

THE 7 AM MESA ZOOM MEETING (Each morning Monday thru Sunday)

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in San Luis Obispo County on March 14, 2020. The County began testing on March 16th at a maximum of 50 per day. The County ordered all bars and restaurants to not sell alcohol on the upcoming St. Patrick's Day, March 17th.

In the community, there was a general feeling of anxiety, but of course there were the naysayers as well. On March 18th, SLO County declared "Shelter At Home". That week a member of the Steering Committee posted a notice on the Mesa meeting room door stating the County Health Department had passed an order forbidding most gatherings and we must cease our meetings.

The Steering Committee gathered loosely to discuss the group's necessity and ability to provide the needed meetings for the Mesa Group membership. The Steering Committee's desire was to have a mirrored format of the Mesa Group in-person meetings. A Secretaries meeting template sheet tailored to each group meeting, a chip presenter where appropriate and a Venmo account for contributions.

Becky B., who had recently moved to the area from southern California was attending zoom meetings at her former group. The pandemic was much worse in the more metropolitan areas of California and they had learned how to use Zoom as a way to conduct their meetings. She thought the meetings she attended were an acceptable and comfortable way to meet and comply with the Health Department mandates.

Lauren said she knew how to set up a Zoom account and use the format. The Steering Committee decided to authorize acquiring a zoom account with the goal of holding all their current meetings on zoom.

The only thing needed now (sans the resentment and coffee pot) was to contact all the current meeting secretaries. We needed to explain what was happening and secure their willingness to participate in the new program. Craig C. volunteered.

In the spirit of Tradition 9, "AA as such, ought never be organized", Craig found the Secretary roster lacking. Lacking in current names, in some cases any name at all or contact information. It took two full days but in the end he had a list for each meeting. Now he needed to notify the group members that our meetings were proceeding on zoom and give instructions on how to log on to the desired meeting.

We prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the Secretaries showing how to log on and off Zoom and how to host a meeting. We walked secretaries and members through the steps of logging onto zoom.

Becky B. said that it took one full week from the notice on the door and the “what are we going to do now” moment, to the beginning of holding our on line meetings.

Craig C. attended all of the meetings in the beginning, encouraging all to log on 30 minutes early and stay 30 minutes after to emulate the “feel” of attending an in-person meetings and learn the quirks of screen management on zoom.

The zoom meetings were well received, with the 7 am and the 5:30 pm being most popular. These meetings sometimes required two screens to display all of those attending.

Gradually, some of the County Health Department restrictions were relaxed. We were allowed to gather if we employed social distancing, wore masks and disinfected items in common use. Given the chance to now start back with in-person meetings, some had discovered the convenience and comfort of getting their needed meeting without leaving their home, an unexpected pleasure.

To deal with the relationship between in-person and zoom meetings, now that we were given a choice, it was natural to discuss hybrid meetings. On the surface, to some, it appeared to be the best of both worlds. However those concerned with the anonymity on zoom pointed out; that at in-person meetings you could see who was there but you had no idea who might be in someone’s home or office during a zoom meeting. It was decided that we would not use a hybrid approach with any of our meetings.

Gradually the in-person meetings have returned but the 7am zoom meeting remains popular. It is a mix of individuals both local and others not so close. It also offers its members a way to maintain their regular meeting while traveling. It has a very comfortable persona. There are a few stalwarts that are meeting in-person at 7am, but the zoom is by far the most popular and most certainly will continue.