



New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes
Executive Committee
Holiday Inn
Mansfield, MA
November 7, 2015

Attendance: Mark Aquino, President; Bob Bertoni, Vice President; Joseph Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Ausra Geaski, Past President
Unit Representatives: David Aronson, Dean Panagopoulos (B, Montague alt.) EMBA; Bruce Emond, CMBA; Donald Brueggemann (A. Clamage alt.), Esther Watstein, CBA; Maureen Fahey, RIBA; Sarah Widhu, NHBA; Wayne Hersey, VBA, Robert Derrah (D. Rock alt.), WMBA

(Absent: Brenda Montague, EMBA; Allan Clamage, CBA; David Rock, WMBA)
Invited Guests: Richard DeMartino, District Director, Helen Pawlowski, Tournament Manager, Peter Marcus DIC, and Marilyn Wells

President's Opening remarks

President Aquino thanked everyone on the Executive Committee for their work and help during his tenure as President. He asked if any of the current members would not be returning in 2016 and Ausra Geaski (CBA) and Bruce Emond (CMBA) stated that they would not.

Secretary's Report - A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held in Warwick, Rhode Island on September 5, 2015, as sent,

Treasurer's Report - Joseph Brouillard

J. Brouillard reported that we, again made a profit in Warwick which continues to be our most successful regional. Tournament income is significantly up as opposed to a considerable loss at the same time last year. Grass-roots receipts are running over \$4,000 below last year. Depending on the finally tally from Mansfield, we might break even.

Our current unrestricted assets are 15,000 greater than last year. A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented.

Tournament Manager's Report - Helen Pawlowski

H. Pawlowski stated that she was concerned with Mansfield, as we did not have this tournament in 2014 because of the conflict with the Providence NABC. We were doing fine until today. All events were up. Saturday was a disaster. We lose \$1,000 for every 25 tables we decline. This is primarily due to the fact that we did not have a Gold Rush event today. This took us from a profit to a loss. President Aquino noted that S. Miguel had told the committee not to have a Gold Rush on Saturday as it conflicted with

her I/N events. How can we do both? H. Pawlowski stated that, after discussions with Peter Marcus and Sue Miguel, they now agree with having the Gold Rush on Saturday. The players in the 299 tend to be new players. That game is important as we try to develop more players from the bottom up. The attendance in the 299er's is lower but they are very new players. Players seem to want to play early in the week. The suggestion is that we make the entire 299er a free play on Saturday. M. Fahey suggested that if we do this there should be a limit at players with less than 50mps. R. DeMartino noted that the 299er room looks empty. H. Pawlowski answered that if you look at the Gold Rush events, there are few in A (500-750) a lot in 0-100 and 200-500. If we get approval for the 2/2/2, this would give them another place to play.

Nashua is locked in until 2016. I will visit the site again to assure that the lighting is taken care of in an acceptable fashion. I am still looking at alternate sites, and will visit the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center.

Mansfield was sold three months ago. Much of the management staff has been replaced including the General Manager, Sales, and Catering Directors. The company plans major renovations, which will begin in two weeks. These would include renovating the guest rooms from the studs out including bathrooms, the ballroom, the restaurant, Wi-Fi accessibility, and the foyer. The water-feature will be gone. We have a contract with a very nice room-rate for 2016. The issue is the future. I would like to negotiate a contract for 2017 and ask for the right of first refusal for 2018. When we see the results of the renovation, we can make a two-year decision.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to sign a contract with the Mansfield Holiday Inn for 2017 and a right of first refusal for 2018.

NAP/GNT sites - Dean Panagopoulos

The GNT with the Rainbow sectional brings in enough hotel rooms that the Sturbridge Host is willing to give us exhibit hall space free. We will continue to hold the GNT there.

The NAP's are a different case. With the qualifying event on Saturday, there is little room pick-up as players are unwilling to commit to a room without knowing if they will qualify. Without this, the hotel will charge us for the exhibit space for \$5,000 per event. The NAP's are a traditional losing event for the District. Hotels want room pickup and Halls want bar service.

I propose that we separate the A from the B & C qualifying. The F-flight would play first at a sectional or club. This would be a "0" sum proposition for the District. Whoever hosts the event would be responsible for all costs and reap any profit from the event. If necessary, I will hold it at the Bridgespot, but would prefer that Unit, in conjunction with their sectional, or another club comes forward. If approved, the availability would be publicized to all Units with sectionals in the operative period and clubs large enough to hold the event. Should more than one entity come forward, the Executive Committee would make the final decision. Rotation among the available Units would be desirable. This would allow "B" flight teams to play up, something that the current schedule does not allow.

Flights "B" and "C" would take place in Mansfield. The "B"s would play a qualifying on Saturday with a final on Sunday. Those who did not qualify could play in the Swiss on Sunday. The "C" flight would play on Sunday. This would dovetail well

with the current Gold Rush schedule on Thursday through Saturday. This should be a win-win for the District, as it would increase room pick-up. General discussion followed. If a Unit expressed interest in hosting the "A" event, the dates for the NAP A would be moved to those dates. The operative period would be approximately from September 15 to November 1. H. Pawlowski reminded the Executive Committee that we are within a year of the event. President Aquino asked that the Executive Committee give D. Panagopoulos the green light to proceed. We would make a final decision on the site in January.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to move the "B" & "C" flight NAP's to Mansfield on Saturday and Sunday of the Master's Region and solicit proposals from Units, in conjunction with a Sectional; and large Clubs, to host the "A" flight NAP.

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Bob Bertoni and Lois DeBlois

We have modified the Nashua Schedule and removed the horizontal Swiss on Tuesday and Wednesday. We will try a 2/2/2 schedule rather than the 3/3 events. This would be a Gold Rush, Mid-flight, and Top Flight. R. Budd asked if the 2/2/2 was legal. R. Bertoni answered that it is on the ACBL website and Gatlinburg held it in 2015 and 2016.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the modifications on the schedule as presented.

The Tournament Committee approved D. Panagopoulos' proposal for the NAP's. We will consider naming and event for the A's on Saturday to try to make it a special event.

The Warwick 2016 schedule was completed. Each of you should have a copy. We have made one change on Saturday changing the open CKO to a bracketed "B" Swiss and a Gold Rush Pairs. H. Pawlowski asked why it was not a 2/2/2 P, Marcus noted that New England players do not want to play in KO's. They all fail. In the last 3 sessions, we lost 80 tables from last time. The numbers who want to play in a KO are too small to make it viable; Swiss is all that will succeed. With Swiss, we get 30-40 tables. Our KO's are 15-20 total, if we are lucky. R. DeMartino added that we should not blame the KO's for the fact that the players do not want to play on the weekends. P. Marcus added that we were 8 tables up Friday. We lost 80 tables on Saturday. The divisions are not set, but an A/Ax Swiss and a bracketed B, not round robin, seems best. D. Aronson asked if there would be enough teams to populate the A/Ax Swiss and P. Marcus answered in the affirmative.

We have removed the horizontal pairs and added a Choice Pairs on the opening day with no separate side game at night. The night games will become a side-game series. Single-session entries will be allowed in the evening sessions.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Warwick 2016 schedule as presented.

The one dollar of the entries for KO's was used to fund the stipends for the GNT Teams. We have had to use NEBC funds for this as the money from our declining KO's is insufficient. I would like to make a proposal that the NEBC fund the GNT winners from the general funds at \$2400 per team. With 4 winners, this would be a \$9600 liability. R. DeMartino noted that up to now the teams have been receiving \$1600. President Aquino stated that we do not know what we will be receiving from the Grass-

roots fund. E. Watstein asked if it could be determined year by year. H. Pawlowski added that we could earmark \$1.00 from all team entries. President Aquino stated that it is the same, as the money will eventually come out of our treasury. Discussion followed.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to provide a stipend of \$2,000 per team to the winners of the GNT's for 2016.

“B’s” Needs Committee Report - Ausra Geaski

ProAm Flyers from Cromwell are available and we need to get them out at our Sectionals and to the clubs. This pro-am targets the south and western portions of the district. We will have the flyers are Newton.

The next issue is the players who graduate from the Gold Rush. We need to educate them about the opportunities that are available with the changes in stratifications. When the ACBL makes the final approval, Mike Wavada will send out a letter to all the players explaining the implications of the new regulations in a “Do You Know” email. We intend to track the players who move over the 750 mark and send a congratulations letter congratulating them on their accomplishment and explain the new stratifications.

The committee has existed for 4 years. It began with two years under Mark Aquino’s leadership getting as many people involved as possible and brainstorming ideas on who we could improve attendance at the Regionals particularly for the B flight players. We developed action items and one by one, these were accomplished.

The committee agreed that there are reasons for the committee to continue but we need a new chair. I have agreed to remain as the chair through Newton, but after that, it is time to pass the baton.

Long Range Planning Report - Dick Budd

Data compiled by Peter Marcus shows that Connecticut players are strongly underrepresented in tournament held in the eastern end of the District and EMBA players show up less for events in Connecticut. Both groups come to sites such as Sturbridge, as well as players from metropolitan New York. There is a well-recognized problem that the hotel at Sturbridge is not up to standard, and there are alternate room sites available. Therefore, one possibility is to find a site in Central Massachusetts with a reasonable hotel and restaurant venue. It is not clear if such a site exists. If such a site is found, we ought to consider moving all or regionals to it over time.

The February tournament in Cromwell frequently has attendance disasters because of inclement weather it also frequently draws New York players. We ought to consider moving this event to August if the schedule can be worked out. Moving the event to August would not conflict with the previous item, or can be done keeping Cromwell.

Many Districts hold their regionals at resort locations, where there are many other attractions to draw players, This would be more expensive in hotel costs, but perhaps we are over-estimating the advantage of cheap hotel rooms in places where nobody really want to be. In order to be possible, it would have to be slightly off-season, as during the short summer, no New England resort will consider giving you group rates or committing most of the hotel for several days, as they sell out anyway. Possible resort regions include Mystic, Rhode Island shore, Newport, southern Vermont, and the Berkshires.

R. DeMartino noted that it is not a good idea to have no regionals from November to April. This was echoed by many other members of the Executive Committee. President Aquino asked that the members of the Executive Committee review and digest these issues and return to it in Newton.

Larry Weiss Award Update: Bob Bertoni

James Rasmussen, as the last New England player to win the award as Frank Hacker has moved permanently to Florida, has agreed to chair the committee.

District Director's Report - Richard DeMartino

I will defer my report until tomorrow at the Board of Delegates meeting.

Old Business

Treasurer J. Brouillard reported that, as requested by the Executive Committee, he had applied for a waiver that would permit him to move NEBC funds into a Fidelity account. The waiver was granted. Our funds will be moved from Bank of America to Fidelity Investments. J. Brouillard will speak to an advisor who will invest the funds in a conservative account that should bring us a much high rate of interest. M. Aquino asked that all necessary signature cards be handled for the transfer from himself to Bob Bertoni as President of the District.

New Business

none

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Carolyn Weiser
Secretary, District 25