

## **Future AAMA Conferences**

The past two years have been extraordinarily challenging for both AAMA member companies and staff alike. AAMA leadership and staff are again exploring options to reduce the time commitment and cost of conference attendance for members.

Many of you are aware that conference contracts must be signed at least two years in advance to secure properties with appropriate meeting space, sleeping rooms, room rates, location and quality of service and accommodations. The contracts include a minimum commitment to the number of guest rooms, and falling short of the minimum room commitment results in an onerous attrition fee. Over the past few conferences, this attrition fee ranged from \$30,000 to \$80,000. Attaining the room night commitment also triggers the waiver of all of the meeting room fees.

AAMA would have incurred these exorbitant attrition fees, were it not for a subsequent negotiation option to book another conference at the same site within the next two years. While these sites may not have been the first choice of our Sites Committee, they are preferable to the payment of the excessive attrition fees, particularly in this economic environment.

The declining conference attendance not only dictated some of our future site selections, it has prompted exploring cost effective means for ensuring that as many attendees as possible stay on the conference property. We understand that many conference attendees seek the lowest hotel rate, sometimes staying off site and commuting to the conference each day. Those who choose to stay at offsite hotels receive the benefits of the conference facilities, yet do not contribute to the necessary commitments that allow AAMA to forego the cost of the common meeting space.

First and foremost, AAMA is seeking lower and more competitive room rates at mid-range properties that are in closer proximity to airports and/or public transportation. And secondly, a \$200 facilities usage fee will be enacted for those who attend conferences, but elect not to stay at the conference host hotel. This usage fee will commence with the 2010 Annual Conference, to be held in Palm Springs in mid February. Any number of nights reserved at the conference hotel qualifies for waiver of the facilities usage fee.

Additionally, member concern over the continuing geographic imbalance of AAMA National Conferences was expressed at the Sites Committee meeting in Las Vegas. AAMA strives to locate winter conferences in warm climates and rotate equally between the Eastern and Western regions of the U.S. Since 2000, the East-West rotation was skewed by 60% of the conferences held in the Western U.S.

Unfortunately, this trend will continue for the next two years, as we work through the rebookings at the Western sites prompted by attrition fee avoidance mentioned earlier in this notice. The AAMA meetings staff is constantly reviewing and renegotiating contracts for all future conferences to reduce the risk of attrition and secure more properties located in the Eastern United States. Please understand that AAMA conference contractual commitments must be balanced with the financial stewardship of association assets.

One of our primary objectives for 2010 is to evaluate and streamline the conference schedule and reporting structure. We hope to announce the results of that effort shortly.

If you have any questions or concerns about the information provided in this notice, please contact Rich Walker (AAMA President & CEO) at [rwalker@aamanet.org](mailto:rwalker@aamanet.org) or (330) 242-1916 or Florence Nicolici (AAMA Meetings Manager) at [fnicolici@aamanet.org](mailto:fnicolici@aamanet.org) or (847) 303-5859, ext. 231.