

New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes **Executive Committee** Cromwell, 2014 February 15, 2014

Attendance:

Officers: Mark Aquino, President; David Rock, Vice President; Don Levy, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Ausra Geaski, Past President

Unit Representatives: EMBA: David Aronson, Dean Panagopoulos; CBA: Allan Clamage, Esther Watstein; RIBA: Lois DeBlois; NHBA: Wayne Burt; MBA: Dick Budd; WMBA: Robert Derrah

Invited Guests: Richard DeMartino, District Director; Joseph Brouillard, Co-chair Providence NABC ; Helen Pawlowski, Tournament Manager/Co-chair Providence NABC, Bob Bertoni, Chair Scheduling & Website (note: Peter Marcus available by phone if needed)

Absent: CMBA: Bruce Emond; VBA: Wayne Hersey

President Aquino opened the meeting at 6:00 PM. He thanked the "B"s Needs committee, especially Ausra Geaski, Chair; Helen Pawlowski, Sandy DeMartino; as well as Tournament Chair, David Rock and Sonja Smith, who, with the committee, developed and implemented new initiatives that created a friendly and inviting environment at this tournament. We will experience a financial loss, but this could be the beginning of long-term success. Again, congratulations to all who helped. Overall, the hospitality was excellent.

District Director, Richard DeMartino informed us that we would be the recipients of a \$30,000 Charity Grant. I applaud Charity Chair, Phyllis Bausher, who has already contacted the Units. We will try to tie this in to the Nationals and announce the recipients at the Providence NABC.

Secretary's Report - Minutes, Executive Committee meeting, Newton, MA, January 4, 2014 Carolyn Weiser

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee from Newton, MA of January 4, 2014. So voted.

Tournament Committee Report - David Rock

D. Rock reported that the weather has been a major issue here at Cromwell on many occasions. Because of the potential for storms and bad weather in February, the Tournament Committee considered the possibility of moving this tournament to another time slot later in the year. The best compromise appears to be the last week in March, which is frequently the week after the Spring Nationals. H. Pawlowski added that the numbers for room pickup support this. We had very good projected room pickup. Wednesday was up 23%. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday we lost over 200 tables, all snow related, particularly as it affected the commuters. Last year was dismal as we were down 175 tables due to frequent predictions of ice, particularly in the mornings when the players would be traveling. D. Rock continued that the Tournament Committee discussed this and voted to recommend that we move this tournament to March, starting in 2014. H. Pawlowski added that we have a contract with the hotel through 2017 so this would be only a date change. They cannot commit to the availability of the new dates in 2015, but are OK with the following years. We will have to change the days from Wednesday through Monday to Tuesday through Sunday as we will lose the Monday holiday. The new dates for 2016, 2017, and 2018 are open and we have them on hold. E. Watstein asked where the flyers were for this tournament. H. Pawlowski reminded her that we discontinued mailing them to clubs several years ago due to the expense. They were made available to the Board of Delegates members, as usual, who were asked to take copies back to their Units and

clubs. They were also available at the NAP's and at Newton. J. Brouillard sent out over 34,000 emails and the ACBL did an email blast. A. Clamage noted that starting just after the Spring Nationals seems unwise. H. Pawlowski noted that most New England players go to east coast Nationals. In 2018 the Nationals are in Philadelphia and this may be an issue. We are trying to get out of the weather. There will still be one month between Cromwell and the Seniors. There are limited spaced into which we can move. D. Rock added that we do not normally have 200-300 NE players at a Nationals. The reasons for moving the tournament are purely financial. President Aquino stated that he would like to give people time to digest this change. There will be an Executive Committee meeting at the Seniors this year and we should try to have this resolved then. H. Pawlowski will circulate the pertinent information.

“B’s” Needs Committee Report - Ausra Geaski

President Aquino alluded to some of the changes at this tournament that were suggested by the “B”s Needs Committee or other activities that stemmed from those changes intended to make the tournament more player friendly. The Hospitality Table, which was new at the tournament, was a success. We began taking photos and B. Derrah worked with M. Wavada to log in the winners. When the tournament is over they will go on the website. Putting them in the Bulletin would probably not be useful as this would increase the workload and price as we would be many more pages. H. Pawlowski put out a Suggestion Box and it was well received. The Leader Board went up and many commented on it. We are taking a long-term look at having a Pro-Am tournament. B. Bertoni is leading this effort and looking in to when we could hold it and by whom it would be organized. It would be an evening event. Joyce Stiefel and D. Panagopoulos looked into the cost and logistics of having a pro in for a lecture series or event to generate interest especially with newcomers. We are looking into what would make sense and would be sustainable and adaptable for our future tournaments. Ginny Iannini, the Chair of the Senior Regional, is on board with the new initiatives, and will continue them at the Cape. Wayne Burt and B’s Needs Committee member Sarah Widhu will work on the initiatives in Nashua. We intend to develop a manual of all of these initiatives so that others can continue them and we will not lose momentum. Anyone is encouraged to join the group and attend the B’s Needs Committee meetings that are held at the regionals.

Scheduling Committee Report – Bob Bertoni

Regarding the Pro-Am, our committee discussed this and would like to ask the Executive Committee for provisional approval of this event that would start in Cromwell in 2015. We might create a Charity Pro/Am, the charity to be determined. We do not want the “B”s needs Committee to spend a lot of time only to have the Executive Committee decline to support it. We would like to pick a Saturday night. It would be a non-gold point event opposite the Zip KO or a side game.

A motion was made and seconded to support the possibility of having a Pro/Am event.

The people most likely to be affected by this are the better players who would have just been to the Nationals who would be asked to participate in a Pro/Am a week later. B. Bertoni added that those players will always be at the Nationals and many are addicted to coming here. H. Pawlowski added that there is no decision yet to link it would Cromwell. B. Bertoni added that the earliest date would be Cromwell but any regional would be OK. E. Watstein stated that at the CBA meeting both life-masters and non-life masters were opposed. The motion was called and passed.

The Committee would like to continue the sticker project, which will need some money. H. Pawlowski stated that this would be under \$300 for each tournament.

D. Panagopoulos made a motion that the Executive Committee authorize up to \$500 to support enhanced hospitality and in support of these initiatives. The motion was seconded. There was no discussion and the motion was called and passed .

Website Committee - Bob Bertoni Report on “Fast Results”

The objective of adding Fast Results is to make a better player experience and to be able to get results to players faster. We examined several alternatives. H. Pawlowski paved the way with the Directors, who are on-board. Barry Rogoff did the serious work and presented three alternatives that were reviewed. R. DeMartino called Jay Whipple, (District Director of District 9) the developer of Fast Results. Several districts are already using it. It would be imbedded into our website. Everyone who registers would get an email alert when the results were ready. It would be rebranded and put on our website. We would keep the Daily Bulletin results and overalls. J. Whipple has asked that in return we contribute \$100 to the ACBL Educational Fund and pass out his material on how to use it. We would also like to propose Barry Rogoff as the "Fast Results" coordinator. Barry would work with Mike Wavada.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the proposal for Fast Results and having B. Rogoff as Coordinator.

E. Watstein asked if we would get help if there was a problem. B. Bertoni noted that the process appears seamless and J. Whipple was asked that on the phone today and he said yes. R. DeMartino added that Jay is passionate about this and can be counted on for support. Other Districts are now using it without issue. There might be some small charges for some of the Directors who might have to pay small internet charges. H. Pawlowski has already gone to the directors on this and they are very supportive. We could initiate this at the Cape if it is approved tonight. J. Whipple answered all of our concerns. I would ask that we try it and if it is not successful we can always go back to the old way. D. Panagopoulos cautioned not to oversell the time it might take. It is always better to undersell and over deliver. B. Bertoni said that he would install a "drop box" in each of the director's computers and the files would be transferred there. The motion was called and passed without opposition to be commenced at the Senior Regional.

Treasurer's Report - Don Levy

The Koehane Individual experienced a loss which was \$3,306.90 higher than last year. Mandated liabilities of \$520 for the GNT and \$938.00 for the National Fund contributions were part of this loss. The total loss to date for this year is over \$7,000. Our Bank of American operating account has a balance is over \$3,000 less than that of last year at the same time. This includes encumbered funds for the GNT's and NABC.

M. Aquino has been added as an alternate signer for checks. I am in discussion with Linda Robinson regarding the Taxes and the 2014 Audit.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. President Aquino added that L. Robinson was very impressive as Treasurer for the 2009 NABC. She is very professional and an audit specialist. She has sent in a skeleton overview of the process and the committee is being formed. She is working to define and assure both legal and fiscal responsibility. D. Aronson will be part of the committee.

District Director's Report - Richard DeMartino

The progress on ACBL Score seems to be falling behind schedule and we still are having problems with Tourney Trax. The Board is actively working on providing a transition for players with more than 750 masterpoints. There is also the issue of how to count subordinate games. We need to develop a way to count tables without counting the huge number of tables in Gold Rush games. A reasonably sized pair game should be given the same award no matter where it is held and independent of whether or not there is a Gold Rush game that day. We are looking at adding a third stratum in the top flight for players with 750+ to some number of masterpoints. The plan is to get this done by the end of the year and ready for January 2015. This will help establish a transition out of the Gold Rush games. We also need to adjust the AX

The issue of the number of special games that can be held at clubs is again being discussed. Since 2004 we have special games that count the same as sectionals. From 2004 to 2010 we had triple point games. In 2010 the number of special games was reduced by 65%. There is some movement

toward increasing the special game awards, but this would hurt sectionals. I meet with the CBA club owners and asked Dean Panagopoulos and Dave Metcalf, and the consensus is that players do not want to pay extra money. I do not intend to support more special game awards. D. Budd stated that players from clubs that give huge awards so not come to sectionals. W. Burt countered that at the Great Bay Bridge Club we had special games 52 weeks of the year. The ACBL goes out of its way to push specific special games for individual months. I think that the local charities deserve more. A show of hands indicated that the Executive Committee did not support adding more special games.

NABC Providence- J Brouillard

We are starting phase 1 of our email campaign. We are establishing a valid email list and sending out flyers for the Providence Nationals. 81,000 were sent. Information regarding the tournament is on the ACBL website and there are links to our website. There were 2000 hits on the You-tube video. Linda Ahrens and I are going to Dallas. H. Pawlowski and Sally Kirtley are going to Las Vegas. The Registration and Sectional Top Prizes have been ordered. We have added a woman's scoop neck polo shirt to our promotional items. R. DeMartino asked why they were not on sale here. J. Brouillard answered that he would try tomorrow. The Waterfire Contract is ready. It will be from dusk to 10 PM on the first Saturday, with Sunday as a rain date. We have contacted the Providence Performing Arts Center about discounted tickets. They will be presenting Circ de Holiday next year. They will provide a 10% discount on the tickets. We decided to avoid any events for which we would have to shoulder the liability, by purchasing tickets before hand, such as with bus tours. We will provide the information. R. DeMartino voiced his concern that historically the Nationals run great tours. H. Pawlowski added that the possible tours will be listed on our website. R. DeMartino added that the rest of the country needs to know why they should go to Providence and what it has to offer. J. Brouillard answered that Wendy had her doubts about Waterfire, but now that she has attended one, she sings their praises. We need to let all the Units know that this is a District event. RIBA has contributed \$2,000. All the units may not be able to match that amount, but they should be encouraged to try to help pay for Waterfire. If a Unit contributes \$2,000, one person from that Unit would be eligible to participate in the torch parade. We have not had any feedback yet. E. Watstein asked if Units could contribute less. Of course they can. They might consider sponsoring an event. The cost is \$250 for a single session, \$500 for a two-session event and \$1,000 for a 4-session event. H. Pawlowski, P. Marcus and I will meet to decide when it would be best to run an additional NABC Fund Game. President Aquino stated that we would like to have a clear understanding of the financial position of the NABC and how they plan to spend the money as well as the potential issues, liabilities and sponsors for the April meeting. J. Brouillard stated that they have a detailed spreadsheet.

Tournament Manager's Report - Helen Pawlowski

The table count for the Individual was down 30%. Though we had snow issues, there was also some snow in 2013. Our revenue declined by 22% but our ACBL cost did too, thanks to Peter Marcus. If you look at the revenue received from the head director, you will see that most of the losses were table count driven. This was our first year of the coffee and something every morning, which upped the hospitality costs.

Regarding the GNT's D. Panagopoulos stated that we are looking into the possibility of moving the GNT's out of January. Many of the snowbirds are away. We would like to put it where more players would be available. This year it is in March. We must finish by the end of June as the winners will play in the Summer Nationals and need time to make their plans. In Practice we need to finish it by the end of April. We are looking into the availability of Sturbridge for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. There may be a conflict with the Host Hotel in 2015. The new brackets are Superflight/ A: 0-6000; B: 0-2500. We should add the use of the Grass-roots Fund money to the April agenda.

Old Business

D. Rock noted that the question of when to stop contributing to the National Fund was on the Action Item list for this meeting. President Aquino stated that we will take this up in April.

New Business

By-law Review- Allan Clamage

There was one item that was never passed from the last round. I would also like to see an amendment that would require the Board of Delegates to have a 2/3 vote in order to amend approve an amendment. We had an issue that was unforeseen regarding the filling of vacant seats of officers that gave us three treasurers in 6 weeks. This does not sense. I would like to recommend that we go back to the old way; that the Executive Committee makes an interim appointment to fulfill the term. We have no rules for the appointment of first and second alternates to the District Director. We should also reconsider term limits and investigate having all the officers elected for two years. There is some language, in a few cases, that needs to be clarified. President Aquino stated that he does not wish to have a return to the controversy of the last time. A. Clamage continued that he would like to see the rolls and responsibilities of the Audit and Bylaw committees in the handbook as well as who appoints them. It was noted that no other District has a Tournament Manager just like ours. In the recent lawsuit, H. Pawlowski was served. This is inappropriate. All procedures, rolls and responsibilities in the handbook, including those of the Tournament Manager, should be clarified and periodically reviewed by the Executive Committee and updated.

As there was no further new business, a motion was made, seconded and so vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:40.

Respectfully submitted:

Carolyn Weiser
Secretary - District 25