

New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes

Board of Delegates

New England Bridge Conference

Mansfield, MA

Sunday, November 11, 2012

Attendance:

Officers: Ausra Geaski, President; Mark Aquino, Vice President; Richard DeMartino, Treasurer & District Director; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Robert Erwin, Past President

Delegates:

EMBA - Unit 108 (17 of 17)

Jane Adams (C. Carlson alt), David Aronson, Murthy Ayyagari, Robert Bertoni, Cilla Borrás, Frank Caine, Don Caplin, Lowell Eubanks (P. Lombardo alt.) Polly Goedicke, (F. Caine alt.) Michael Howard, Don Levy, Brenda Montague, Neil Montague (Mark True alt), Dean Panagopoulos, Adam Parrish, Jan Smola, Marlene Yesley (Tim Hill alt.)

Absent: Carole Carlson, Peter Lombardo, Tim Hill, Mark True

CMBA – Unit 113 2 of 2)

Harris Jacobs, Bruce Emond

Absent: none

CBA – Unit 126 (9 of 12)

Larry Bausher, Phyllis Bausher, Debbie Benner, Allan Clamage, Sandy DeMartino, Joan Martin, Sonja Smith, Joyce Stiefel, Michael Wavada

Absent: Burt Gischner, Janet Gischner, Bill Watson

RIBA – Unit 145 (4 of 4)

Lois DeBlois, Suzanne Erwin, Maureen Fahey (William Shockley alt.) Stan Williams (Joe Brouillard alt.)

Absent: Joe Brouillard, William Shockley

NHBA – Unit 150 (2 of 4)

Wayne Burt, Daniel McGuire

Absent: Bruce Downing, Joe DeGaetano

VBA – Unit 175 (2 of 3)

Frank Hacker, Jay Friedenson (Wayne Hersey alt.)

Absent: Wayne Hersey, Phil Sharpsteen

MBA – Unit 189 (0 of 4)

Absent: Richard Budd, Dottie Kelleher, Allan McRae, (4th yet to be named)

WMBA – Unit 196 (3 of 3)

Robert Derrah, Helen Pawlowski, David Rock

President's Report - Ausra Geaski

President Geaski welcomed the Delegates.

Secretary's Report - Carolyn Weiser

A motion was made and seconded and so voted to approve the Minutes of the Board of Delegates meeting held in Sturbridge, MA on Sunday, June 24, 2012 as sent via email.

Treasurer's Report - Richard DeMartino –

The two year comparison report was passed out. A three year report will be prepared at the end of the year when the results of the last two tournaments are available. Upon request to the Secretary this report will be made available to all delegates.

Financially 2012 has been a difficult year for the district with the main concern being decreased attendance. We had a modest profit last year. This year we suffered a substantial loss. We made a modest profit last year compared to a substantial loss this year. There were 200 less players at the Senior tournament which was held at the same site and same time as last year. D25 has two financial goals: to make a modest amount of money (\$2000 - \$5,000) each year to cover expenses, and to maintain reasonable cash assets. Neither goal was met this year. The cash flow can be quickly corrected by raising table fees an additional \$2.00, but there needs to be a strong focus on increasing attendance for a long term solution. The district did incur some additional expenses with the purchase of new bidding box inserts and rental of electronic Score Pads. All of these expenses must be taken into account, but the issue of lower attendance is still the overriding concern.

Don Levy asked what the arrangements were with the book seller. H. Pawlowski answered that he provides a discount on merchandise and books to the players in lieu of a fee. Details of all expenses will be provided in the Tournament Manager's report. D. Levy asked if the meeting expenses were included in the tournament expenses. They are and have been for many years. D. Levy asked if we make deposits to the bank. H. Pawlowski stated that P. Marcus either gives cash during the tournament or waits and takes out all of the ACBL expenses and then gives a check with the final accounting. Wayne Burt stated that the main problem appears to be the fact that table count is way down. If the table count had stayed the same we would be on the right side with expenses.

The district, also, has to raise money for the support of the Nationals in our National Fund or we will have to cut back on hospitality. Some sites such as San Francisco and Las Vegas do not add funds since these cities attract the players because of their location. Many sites, including New England, have added funding for hospitality to attract players.

M. Yesley asked how the numbers compare over the last 20 years. R. DeMartino answered that he has the complete records from 1997 when he first became treasurer and could produce a comparison chart for 2000 to the present. His presumption is that we are holding our own. New England is in the middle as to other Districts. Financially the West and the Mid-Atlantic are doing better and New England and New York are doing worse.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented.

R. DeMartino continued that when he first became Treasurer 16 years ago he was given a check for \$20,500 and no records. During his term as Treasurer the district made the decision to bond the Treasurer and Tournament Manager and that the Audit Committee would review all finances each year. During the election for the District Director it was stated that if R. DeMartino was elected as District Director he would step down as Treasurer. With his re-election R. DeMartino is resigning as Treasurer for the district. He will prepare the detailed end of the year financials and work with the new Treasurer to assure a smooth transition.

President Geaski expressed the thanks of the District and asked for a round of applause for Rich for his years of service as Treasurer.

Frank Caine asked if we can get a comparison list of players who attended the tournaments in 2011 and 2012 so the district could follow up with them to ask why they have not returned. Rich DeMartino answered that the Executive Committee has asked for this list which will be prepared. Until the district can find out why it is losing players it will continue to suffer losses.

President Geaski added that Peter Marcus has agreed to produce these lists. Mark Aquino, as Chair of the Tournament Committee, will put together a committee to decide how to best use this information. Allan Clamage added that the Annual Audit and bonding has been added to the bylaws.

District Director's Report- R. DeMartino –

R. DeMartino will continue to ask for BOD input on matters that will be coming up for discussion at the ACBL Board meetings. The ACBL Board has accomplished less this year than in the last 12 years. This needs to be corrected. There have not been enough motions which help to generate discussion and make the Board more effective.

There is a motion to change the policy on cell phones at National events. Currently they cannot be carried into the playing area. Enforcement is very difficult. The change would allow cell phones to be kept on the person but they must be kept off and out of sight. The penalty remains the same if they are on, ring, or are in sight. I intend to vote for this change.

Currently if a director plays in a STaC game they are not allowed to win overall awards though they can receive section awards. Originally this seemed to be a good idea. I have been reminded, however, that in some areas a playing director is needed to fill out a game. I intend to vote for the change.

The ACBL intends to introduce a new event the "Super Regional" at each National for players with less than 10,000 points. When you introduce the 0-10,000 game I think we will have smaller games. With those players removed from the major events the lower strats may also drop out. The promoters of these events think that they will attract more players. Some feel that they will ruin other events. I intend to vote against them and against giving platinum points. B. Bertoni suggested that it be tried at one tournament.

Rich thanked Mark Aquino for being GNT Coordinator during his whole term as District Director and worked diligently to improve the event. Dean Panagopoulos has agreed to become the new GNT/NAP Coordinator. There is discussion that finishing the GNT in one weekend would be best. The C-flight is already one day. A poll of the A-flight was 60-40 to finish in one weekend. The Superflight was 58-42% to do the same. Both the semi and final games would be completed on the same day.

Tournament Manager's Report - Helen Pawlowski

The financials were made available to any members of the Board of Delegates who wished a copy. There was a small loss at Warwick this year as compared with a profit last year even though table count was up 36 tables. The cost of rooms and hospitality, which were up over \$2000, and the \$2560 for the National fund together accounted for the loss. Director fees were also up particularly in the area of Tournament Assistants. As the staff ages and retires replacements need to be brought along. They begin as Tournament Assistants but cannot contribute at the same rate as experienced directors. B. Montague asked about the expense in 2011 for the lighting in the tent. H. Pawlowski answered that this was covered by a grant.

Tournament Committee Report - Mark Aquino

M. Aquino recognized Polly Goedicke for her many years of volunteer work in the district. We always say we need more volunteers and no one over the last 20 years has been a better example of a volunteer than Polly both at the District and Unit level. She has always been willing to do whatever is needed to be done and go the extra mile. She has been nominated to the Goodwill Committee.

After discussion of the issue of lower attendance at the regionals it was noted that we need to focus more on the B-flight players. The Gold-Rush events have brought in the C-flight players and the Flight A players take care of themselves. The tournaments are losing the players in the middle- those between 750 and 3000. We need to find a way to bring them back and reintroduce their excitement into the game. M. Aquino will be spearheading an effort to discuss how to bring Flight B players back to the regionals. Anyone who is interested in participating in such a group should contact Mark. Helen Pawlowski, Peter Marcus and Dave Rock have been creative in their thinking to find new ways to attract all players to our events but even more ideas are needed. The game schedule has been changed for the starting times and consolidating events. The EC will assess the impact of these changes on attendance.

In 2014 the Master's Regional has been cancelled since it would be too close to the Nationals. Instead a "Super Gold-Rush weekend is planned to be held around the NAP's that would be similar to the Rainbow weekend held with the GNTs. The Super Gold Rush weekend would be for players with 0-2000 masterpoints. It would be open to any player, not just District 25, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The B

and C flight NAP's would both be one-day events on Sunday. The A flight would still be two days- Saturday and Sunday. The full schedule will be available on the web.

The largest group of players in District 25 are those with under 300 points. We need to find ways to help them continue to develop their skills and interest in bridge long after they become Life Masters. Jane Adams added that Flight B players find it difficult to find a game they would like to play in. R. DeMartino added that the Gold Rush was a brilliant idea but we failed to realize that when the players get over 750 points there is no place to go. The A flight players are still coming but the B-flight players are leaving. For the short term we need to keep the gold rush but we must meet the challenge of the 0-3000 players. M. Aquino stated that everyone wants to win but we should not just give away points but strive to improve. Sandy DeMartino asked where is the place for the A flight players who play like B-flight. H. Pawlowski noted that at Cromwell there will be only one 2-session pairs game or 1 2-session team game each day. By consolidating the number of events there may be a larger turnout for each event.

Scheduling Committee Report – David Rock

The new tournament schedule which will start in Cromwell will be more simplified with fewer events. All of the main events will be at 10 & 2:30 with a side game in the evening. The players have voted with their feet that they prefer the earlier start time and fewer events. The same schedule is planned at all regionals. Two surveys taken at the Senior Regional showed a strong 1/3 - 2/3 split in support of the 10 & 2:30 times.

Nominating Committee: David Rock

This is a bi-election year with nominations just for President and Vice-President. The Nominating Committee met in June and September and nominated Ausra Geaski as President and Mark Aquino as Vice President. The Committee was mindful that there might be a vacancy for Vice President due to the election for District Director. In June potential replacements were identified for either Mark Aquino as Vice-president or Richard DeMartino as Treasurer if either resigned. Unit Representatives were asked to return to their Units and see if there were candidates interested in either position. The Committee met again in September and only one candidate was suggested for Treasurer- Sonja Smith. D. Rock met with Allan Clamage regarding the Bylaws. As there are more than 6 months in Richard DeMartino's term as Treasurer the Executive Committee had to appoint an interim Treasurer. The final election would take place at a Special Meeting of the Board of Delegates to be held at the earliest appropriate time which would be Cromwell. The Executive Committee would like to hold the election via email if the Bylaws allow. Wayne Burt asked if the same 45 day notice would be followed. Murthy Ayyagari questioned if this schedule as proposed would allow alternate candidates to be brought forward. Allan Clamage answered that there would be enough time and suggested that anyone interested go to the website where the procedure is spelled out in the Bylaws. Candidates must submit their names with signatures from 3 different units. B. Bertoni added that he can provide a means for voting via email. A timeline for the election will be sent out to the BOD members.

A motion was made that the Secretary cast a ballot for the whole for Ausra Geaski as President and Mark Aquino as Vice-President which was seconded and so voted.

D. Rock asked for approval for the appointment of Sonja Smith as interim Treasurer. A show of hands indicated approval.

Nationals – H. Pawlowski

There was a wonderful response to Ausra's notice on the website for volunteers. We were especially pleased with the number from Rhode Island for the chairmanships of committees that require local knowledge. Most of the chairs have been selected. The Visitors Bureau has been very supportive and some of the committees that were required in Boston will not be necessary as a result. The Visitors Bureau will man the Information Desk. The kick off meeting for the Chairs will be held in Cromwell and a preliminary budget will be completed by Sturbridge. The ACBL has yet to give us their table count estimate and preliminary reimbursement figures. K. Benjamin affirmed that this is typical and that a budget 18 months out

is realistic. Thanks to all who stepped up as Chairs. We will be looking for many volunteers as the time gets closer.

Old Business

Nashua site - H. Pawlowski

Negotiations began this Friday with the Raddison. One-hundred ten guest rooms have been completed. By 2014 when we intend to be there all the renovations should be done. The contract will be finalized next week. The Summer Regional will be in Sturbridge in 2013 and move to Nashua in 2014 & 15. The Executive Committee has discussed the possibility of a Regional farther in the north in Vermont or Maine. If anyone has any suggestions as to site, please let Helen know. The Masters will not be held in Mansfield in 2014 due to the Nationals but will be back in 2015. After that we could make a one-year move. Wayne Burt asked for clarification that the Summer Regional would move to Nashua and that the intention was to keep it there. H. Pawlowski confirmed that it was the Master's that would move not the Summer Regional.

We are in transition with the GNT's and NAP's. There are no good alternate locations. The upcoming GNT's will be in Sturbridge on January 26-27 following Rye as usual. We will be leaving Sturbridge for the Summer but we have the January and October dates and have 2014 for the Super Gold Rush.

Attendance at Regionals – A. Geaski

President Geaski reaffirmed previous comments that our key focus needs to be finding ways to increase the attendance at D25 regionals. The BOD members are the eyes and ears of the Units. It is important for every delegate to talk to players in their Unit and provide the Executive Committee and BOD members with feedback. We need suggestions on how to improve our tournaments that would bring players back. Helen and Peter have continued to suggest and try creative solutions but that we need to work together to provide tournaments that will be both fun and competitive to all levels of players.

New Business:

Youth Bridge – Adam Parrish

In 2011 EMBA started a Bridge in Schools program with the goal of teaching Middle School age students how to play bridge. We initially were able to start programs in 4-5 middle schools and one high school. We concluded the year with a "city-wide" tournament. We learned a great deal our first year with little support from the ACBL or anyone else. We have since become a 501-C3 Non-profit organization known as New England Youth Bridge. We are totally separate from our Unit and donations are tax exempt. We would like to expand our program to other Units in the District. The greatest hurdle is getting into the schools. This works best if we have a personal contact. The program is free to the schools. We will provide the Curriculum and train the teachers. Teachers can get credit for taking the training course on line. Please let me or Murthy Ayyagari know if you are interested or check our website: NEYB.com. Our goal is to get students playing. We have a 1 day Program licensed from Patty Tucker of Atlanta. This is a 5-6 hour seminar that can also be given to adults as part of an enrichment program. This is free for anyone in New England.

A motion was made and seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:45.

Respectfully submitted:
Carolyn Weiser
Secretary, District 25