



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

Minutes
Executive Committee Meeting
Nashua, NH
June 27, 2016

Attendees:

Robert Bertoni, President; Lois DeBlois, Vice President; Joseph Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Mark Aquino, Past President & District Director
Unit Representatives: David Aronson, Brenda Montague, EMBA; Shirley Wagner, CMBA; Allan Clamage, Esther Watstein, CBA; Maureen Fahey, RIBA; Barry Rogoff (Sarah Widhu alt.) NHBA; Wayne Hersey, VBA; Dick Budd, MBA; Robert Derrah (David Rock alt.), WMBA;

Absent: Sarah Widhu, NHBA; David Rock, WMBA

Invited Guests: Robert Hartman, ACBL CEO, Helen Pawlowski, Tournament Manager; Peter Marcus, DIC; Marilyn Wells, Director, Mike Wavada, Communications Committee Chair; Linda Robinson, Audit Committee Chair

Call to Order- President's Opening Remarks - President Robert Bertoni

President Bertoni called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. He reported that as of now the tournament is up 103 ½ tables. The location is paying off. The hotel made improvements in the lighting. The issue of the closed Men's room was out of their control and due to structural issues, involving the chlorine from the health club pool below that is under review by their insurance company. This will not be a problem next year. The new schedule that Lois DeBlois worked out is going well. There were many reasons for the decline in attendance that the District has been experiencing. We analyzed the conditions and it has taken time to make changes. We tried to pay attention to the players and they have responded with the feet. We appreciate your help and support with this process. We continue to have challenges. We will continue to employ the methods we have been using to analyses and respond to the needs of the players. We have done well but we can still do better, With your help, we will do this. We can bring these tournaments back to when they were exciting. We have lowered the number of boards, which the majority of players like. The top players do not, and we have kept the number the same in the top of the 2-2-2.

Secretary's Report - A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on February 13, 2016 in Cromwell, CT as sent.

Treasurer's Report - Joseph Brouillard

The Operating income Statement shows a loss of just over \$5,000, but the tournament here should be a big help. We received \$6,343 from the ACBL from Grass-roots Fund games held in our district. This brings our net loss for the period to only \$24. This is a bit misleading, as we will be paying out \$8,000 in GNT subsidies this month. Our NABC Fund money had done very well until the market took a dive this week. Even

with this, we have accrued income of \$372, which compares well to our total interest of under \$25 last year.

Audit Committee Report - Linda Robinson

Everyone has received a copy of the report. The Committee notes that though District 25's cash management and financial tournament management practices are of the highest quality. Both H. Pawlowski and J. Brouillard should be complimented. The Executive Committee should take particular notice of the recommendations.

I have been privileged to serve District 25 as Chair of the Audit Committee for the past three cycles. However, during that time I have also been asked repeatedly to work with the Officers and to advise on financial matters in a fashion that is incompatible with the independence required of the audit function. I feel that I can best serve the District by continuing to work directly on financial policy and that someone else should be appointed to serve as Audit Committee Chair. D. Aronson stated that the District owes a debt of gratitude to L. Robinson for taking over and regularizing the process. Her high standards and expertise will be difficult to duplicate. D. Budd made a motion that a "Thank you gift, not to exceed \$50 be given to L. Robinson for her work. The motion was seconded and so approved.

Tournament Manager's Report - Helen Pawlowski

The results of the GNT's showed that the table count was up 22 ½ tables which with some changes in hospitality, brought our losses from \$3,900 last year to only \$900. This \$3,000 improvement was due to a combination of increased table count and reduced costs.

As of this date we have signed contracts with Sturbridge for April 13-15 in 2018. We have asked L. Gillespie, our Tournament Coordinator, to look into possibilities for 2019 and 2020. We hope that an accommodation with NHBA can be made that will allow us to maintain April dates.

The Senior Regional was down 40 tables, but this was not due to the Regional games but to a decline in the Sectional and I/N portions. Profits were down due to the decline in table count.

Here we are already up 103 tables from last year. We have seen the benefit of the 2/2/2 schedule. Normally we have a drop on the weekend but we are went up. We were shocked at the increase. It was great. I would like to negotiate for the next two year with this property. They have offered to increase the room rate only \$2 for 2017 and 18. This would mean a room rate to the players of only \$99 and provide us with Com-Rooms at a rate of one per 25. There was a bit of attrition in the room block. We have over 600 rooms booked. It appears that the players are making reservations as they do with the NABC's and then cancelling the nights that they do not want. We lost 10% from the sign-up total. We will work with the management to establish penalties if cancellations are made within a certain period. The Hotel builds in a 6% attrition rate, but we had 9%.. R. Budd noted that the hotels still has some issues with the restaurant. H. Pawlowski asked that any issues be brought to her attention immediately when there is something she can do. H. Pawlowski continued that the hotel has solved the lighting as well as they can. They used LED bulbs. In a ballroom of this type, there will always be dark corners. The problem with the men's room was due to the chlorine in the pool and will not be an

issue in the future. H. Pawlowski asked for Executive Committee approval to sign a contract for 2017 and 2018 with a right of first refusal for 2019 and 2020. An exit list will be given to the hotel. The management is new and they are working to bring the hotel service to Raddison standards. President Bertoni added that after last year, he was not in favor on continuing with this location. We have built up the location and feel that the hotel is working very hard to accommodate us. It is our only northern venue. He recommended that the contract negotiations be approved. A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the request of the tournament manager to negotiate with the hotel for this location for the next two years with the right of refusal for two more.

D. Director M. Aquino noted that currently there are initiatives to go to electronics and away from face to face tournaments as it becomes more and more difficult to make these tournaments profitable. Not the least is the reluctance to play evening sessions. It is an ongoing challenge. It is important for the ACBL to see how it can help, support and foster local regionals.

A. Clamage asked if there was going to be any upgrading in Sturbridge. H. Pawlowski answered that there were no such plans. The cooperation uses the revenues from Sturbridge to support its other locations. President Bertoni added that H. Pawlowski is doing a great job.

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Lois DeBlois

The Tournament Scheduling Committee met in Hyannis. A survey was sent to the CBA asking for feedback regarding moving the Cromwell Regional to Mohegan Sun. E. Watstein and her board were a great help. The CBA Board was not in favor of moving the Regional and strongly supported the city of Cromwell continuing as the host city and in addition being prominent on the flyers. Mike Wavada suggested we use President's Day as our theme and the committee settled on calling the tournament the Presidential Regional at Cromwell. E. Watstein stated that the Board had supported the inclusion of the name of the State on the flyers. President Bertoni observed that the goal was not to identify a regional by state, but rather brand it memorably. The Cromwell schedule was modified by removing choice pairs and replacing with flighted pairs. We will offer open and gold rush pairs on Saturday, leaving the evening open for the Pro-Am. Everyone was asked to review the schedule provided and get back to the committee with any comments. President Bertoni added that though many are wedded to the Friday night KO, it was moved to a Saturday/Sunday format beginning in Cromwell. The Friday night KO at this regional was up 50%. District Director M. Aquino stated that the Pro-Ams are the best thing that we do and that we should continue them. L. DeBlois stated that we need someone to be in charge in Warwick. A. Geake has agreed to be the point person in Cromwell.

We brought the question of a Prize Day in Mansfield to the Executive Committee (Cromwell) and L. DeBlois was asked to prepare a proposal to present in Nashua. The choices were reviewed by the Committee, which voted that the single color was best. President Bertoni interjected that using last year's figures, we would need between 96 and 126 items. Three-hundred bags should be enough for between 2-3 years. L. DeBlois continued that the price for a single color logo would be \$368. D. Aronson made a motion that the Executive Committee approve the expenditure of \$368 for the purchase

Communication Committee - Mike Wavada

President Bertoni stated that M. Wavada is one of our hardest working people in the District. He has developed targeted emails that are one of the causes of our increased attendance.

M. Wavada continued that one of our goals is to enhance the relations with the Units. We have offered to advertise their events with their flyers if they would put ours out at their sectionals. Presidents of each Unit were asked to let him know, who was the best person in their Unit be designated to receive our flyers.

Many of the emails we receive from the ACBL data base are confidential. We have created our own targeted data bases as well as 20-30 tables including every member of D-25 including their attendance at Sectionals and Regionals and NABC's. Some lists include the whole country. In the future, we want to be able to send emails targeted to specific groups of people who might be interested in attending our Regionals. We currently use Mail Chimp, which costs us .01 per email. The ACBL is offering an email service called Pianola, which does not provide for the targeting that we need or allow me to use our databases. What we are using is working and much more flexible. Mail Chimp allows me to use imbedded images, web pages, tables, and more fonts and colors that the ACBL system provides. Pianola is good for plain text that you want to send end to everyone. Their system, which is currently free, may not be in the future.

President Bertoni stated that the Executive Committee had already approved \$500 per year. This costs us 1 cent per email up to 50,000. M. Wavada does 60-70,000 in a year. If we prepay for \$2,500 we would get 2 million emails and would have no time limit on when we could use them. We get many data back when we use Mail Chimp including click count and an analysis of whom and when they are opened. None of this is available from the ACBL. The national average for opened emails is 9%, with Mike's targeting we are getting an open rate of 60%. D. Budd made a motion that the request for \$2500 for Mail Chimp be approved. We could pay \$900 a year or \$2500 for indefinite use up to 50,000 emails. The motion was seconded and so voted with one abstention.

President Bertoni called on Director Marilyn Wells to discuss the use of 24 boards at this tournament. She deferred to DIC Peter Marcus. He explained that at this tournament we used 24 boards, except in the Flight A- KO and Flight A/X pair events, which used the more traditional numbers. This can cause a problem is a pair comes in late, but this happens rarely. The reaction of the players ranged from positive to none. Most are most used to two session events are used to 24 board games. There were very few comments and what comments there were, were positive. A few players in the open game did feel that it was an issue. There is an additional advantage to this change. It would be possible to change our schedule from 10 & 2:30 to 10 & 2 for pairs games. This would allow the players to be done by 5:00 and actually get home for dinner. The A/X would continue to play at 10:2:30 and they would not have their break until the other had eaten, creating less of a crush. Where this has been done, it was well received. President Bertoni acknowledged that there is some negative feeling by some of the top players. The differential in cost is 2 cents per board. The average players (0-2500) report that they are fatigued. P. Marcus added that we see this change at tournaments that are thriving. Gatlinburg uses 24 boards. District Director M. Aquino stated that he disagreed. He had ½ dozen players come up to him with concerns about not playing 26 boards. President Bertoni answered that the majority of players voted with their feet and came. We need to

deal with reality. L. DeBlois stated that the only complaints she heard was that they did not know in advance. President Bertoni added that nowhere is it written that they are guaranteed 26 boards. S. Wagner stated that this would make it easier for us to encourage players to come when we can tell them that they only will have to play 24 boards. President Bertoni stated that the A players would only have 24 boards in open games. Otherwise they would be guaranteed 26 or more. This affects only mid-flight and open games when not part of a 2/2/2. The top Flight A- KO's and the top flight in flighted events in a 2/2/2 format will play 26 boards or more as appropriate to the movement. All other events will play 24 boards, with the exception that when there is a sitout when the directors will do everything possible to make sure that no one plays 21 or 22 boards. We would like to put a policy in writing for clarity. He asked how many are generally in favor of this policy. He asked for a show of hands as a straw vote. 12 voted in favor, 2 unsure and none against. D. Aronson suggested that this be brought to the Board of Delegates as a motion. A motion was made and seconded that this be brought to the Board of Delegates on Sunday. This was seconded and so voted without dissent.

District Director's Report - Mark Aquino

We have a big meeting coming up in Washington this July. There have been many issues from CT with respect to the Unit Championship and we have been working to resolve it. Don Siegler has been working with Mitch Hodis, the head of IT at ACBL Headquarters. At last notice it has been resolved and D. Siegler sounds happy with the resolution.

I have made some recommendation for some changes for the Summer NABC's that I hope will be approved. Instead of having the various Life Master Pairs all being run simultaneously for 3 days, we would have them staggered so that a player could play up and if knocked out could still play in the lower bracket which would start the next day. The second is a recommendation that the brackets of the Spingolds be changed to have them in line with the GNT's as they are now. I think this would make the finals of the Spingolds even more exciting. It effectively would have the last rounds finish on the same day. 0-2500 would be in the finals playing next to Meckstroth and Rodwell in the same room. This would be similar to the changes we have made here in the GNT's. Currently the championship flight is off by itself. I think it would encourage people to play up and allow the higher players to get to know those of the lower strats. If you have any questions, comment, criticisms or concerns, please let me know.

Robert Hartman- ACBL CEO

I have spoken to more payers here from all flights than I do at most NABC. There were about 25 things that referred to headquarters. Many others were specific to here and I passed them on to Helen.

I have a question for the group. We have a committee of some board members, some player, management, and BOG members looking at restructure our governance at the highest levels. Currently each District sends 6 to governance: 1 District Director and 5 representatives to the Board of Governors. This means that there are 25 Directors. There are also 10 additional members including past presidents that brings the total of the Board of Governors to 135. The

feeling is that it is too many people. We are trying to find a way to slim the groups down and have more cooperation and exchange of discussion between them.

The Board of Governor's Representatives do not attend the District Directors meeting and District Director has ever spoken to the Board of Governors.

I would like to get people's thoughts- to see if this concept makes sense. The draft is to have nine people at the Board of Directors level that are not from specific Districts. They are voted in at large. There would also be some number of District representatives who would be invited to the Board meetings. The Board would be reduced from 25 to 9 and the Board of Governors from 135 to 50. Each District would get 2 reps.. I just wanted to see if you thought that this was a good idea or a bad idea. President Bertoni summed the response up as bad. He added that when you do "at large" representation you create representatives that could all come from one area. The largest area would come to dominate the League. Why should a District Director like ours be asked to withdraw? To make the Districts larger is ever crazier. What would a play from Toronto have in common with the rest of the Mid-west. The plan seems inherently unfair. Leave the Districts alone, they manage themselves now. If you change the makeup of the Districts or change their representation at the ACBL you in effect disenfranchise them. Why would we want to stay in the League? R. Hartman answered that there has been no conversation in the group about changing the Districts- "No slicing or dicing." However, I cannot say that it might not be brought up again. B. Montague commented that there has been a suggestion that the Board of Governors be done away with all together. R. Hartman added that this does not solve this Districts problems. The areas would be the East Coast, Midwest, West Coast and Canada. Your Representative would not come from here. District Director M. Aquino stated that he thought that it was a bad idea. The New England states have long been a cohesive structure and even bringing in New York City or New York or Quebec would not work. They would be too different. It is difficult enough to service the players in an area as diverse as New England. R. Budd suggested that we might include the Maritimes, but that would be a stretch. District Director M. Aquino pointed out that there are some Districts such as D-23 (Los Angeles) that are geographically tiny, which might not be the best idea. Perhaps there could be some. There are some Districts such as D-23 (LA) that are geographically tiny, which might not be the best structure. Perhaps there could be some reconstructing . Those that include 5 states and 3 provinces are already unwieldy. But, this is not what you are talking about.

R. Hartman concluded that if anyone else has any ideas you can grab me after the meeting.

District Director M. Aquino thanked CEO R. Hartman for coming to District 25. We are pleased to have you here.

New Business -

B. Montage reminded all the Unit representatives to the Executive Committee that a representative to the Nomination/Election Committee should have been selected by May 1. Any Unit that has not done so is requested to send in the name of the Representative as soon as possible.

District Director M. Aquino again thanked Robert Hartman for coming to District 25.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:20.

Respectfully submitted:

Carolyn Weiser
Secretary, District 25