

1Region 1 Roundup
by Ian Randal Strock
Region 1 RVC
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Last month, I talked about the planning for the March AMC meeting, including setting the budget. The first weekend in March, Central New Jersey Mensa held their Snowball Regional Gathering, which I've been attending off and on for a long time. This time, however, it was different due to the fact that Snowball hosted the AMC quarterly meeting. That meant I saw very little of what happened Saturday at the RG, but it was a very productive day.

You can read the mini-minutes of the meeting at <https://www.us.mensa.org/lead/amc/meeting-reports/> (by the time you read this, the full minutes may be available), but I want to make a few comments on the meeting. First, we adopted the budget for the 2019–2020 year, which is basically a break-even budget. There was some consternation before the meeting over the fact that we once again chose to forego the “equity restoration” requirement for this year. I think American Mensa is better served, at this point, by using all our available funds to work toward improving and growing the organization, rather than sequestering a significant chunk of them to pay ourselves back from an old expense. We don't owe money to any outside agency, so carrying this debt on our books, at the moment, is not a horrible burden.

One of the smaller pieces in the budget, one which I hope will have a large impact in the not-too-distant future, is funding the establishment of electronic testing. At the moment, every potential member joins either through submitting prior evidence or by taking the Mensa admission test. Those tests are administered by volunteer proctors, so the scheduling is sometimes rare, or incompatible with the schedules of the prospective members. And there's also the problem that some groups, some proctors have cut back on the amount of testing they do for spurious reasons that don't serve Mensa's best interests. But with electronic testing, we'll be able to offer would-be test-takers the ability to test whenever they prefer, using electronic testing centers (the way I took my NASD licensing exams several years back). Electronic testing may make the test-taking experience more impersonal, but it will make test-taking much easier, more responsive to the needs of our not-yet-members. I hope it results in more people qualifying to join, and then joining.

A significant portion of the AMC meeting was in executive session, meaning I can't discuss it, except to point you at the statement the AMC made about it. The full text of that statement is in the mini-minutes, but to boil it down, American Mensa has expelled a member. This is the second time we've had to do so since I joined the AMC, and the seventh time in the history of American Mensa.

The now-former member, as you'll see from the statement, was accused of “engaging in conduct that endangered the emotional health” of other members, and “engaging in uninvited and/or unwanted touching of a member or members in inappropriate ways.” The Hearings Committee found no mitigating factors, and thus recommended the member's expulsion.

I think this case heralds a new era for American Mensa. Specifically—and most directly noticeable to the longer-term members such as myself—accepting or ignoring behavior that is beyond the pale will no longer occur. Where once we made excuses for inappropriate touching, invasion of personal space, or other activities that were, if not acceptable, at least ignored, we will no longer ignore, accept, or make excuses for this behavior. It's time for all of us to pay attention to our actions not only as we imagine them to be, but as others perceive them.

Mensa is still, or should be, the warm, welcoming, friendly environment we all joined, where quirkiness is accepted and we feel welcome even though we may not fit in with society as a whole. We are still accepting of people with superior intelligence, with an incredibly wide range of interests, who just don't fit in elsewhere (and also those who do). What we will no longer be accepting of are people who feel Mensa is an environment in which the “meat market” mentality is encouraged.

What does this mean to you, individually? It means you're expected to treat people the way you want to be treated, the way you want your mother to be treated. That's it. Very simple, not terribly onerous. And for the vast majority of us, that means absolutely no change whatsoever. So don't sweat it; just act like a decent human being.

One other minor point from the meeting. This was the sixth AMC meeting I've attended in person since I was elected RVC. All AMC meetings are open: any member may attend (there's even space on the agenda for those members to make comments at the beginning and at the end of the meeting). At my first five AMC meetings, the number of members attending to see what occurred ranged from a handful to none, perhaps a combined total of a dozen. But at March's meeting, there were 32 “plain vanilla” members in the audience, 15 of them from Region 1. I am thrilled to see the interest from our members—especially those from our Region—and I plan to point to those numbers when we plan future meetings. I hope to see more AMC meetings and major events in the northeast.

You're probably reading this toward the end of election season (which runs from the middle of April to the middle of May this year). I urge you to read the candidates' statements in the races for which you can vote (American Mensa Chairman and Second Vice Chairman, and all the International Mensa offices), and the commentary on the bylaws amendments. I also urge you to get your vote in on time. If you have questions on any of them, or are looking for another opinion, I'd be happy to speak with you.

Here is my usual reminder: the newsletters (and calendars) from your nearby local groups are available to you on the Mensa web site (from the main us.mensa.org web site, pull down the “Read” tab and click on “Local Group newsletters”). And I urge you to share your events with those surrounding groups' calendar editors. Keep up to date with the latest goings on in the region in Region 1's Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188180494045/>

Upcoming Region 1 Regional Gatherings:

Mid-Hudson Mensa's Games Day: (May 4) at the Quality Inn & Suites in Fishkill, New York. For more info, contact Bill Hughes at bill@blueskyballoons.com.

Boston Mensa's Cape Cod Mini-RG: (May 10–12) in Dennis Port, Massachusetts. For more info, see <https://cape.bostonmensa.org/>.

Maine Mensa's Mini-RG: (May 31–June 2) in Portland, Maine. For more info, see <https://mainemensawordpress.com/>.

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Glossary:

AMC: American Mensa Committee, the national board of directors

RVC: Regional Vice Chairman, a member of the AMC with responsibility for a specific region of American Mensa

Region 1: The northeast region of American Mensa, comprising New England, Northern New Jersey, and most of New York

AG: American Mensa's once-a-year five-day Annual Gathering, featuring the Annual Business Meeting, more than a hundred speakers, and more than a thousand Mensans.

RG: Regional Gathering: a weekend-long get-together hosted by a local group featuring speakers, games, events, and more with 100–400 of your closest friends you haven't met yet.

ExCom: Executive Committee, in some groups known as Board of Directors: the members who have volunteered and been elected to take care of the day-to-day business of operation a local group. The local group version of the AMC.

LocSec: Local Secretary, aka president: the elected leader of a local group (the name comes from our British roots)

SIGHT: the Service of Information, Guidance and Hospitality to Travelers
(<https://www.us.mensa.org/connect/sight/>)

YM: Young Mensan: teenaged members and those younger

YAM: Young Adult Mensan: members in their 20s and 30s