



## *New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League*

Minutes  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Nashua Regional  
Sheraton Hotel, Nashua, NH  
Saturday, June 24, 2023

### Attendance

**Officers:** Curtis Barton, President; Mark Oettinger, Vice President; Joe Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary

**Unit Representatives:** EMBA- Paul Harris, Brenda Montague, CMBA- Denise Bahosh; CBA- Peter Marcus, Michael Wavada; RIBA- Susan Miguel; NHBA- William Kennedy; VBA- Steve Ackerman; MBA- Daniel Morgenstern; WMBA- Peter Samsel

**Invited Guests:** Mark Aquino, Regional Director; Sally Kirtley, Tournament Manager; David Metcalf, Tournament Advisor; Gary Peterson, Webmaster; Neil Montague, Internet Advisor; Bart Bussink, NAP/GNT Coordinator      Absent: Jack Mahoney, Past President, Dean Panagopoulos

**Call to Order-** President Barton called the meeting to order at 5:49 PM.

### **President's Opening Remarks**

The new Executive Director of the ACBL is a breath of fresh air. Thirteen of the twenty-five District Presidents showed up at our meeting. She will be fine. Our website people are also doing fine. Tuesday we had a meeting. I loved the picture of Albany just 145 miles away.

This District is back. We won't reach the 2019 numbers but by Wednesday, we had. Apparently, issues with this hotel will mean that we will not return, because of costs. There is a lot we have to do. I do not denigrate the issues, but we are beginning to turn the corner. We have a great team.

**Secretary's Report** – Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting, Presidential Regional, Southbridge, MA, February 10, 2023– Carolyn Weiser

A motion was made to accept the minutes as amended.

### **Financial Reports - Joseph Brouillard**

#### Treasurer's Report

The Statement of Financial Position shows that we are doing OK. Working Capital is down to \$48,637. The Grass Roots Fund is down to \$10,101. Because of covid, we had no tournaments and we have little earned no Grass Roots money over the last few years. Our Fidelity account was up \$5792 by May 31. June saw an additional increase of \$2,000. Out total assets stand at \$135,763. We spent \$40,000 on the NABC last year.

The Operating Income Statement shows a net loss to date of \$2,449. There hasn't been a final accounting for the GNTs. There is \$16,000 in NAP stipends outstanding. The GNT fund needs between \$4-5,000 between now and our meeting in Warwick. We have current net income loss of \$2,449. Right now, they are on-line. We had an \$87.00 loss on the Royal STaC.

(G. Peterson) Has everyone paid?

(J. Brouillard) Everyone has paid.

### **Tournament Manager's Report - Sally Kirtley**

This tournament is running at 75% of our pre-covid numbers. We should do OK. The Presidential Regional had a small loss of \$835.50. That was not bad considering all the freebees. We spent over \$18,000 compared to the \$12,500 we regularly spend. We are going to spend \$14,000 here.

Update – Tournament sites and contracts

The schedule for upcoming tournaments includes Warwick, Marlboro, and Southbridge for which we have contracts. We have nothing in June of 2024. If we cannot find a site for June, we will do a tournament in February.

(President Barton) This hotel wants \$5,000/per day for the ballroom space, plus money spent on food and beverage. I sent a message to all the unit presidents. NH responded. Sally (Kirtley) checked them all, even an indoor athletic field and a Mal.

General discussion followed about the pros and cons of schools, including food access and air-conditioning. The consensus was that a hotel with a room block is better. (S. Kirtley) All of the post-covid weddings will be done soon. We can work with room requirements. In Southbridge we had to pay for 18 room nights. We go for the lowest number of room nights I can negotiate to get what we need. Here we had over 400 room nights and blew out the number requirement. We cannot sway goodies for room nights here.

General discussion followed. N. Montague discussed Topsfield Fairgrounds, but there is no associated hotel. There is an additional hall here, as well.

(Pres. Barton) If there is no site in June we will do February and April. Are there any other ideas?

(S. Miguel) There might be college sites. Holy Cross rents out.

General discussion continued. President Barton added we have used the convention center in Manchester. Smuggler's Notch was suggested. It was noted that we tried the Burlington Sheraton in 2006 and it was an economic failure.

(VP Oettinger) It would be appreciated if there was something in the North.

B. Montague mentioned Springfield. S. Kirtley stated that she wanted a lot of money. The possible site in CBA wants \$7,000 a day. President Barton added that at casinos we can only have Monday through Friday. Most colleges are too small and there are no hotels in driving distance.

### **Tournament/Scheduling Committee Report – Mark Oettinger**

This tournament is a success. We have 76% of 2019 attendance, which is terrific. All the work in the I/N area, and in getting pro-teams to come, have made a big difference.

Our schedule includes Warwick that will run from Tuesday through Saturday. Marlboro will also be Tuesday through Saturday. Southbridge will be Wednesday

through Sunday. For 2024 the Tournament Committee is open-minded. We want to wait and see how the various locations and schedules work. We recommended four tournaments in 2024. April, August and November are set. We will schedule either February or June depending on site availability. February has weather considerations, but it is a long time between November and April tournaments.

(S. Kirtley) There will be a one-day conflict with Gatlinburg. I asked to move the dates. Gatlinburg is not the draw it used to be. I will continue to try to move the date, but the overlap is only 1 day.

The return to face-to-face bridge has been a challenge to the schedule to accommodate teams, pairs every day, I/N, Novice. Superflight teams as well as Bridgefest. It has been challenging.

The ACBL would like to do on-line events at regionals. This would reduce the number of face-to-face tables. If we run a Tuesday through Saturday schedule, we could potentially run an on-line event on the odd day. The ACBL wants the money. The general consensus of the committee was not to do on-line, but to keep our options open.

The GNTs and NAPs will stay on line for a while.

Night games at regionals are getting smaller and smaller. The committee discussed possible events, including social bridge, social events, speedball, and others.

The Committee suggests that after every regional the President should send out a letter to the members recapping the event and including the next schedule. It would be desirable for the schedule for the 2<sup>nd</sup> future regional also to be available. We have schedules for the rest of 2023, though the hotels are not set.

(M. Wavada) Why work on a set schedule. We should hold a tournament, then analyze the results, and then set the schedule.

(S. Miguel) We finished the Warwick schedule today based on what worked here. We have a boilerplate schedule on the ACBL website. It gives the dates but the specifics of the schedule are not set until closer to the event,

(VP Oettinger) The players want the dates. We can set the final events closer to the event.

(Pres. Barton) Warwick is 5-days and we can't have a 6<sup>th</sup>. We cannot set a schedule for every tournament.

(S. Miguel) We are considering a Zip KO in Warwick in the evening. It would be a dollar to play every round. If you lose you leave.

(Pres. Barton) We will try things and if they work we will do them again.

(G. Peterson) Compliments to Sue (Miguel). Bridgefest is an amazing event. The attendance has been fantastic.

(S. Miguel) It is a team effort. We did have Denise and Carolyn to get things done.

### **Regional Director's Report – Mark Aquino**

The last six months have been extremely. I was privileged to be part of the search committee working to replace the ACBL Executive Director. It was challenging and rewarding as well as exhausting to be part of that group. We had many highly talented people from within and outside the bridge world, both men and women. We eventually secured the talented Bronia Jenkins who is dynamic and enthusiastic. She hit the ground running. She worked to build a staff. The Director of Bridge Operations, Marketing, Financial Management, General Counsel and others are no longer there. There is a lot to

be done. She is already living in Memphis. We lost one of the top candidates because of that requirement. I am very pleased.

Expect to see a plethora of marketing incentives to try to build our membership. The membership reached about 160,000 with an average age of 74. It dropped to 130,000 during the last 18 months. Bronia envisions many sub-committees including the NAP/GNT- on-line and NABC planning. We have lost our shirts at the NABCs.

Paul Cuneo, RD from Houston, stepped up to be temporary CEO until we found a new CEO. He did a lot of work with the hotels, etc. to cut our losses.

Regarding Providence, there was an issue with the Conference Center. We can't predict attendance 4-5 years ahead. We are cautiously optimistic. We have reason to be. We will see what the next six months to a year have in store.

(VP Oettinger) I saw the data. April had more members than we had in March. It looked as if we have turned the corner. Is the trend continuing?

(RD Aquino) The membership turnaround doesn't happen by accident. There are many initiatives. Many continue to function. Until we change the demographics and start getting members from the 40-50 year old bracket, we have a long way to go.

Organizationally, we are still in the transition phase. Starting next year there will be 13 Regional Directors. We are still trying to determine the role of the Regional Directors Advisory Council, the District Presidents Council, the Convention Committee, etc. We are reviewing them all and trying to find a balance.

(D. Morgenstern) The new convention card is terrible.

(RD Aquino) P. Marcus and I sit on the C & C committee, whose chairs are Tom Carmicle and Danny Fink.

(S. Miguel) I have had an opportunity to work with Bronia. She is willing to try new ideas and if they do not work, she will drop it.

(Pres. Barton) In every Bulletin there are at least three letters saying drop the new convention card.

(D. Metcalf) There is a group working on a Convention Card light.

(M. Aquino) We have big problems with the IT department.

(W. Kennedy) Are the old convention cards still usable?

General discussion regarding the convention card followed.

### **Old Business**

Weiss-Bertoni Award- Mike Wavada

The Weiss-Bertoni award will be given at the BoD meeting on Sunday.

### **New Business**

Nomination/Election Committee Report - Brenda Montague

The slate is "semi-finished" as it is not done until it is announced at the Board of Delegates meeting on Sunday.

Bart Bussink, NAP/GNT Coordinator

The NAP/GNT were relatively well attended on-line, especially the flights B & C. Sue (Miguel) did a great job getting them signed up. There were 32 C teams: 26 B teams including some flight C players who were playing up; 11 A teams, including 6 who were playing up; and 11 Champions flight teams, for a total of 80 teams.

(P. Marcus) Two years ago we had 60 teams in flight C. Today with BBO it is hard to find 30 players with less than 500 pts. The creeping point situation causes issues, major issues. We went through the first 8 teams and we could not find a flight C team willing to go to Chicago. We did find 2 B and 2 A. The big issue is BBO. There is feedback from the Championship flight that they would prefer to play face-to-face as soon as possible. For Flight C the ease of accessibility is more important. Flight B is more in that camp. The Championship flight is very vocal about their preference for face-to-face events. The A Flight is too.

The plan is to continue on line for 23 & 24 both in the fall and spring, but players need to express their opinion and have input in the decisions.

(Pres Barton) The plan is for 2024 and 2025 to transition for part of the GNTs and NAPs, especially for A-flight. The consensus is that for B & C on-line is OK. For the Championship flight, no.

(B. Bussink) The stipends for the GNTs are done. It was decided by Zoom. Almost everyone in this room has more experience than I regarding, the stipends. I am open to input. My suggestion is that the NAP qualifying in the fall of 2023 be on-line.

(M. Wavada) Is it possible not to do it that way?

(P. Marcus) No, 2023 is set. For 2024 it is possible. The championship flight wants face-to-face over two weekends. To do this they want shorter matches? There are physical realities. What are we willing to spend on sites and directors? No one doubts that face-to-face is better, but where would be put it over a two day weekend?

(D. Morgenstern) The logistics are a real problem. I would support a second week of the Championship fight in person.

(P. Marcus) It is now over two weekends.

(D. Metcalf) From the players point of view it is difficult to predict if they will need a room.

(RD Aquino) We can discuss this. We need concrete proposals including the cost factors. If someone has a proposal, then we can make a decision.

(J Brouillard) If Bart (Bussink) wants to back face-to-face why are we not giving Bart direction regarding the cheating we seem to hear about?

(Pres. Barton) This came up at the Presidents meeting. People refer to on-line as cheaters bridge.

(S. Miguel) If it goes face-to-face, no one will be playing. This year I put together C teams from all over New England. B had 26. I called and got C players to move up to the B's. Flight A had B's who could have played up.

(P. Marcus) I have a question regarding the Championship teams. For NAPs at all levels it is better for the players and the district. For the Championship flight, they prefer to finish in two days with a round robin on day 1. ½ and ½ or an all-day KO on-line.

Discussion followed.

(B. Bussink) I make a motion For the Championship fight the first of 2 days should be on-line, the last 2, face-to-face, at a sectional or regional.

(RD M. Aquino) That is essentially the USBF model.

(B. Bussink) The number of tables losing at the sectional or regional is less.

(Pres. Barton) Is there a motion? I envision one by Warwick, except I support next year's championship flight to be on-line and the 2<sup>nd</sup> level face-to-face.

(B. Bussink) We should make it a function of the number of teams and where they live.

B. Bussink concurred and was authorized to write the conditions of contest to reflect the decision, for the championship flight. The motion was called and passed without opposition.

(D. Morgenstern) We can see how this goes with the championship flight and then see about A in 2024.

A Motion was made that A, B & C will be on line (no change). The motion passed with 2 opposing.

GNT and NAP status and stipends- 2023 and 2024 - RD M. Aquino and Bart Bussink

(J. Brouillard) Traditionally the NAPs paid a \$2,000 stipend for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place finishers. We (D-25) paid the stipend for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. The GNT stipend gave \$1800 to the first place team that was split 4 or 6 ways. \$1,200 was given the 2<sup>nd</sup> place team. For Chicago, that money would come from the Grass-roots Fund, which will be down to \$10,000 after Chicago. We get 80% of the money that the clubs generate for the Grass-Roots Fund. We (D-25) should consider Grass-Root days at our sectionals. In 2019 we got \$10,000 in Grass-roots money. In 2021 that is was to \$2,800. We won't have the money to provide the subsidies to the winners.

(P. Marcus) For two session at a sectional the MPs are raised from Sectionally rated to Regionally rated. \$7.00 per table goes to the Grass-roots Fund.

(RD Aquino)When the Unit (Club/Regional) gets the sanction, the sponsor would have to designate up to 2-sessions as GRF game(s). The fee is \$2.00 per table. The increase in MPs is significant. We should encourage the sponsors of a sectional to designate session(s) as a Grass-roots event.

(D. Morgenstern) This is a challenge for the Units as they are already losing money.

(S. Miguel) What is the actual cost I dollars? Why should everyone support this when the money goes to the same group of players?

(DD. Aquino) It does go to the same few players. The Winners and 2<sup>nd</sup> place get 2-teams and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> get subsidized. At the national level they get free entry fees for the lower level players.

(S. Miguel) The money from the GRF games goes just to the NAP and GNTs.

(M. Aquino) Yes. We have 32 teams and they don't want to go.

(B. Bussink) There is some pushback as the event may go for 5-days.

(DD. Aquino) That's a good point. We have to plan these better.

(Pres. Barton)The NAP qualifying is at the clubs during June, July and August. There is a fee per table. The finals are at the Spring NABC. The GNT qualifying, by district, is done in the late winter or spring. The finals are held at the summer NABC. We will talk about this in Warwick.

Vaccination Status - President Barton

Confirmation of plans to move to no vaccination status

We are no longer checking vaccination status. We will discuss this at the Board of Delegates meeting. The bottom line is, if you are sick, don't come.

Status of Data Base Transfer- Gary Peterson, Neil Montague, and Steve Ackerman

(P. Marcus) Who own or knows the (website) password(s)?

(D. Morgenstern) Regarding the posting of scores for the on-line GNTs, you can put a link on the District website with to the MBA website, where the scores are available. You can put a link on to the MBA website where the scores are available, if necessary.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Carolyn Weiser, Secretary