the specific circumstances of each Congress.

LS: having a good registrar who can handle these questions is important.

BG: it was mentioned that there was a use of google translate to translate chinese/english -- i've used spanish/english with little problem, but korean/english was nearly nonsense.

LS: Not that useful.

AO: It has limited utility except for mundane exchanges. Anything of substance or legal importance cannot be done with google translate – yet.

EZ: I've used google many times, it's good for information, like nouns, date/time locations, but the grammar is wrong very often. Speaking of the Asian attendees, i want to remind everyone that every year since a few years ago, there are maybe 50 people who are players & nonplayers from China. And a lot of these are from other channels, maybe they come by themselves, maybe they use other services. But i'm thinking in one of the e-mails Gurujeet mentioned, Alice claimed she had 13 people this year, yet actually the Congress had over 50 attendees from China, so there are other touring companies in China.

BG: Are the visa letters in English?

AO: Yes. The intent is that someone can take them to a US consulate or embassy.

GK: This is something we can take up again in the future, but it seems that, especially in light of the large number (50+) of overseas visitors, it would be good to have someone who can correspond with the non-English speaking people.

AO: Let me ask a question. Do we want to make it standard policy that every year the website is in the four main languages?

CK: It would be good to have something that could be used for multiple events, that would be worth translating

LS: it would be a huge investment of time and money.

CK: we could do pricing.

AJ: It seems like a single page for the tour groups that could be translated would be doable.

LS: We could do it for limited terms throughout the website.

BG: I recall that a year or more ago there was a Chinese pro living in Chicago who was interested in organizing a Go Camp in Atlanta for Chinese and US participants. I don't know what became of this. But it suggests this would have utility beyond just the congress.

LS: For a general letter or general page that we can send tour groups to, I think that makes a lot of sense.

GK: So Andy, i've given you some ideas, the board will happily engage you, but we'd love to get something soon and i think these ideas exploring translation or a boilerplate something is worth looking into.

AO: Ok.

GK: Unless there's further info on this topic, i'd like to have someone move us into Executive Session to discuss everything else that's been happening, including blog posts, possible legal actions, rumors regarding the recall petition, other social media posts, etc.

CK: Before we go there, I would like to ask if we would like a motion to ask Andy to do this.

AO: I consider myself so instructed. No sweat.

EZ: I can move to go into Executive Session. First, I would like to make a quick comment. We should start executive session here.

EZ moves for executive session to discuss issues affecting personnel . CK seconds. Motion passes at 8:58pm EDT. Edward Zhang recuses himself.

DP Moves to leave, ML seconds. BG moves to adjourn, DP seconds. Meeting adjourned 10:32pm EDT.