

# Vermont Acupuncture Association Annual Meeting Summary

## Overview

This annual meeting of the Vermont Acupuncture Association (VTA) brought together board members and practitioners to discuss organizational updates, technical challenges, membership growth, financial status, legislative advocacy, bylaw revisions, board elections, and strategies for community engagement. The meeting was marked by transparency, active participation, and a focus on strengthening the profession within Vermont.

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## Meeting Logistics & Technical Challenges

- The meeting started with significant technical difficulties, including managing three laptops and online participation.
  - The secretary was absent due to a canceled flight from Italy, complicating preparations.
  - Despite these challenges, the board ensured the slide deck was shared with both in-person and online attendees.
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## Board Introductions & Structure

- **Current Board:** 7 members (full board), including 4 named officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary) and 3 directors.
  - **Changes:**
    - Treasurer (Mitya) and one director (Beth) are stepping down; Beth will continue as webmaster.
    - Montana transitioned from Vice President to Director for continuity.
    - Open positions: Treasurer and two director seats.
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## President's Report (Dr. C. Luminelo)

- **Key Focus Areas for 2024–2025:**
    - **Membership Growth:** Ambitious goal of 51% representation among Vermont acupuncturists, though acknowledged as aspirational.
    - **Mission & Vision:** Emphasis on developing a clear vision statement for guiding the board's goals; this was sidelined by an emergent issue requiring board intervention.
    - **Board Manual:** Ongoing effort to create a comprehensive, transferable manual for board operations.
    - **Capacity:** Board is at full workload; new projects require additional volunteers or members to step up.
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## Vice President's Report (Maddie)

- **Membership Stats:**
    - 39 current members (about 23% of 160 practicing Vermont acupuncturists).
    - Membership declined post-COVID and after local flooding; higher membership during emergencies.
    - National trend: low representation in state associations across the country.
  - **Member Benefits Expanded:**
    - Discounts at Blue Poppy, Red Wing Books, Golden Needle, Health CMI, LHASA, and more.
    - Drawing for \$200 LHASA credit for online attendees.
    - Ongoing solicitation of suggestions for additional member benefits.
  - **Social Activities:**
    - April social event at Hotel Vermont was successful.
    - Board at capacity for organizing additional events; seeking volunteers for a socials committee.
    - New process: members can apply for budget to host local social gatherings.
  - **Engagement Strategies:**
    - Encourage members to act as ambassadors to recruit new members.
    - Highlighted the importance of increased membership for legislative influence and professional advocacy.
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## Treasurer's Report (Mitya)

- **Financial Status:**
    - Assets increased from ~\$30,091 to ~\$33,608 year-over-year.
    - \$20,000 invested in a CD; \$13,000 remains liquid for emergencies.
    - Interest income from CDs: \$523.
    - Reduced expenses due to lower website costs and operational efficiencies.
  - **Budget Discussion:**
    - Recommended maintaining similar expense levels, adjusting for inflation.
    - Consideration for allocating more funds to marketing or events.
    - CD and money market account options discussed for maximizing returns while maintaining liquidity.
  - **Financial Best Practices:**
    - ASA recommends \$25,000 in reserves for lobbying/emergencies.
    - Streamlined bookkeeping and updated account ownership for transparency and ease of board transitions.
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## Webmaster's Report (Beth)

- **Website Overhaul:**
    - Complete platform migration with Golden Ratio (ASA group website), enabling lower rates and future integration with other states.
    - Transitioned payment processing from PayPal to Square for greater stability and easier board transitions.
    - Ongoing technical issues; members encouraged to report problems.
  - **Member Tools:**
    - "Find a Practitioner" tool used for public referrals.
    - Repository for bylaws, meeting minutes, and resources available to members.
  - **Communication:**
    - Plans to send an update to members about the new website once stability is confirmed.
    - Encouraged use of social media and email to increase engagement.
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## ASA & Legislative Updates

### National Advocacy (ASA Report by Carrie & Greg)

- **Medicare Coverage for Acupuncture:**
  - Ongoing federal bill (HR 3133) aims to allow licensed acupuncturists to bill Medicare directly.
  - Current loophole: only dual-licensed providers (e.g., MDs, NPs) can bill.
  - Advocacy efforts include bipartisan support and Capitol Hill events.
  - Concerns raised about potential for low reimbursement rates and insurance companies following Medicare's lead.
- **ASA Growth:**
  - 37 voting and 11 non-voting state members.
  - New states joining: Maryland, Georgia, Texas, California.
  - ASA offers ongoing webinars, advocacy opportunities, and member discounts.
- **Certification Board Name Change:**
  - NCCOAM will become the National Certification Board for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine (NCBAHM) in 2026, reflecting inclusivity and modern terminology.

### Vermont Legislative Update (Kirk White, via email)

- **No Direct Impact Bills:** Among 679 bills, none directly affect acupuncture.
  - **Statehouse Relations:** Legislators are highly supportive of acupuncturists; previous advocacy days received warm welcomes.
  - **Upcoming Changes:** Structural updates to business licensing processes (LLC/LLP registration) may affect all professions; details to come as changes are implemented.
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- **Medicaid Coverage:** Ongoing pilot programs and studies; limited progress on expanding acupuncture coverage.
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## Bylaw Revision & Code of Conduct

- **Reason for Revision:** Recent incidents involving members charged with criminal activity highlighted gaps in the code of conduct.
  - **Key Changes:**
    - Board now empowered to suspend or expel members charged with serious criminal offenses, particularly those impacting public/patient safety, without waiting for a second occurrence.
    - Emphasis on board discernment and procedural fairness.
  - **Discussion Points:**
    - Need for self-reporting of criminal charges and a clear process for reporting to OPR.
    - Further policy work suggested for mandatory reporting and member obligations.
  - **Vote:** Revision passed unanimously, with plans for further refinement as needed.
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## Board Elections & Open Positions

- **Treasurer:** Mitya agreed to serve as interim treasurer for up to six months while a permanent replacement is sought.
  - **Director Positions:**
    - Robert nominated and elected to a two-year director term, with a focus on member outreach and building community.
    - Second director seat remains open; members encouraged to volunteer.
  - **Skills Sought:** Responsiveness, attention to detail, teamwork, event planning, social media, legal/bylaw expertise, and enthusiasm for the profession.
  - **Board Meetings:** Moving toward quarterly in-person retreats, with most business conducted via email/online.
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## Open Discussion & Vision Planning

- **Vision & Mission:**
    - Current mission statement exists, but no clear vision statement; board will solicit member input and consider adopting or adapting ASA's vision.
    - Proposed process: share ASA's mission/vision and poll results via email and Google Doc for open commentary.
  - **Engagement Challenges:**
    - Decline in email/listserv engagement; discussion of supplementing with social media (Instagram, Facebook) and possibly a newsletter.
    - Noted that in-person and phone outreach are more effective for member engagement.
  - **Professional Concerns:**
    - Ongoing threat of scope infringement from other professions (e.g., dry needling by PTs, MDs billing for acupuncture).
    - Advocacy needed for training standards and legislative protection.
  - **Community Building:**
    - Emphasis on face-to-face events, social gatherings, and personal outreach to strengthen the network of Vermont acupuncturists.
    - Members encouraged to propose and host local events with board support.
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## Action Items & Next Steps

- **Recruitment:** Ongoing search for new treasurer and director(s); members asked to consider stepping up or recommending colleagues.
  - **Vision Statement:** Launch online discussion and committee to draft a new vision statement.
  - **Member Benefits:** Continue expanding and publicizing benefits; solicit further suggestions.
  - **Social Engagement:** Launch Instagram, increase Facebook activity, and explore a concise newsletter format.
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- **Advocacy:** Monitor legislative developments, maintain reserves for lobbying, and remain vigilant on scope-of-practice issues.
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**Closing:**

The meeting closed with appreciation for attendees' dedication, especially those traveling long distances. Lunch was served, and informal discussions continued on organizational priorities and community building.