



New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes
Executive Committee
Holiday Inn
Mansfield, MA
November 11, 2017

Attendance:

Present:

Robert Bertoni, President; Lois DeBlois, Vice President; Joseph Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Mark Aquino, District Director & Past President

Unit Representatives: EMBA: Robert McCaw, Neil Montague (B. Montague, alt.); CBA: Allan Clamage, Michael Wavada (E. Watstein alt.); RIBA: Paula Najarian; CMBA: Shirley Wagner; NHBA: Sarah Widhu; VBA: Karen Hewitt Randall (W. Hersey alt.); MBA: Jack Mahoney (R. Budd alt); Peter Samsel- WMBA

Invited guests (non-voting) Peter Marcus- Director, Helen Pawlowski, Tournament Manager, Michael Wavada, Communications Chair

Absent: Brenda Montague (EMBA), Esther Watstein (CBA), Wayne Hersey (VBA), Richard Budd (MBA)

President Bertoni called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. He expressed his gratitude to all the members of the Executive Committee for their work and support during the last two years. This last meeting as president is bitter sweet as, for the most part, I enjoyed the time. We accomplished a great deal. The many things I tried to implement were the results of many surveys I took before and during my tenure. I talked to those who were not coming; which is not meant as any offense to you who were already coming. We needed to entice the other players. I asked what there issues were and tried to address them. In the beginning, we concentrated on the B's and C's. We tried to make the tournaments better for them. We pushed for more midflight events and shortened the number of boards. We changed the dynamics when we moved to morning and afternoon with no extended meal break. They were not happy with no break and could only handle 1 or 2 days. This was a different dynamic from the 1 & 7 with the longer dinner break to relax and recoup. For A-flight vs only A-flight it is still 26-27 boards. When A flight plays against C they play fewer boards. We need to make a more concerted effort to have a standby available so that no one plays only 21 boards. For two years we worked on reviving the KO's. We seemed to have success and we will continue into next year. We will have two KO's- Thursday/Friday and Saturday/Sunday. This is a very exciting time for the District. We looked at the decrease in attendance year after year. It was not just one thing. We had to make a series of changes to get out current success. Over the last two years, every Regional has had a year-over-year increase. We are the only District in the ACBL that has seen this. The ACBL is going other way and the changes they wish to implement will not be good for us. Kudo's to Paula Najarian who did an outstanding job getting people to the expert lecture. This is the second year that Sabrina Miles has hosted this event. She has done an exceptional job. Everything was well organized.

Another change we made to the schedule was adding the super-point series. This has added more energy to the tournaments and players are able to play in a real event at 7:30. When the afternoon session is done by 5:30 we have time to play in an evening event. There has been an uptick in A-flight players playing at night. The big reason is that the change in time allows a large enough gap to

eat and come back to play. There were 17 tables last night and the winners received 6.71 mps. The Midflight also has been a great success. "I want to thank you all for your support for me when I tried to make these changes."

Secretary's Report - A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Minutes, Executive Committee meeting held in Warwick, RI on September 2017 as sent.

Treasurer's Report - Joseph Brouillard

We have made a nice turn-a-round in our financial position. We had a profit at the Warwick Regional. We received a distribution from the ACBL in Grassroots money, which almost made up for our expected loss at the Summer Regional in Nashua. We show a small, year-to-date loss. It looks as if we will make a profit here and hopefully, we will end the year in the black. Tournament income was up at the same time last year.

The NABC fund is up. We have done exceptionally well in our investments. Our rate of return is 12.08%.

Our Annual Report to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was filed on October 19, 2017. The deadline was November 1. A motion was made, seconded and so voted to accept the Treasurer's report.

Tournament Manager's Report - Helen Pawlowski

Warwick was up 17 tables. The main issue was expenses. Profit was down. Directors' fees and TA expenses were artificially low last year because Susan Miguel was ill. They were \$2,000 less last year. Caddy expenses were up \$1,500 as a result of their pay increase instituted to make them whole when we determined we needed to give 1099's at the end of the year. Director rooms and hospitality were up. This was due to increased attendance and the fact that the evening games have become legitimate and deserving of hospitality. We needed to treat the players the same regardless of the time of day and morning and afternoon games receive hospitality. Expenses were up and profit was down. President Bertoni added that two players stopped him to thank us for the evening hospitality. M. Wavada asked if the Tournament Manager had any explanation for why attendance fell off in Warwick on the weekend. It was terrific the first 3 days and fell on the weekend. Treasurer Brouillard noted that it has been that way for the last few years. H. Pawlowski added that this tends to be the behavior of the Gold Rush group. The A-flight players don't go home. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Tournament Manager's Report as presented.

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Lois DeBlois

"Personally I want to thank Bob for being my mentor and friend these past two years. He has always been responsive, kind, and helpful. He has done a remarkable job. President Bertoni answered that "You (L. DeBlois) will be a terrific President."

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Lois DeBlois

We keep tweaking the schedule as needed, but will retain the general format. We are changing the pairs from 10:00 and 2:30 to 10:00 and 2:15. The change in the number of boards played allows for this. This change does not affect the A-Flight. At the 2018 Senior's Flighted Pairs will be open/4000/2000. In addition, we have added "Not Your Average Gold Rush," with strats of 1250/675/500 to this two flight event. We feel that with the smaller field at this Regional, this will balance the flights.

The Nashua draft as handed out duplicates last year's schedule with the general changes made during the year. The one big change is to add a second KO in Cromwell and in Nashua on Thursday/Friday. The Monster KO will still be held on Saturday/Sunday. The 2:25 time change for the

second session will begin in Nashua. A question was asked as to why Sue Miguel used the designation AXY instead of ABC. L. DeBlois answered that this is the designation used at the NABC's.

The most important discussion we had last night was the site for the 2018 A-flight NAPs. It looks as if it could be at the Hartford Bridge Club. It is very hard to find a date in the schedule that does not conflict with a sectional, regional, holiday or NABC. We came to the conclusion that January 5-6 was the best choice, not only meeting the ACBL criteria, but allowing for a snow date in the event must be cancelled for weather. A motion was made to approve the 2018 A-Flight NAP for January 2019. The B & C NAP will remain in Mansfield. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved.

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District Director's Report - Mark Aquino

Things have been busy these last few months. The new CEO is a prolific individual. He has a lot of “Big Ideas” that he is very aggressively pursuing. He shared his “10 Bid Ideas,” each of which is a composite of many ideas. He seems to be very fixed in his positions on certain matters. It seems like he has been listening to certain folks exclusively. He has 128 mps in his 50 years of playing bridge. He is very hard working and is trying to do a good job. He has an undergraduate degree in Physics and Astronomy from Amherst College and he is a Baker Scholar from the Harvard Business School. I will be leaving for the meeting in San Diego a week from tomorrow. I will be in a better position after that to judge and will let you know. I continue to work as part of the Tournament Taskforce, the Volunteer Taskforce and the “Bridge Committee”, which deals with a variety of topics. One of his most controversial ideas is that he wants to eliminate sectionals. He also wants to have Regionals-at-Clubs. These ideas are counterproductive, I believe, to what we are trying to do here. All of us work hard to promote tournaments because we feel they generate excitement.

Effective January 1, 2018, Frank Merblum will be the NAP/GNT Coordinator replacing Bill Braucher. Frank is from Connecticut, which will help add a broader geographical balance. He is very experienced in NAP and GNT competitions and is one of the most successful players ever in these events. He has won at the NAP “A” at the national level on two separate occasions and has finished second twice. He has also won the GNT Championship Flight. Where he will need help with the B & C flights.

I have been asked by ACBL President, Bob Heller, to share how District 25 has been able to raise enthusiasm in the GNTs, especially Flight C. No other District in the ACBL has been able to duplicate our success in the GNT Flight C. A. Clamage stated that he personally is against Regionals-at-Clubs. “I believe that they are counter-productive to what we have been doing over the years.” District Director Aquino answered that he is advocating taking a step back and looking at the different forms of competition to see how they can complement each other without conflict.

We need to revamp the masterpoint formulas totally for on-line vs face-to-face events. It's great to help allow players who cannot travel to earn gold point needed to help them advance to Life Master, but I am greatly concerned that awarding high amounts of gold points will most definitely hurt attendance at our face-to-face Regionals

President Bertoni interjected that he would like to use this as a Segway to have a vote of the Executive Committee that would reflect our views on Regionals-at-Clubs. I think we are agreed that Regionals-at-Clubs would kill our Regionals. I would like a motion District Director Aquino interrupted to say, “this group cannot direct how I vote.” A heated discussion followed between President Bertoni and District Director Aquino. The Secretary interjected that in the past the District Direct had always asked for a sense of the Board of Delegates and Executive Committee on important matters. A vote of the Executive Committee could be used to bolster District Director Aquino's position. R. McCaw made an analogy to having a City Council pass a motion on a matter that affected a city and send it to their state Senator who was voting on the matter. President Bertoni added that

District Director Aquino had put him in touch with the CEO. When contacted he seemed very fixed in his views. He seemed to push his own ideas while asking for my views. He does not appear to understand the issue. M. Wavada asked about the material that had been provided (by the ACBL), He asked for an explanation of the term “pools” regarding Regionals-at-clubs. He added that he could not figure out where the money was going. President Bertoni asked for a show of hands of those who were against Regionals-at-Clubs”. The response was unanimous (against). A. Clamage stated that, “in the old days being a Life Master was a real achievement. Today its value has been diminished. This would do it even more so.”

Webmaster’s/ Communication’s Committee Reports - Michael Wavada

The Communications Committee tried to come up with some ideas on how to make our viewpoint heard concerning Regionals at Clubs experiment, but there was no final decision. We will continue to work on it. President Bertoni stated that over the past two years, no one has worked harder than Mike Wavada. He always does what is asked and more. A big factor in our success has been his diligence with the development of databases and his continual contact with the players.

Old Business

Update on Danbury - President Bertoni

A recap of the Danbury issue with District 3 was sent to everyone. After a lengthy discussion, the Executive Committee overwhelmingly voted to deny D-3 the use of Danbury after 2019. I offered an intermediate solution that they be allowed to use Danbury as long as it was not schedule within 30 days of any D-25 event. If it overlapped we would charge them a fee of \$150 per day. This was rejected by the Executive Committee. The original question was called and by a vote of 14-2 passed denying D-3 the use of Danbury. D-3 then suggested that they would pay us 7% of net revenue. This was rejected. We calculated the probable damage to District 25 close to \$1,400. The counter proposal was that starting in 2018 they would pay us \$3.00 for every D-25 player who attended. We would advertise their tournament. I went to Danbury with the intention of meeting with President Wasik but was not invited to speak to anyone else. Their counter proposal was that they would pay a flat \$250 a year until they could find a suitable site inside D-3. I would like a motion to accept the proposal that D-3 pay us \$250 starting in 2019. A. Clamage stated that the Executive Committee is being asked to make a decision without all the facts. We need to investigate the number of players who when to Danbury but did not go to Warwick or Mansfield. I am sure if we took time and established a committee we could come up with a better proposal. H. Pawlowski countered that the whole situation was created a lot of bad feeling and ill will. They have made a token gesture to appease us. President Bertoni continued that though the \$250 is less than justified, I think we should accept it and put this matter to an end. W. Burt asked if we could amend this if we find it is not in our best interest. President Bertoni answered that that is not the case. P. Najarian commented that thought all the points are valid, we should accept the proposal and move on. District Director Aquino added that the changes that the ACBL is proposing might make all of this moot. P. Najarian made a motion that we accept the offer from D-2 for an annual payment of \$250 starting in 2019. The motion was seconded. There was not additional discussion. The motion was carried.

President Bertoni stated that we are OK financially. A lot of our profit has been based on false economy. The Caddy pay went up to balance out the fact that they will not receive 1099s and will have to pay taxes. The cost of directors is going up \$1,400 to \$1,500 per tournament. You must remember that Peter Marcus is free. All he accepts is his room and a per diem. Our costs would be much high if he accepted his real salary. We need more money. Peter Marcus likes \$16.00 and H. Pawlowski less. I (President Bertoni) prefer \$15.00 as this is a psychological barrier. If we make the suggested changes in the Daily Bulletin, this will save us \$1,200 to \$1,500 per day. Less than \$50 are taken daily from the 200 we print. H. Pawlowski added that we need to raise fees in preparation for the NABC in 2021. R. McCaw made a motion that table fees be raise to \$15.00 per session. Comparable changes would be made to the I/N as well. M. Aquino stated the Financial Committee directed a drop by 15% in

Hospitality costs. This was never done. H. Pawlowski countered that table count has gone up. D.D. Aquino continued that it was directed. President Bertoni added that we can budget better if we increase the table fees to \$15.00. H. Pawlowski continued that she has contractual obligations. J. Brouillard added that he is not in favor of raising prices. In the last two years we have had two disasters, financially. If we effectively manage our expenses there is no reason to raise rates. In 2015 our assets were \$145,000 and now they are \$173,000. P. Najarian added that she is also against it as long as some are playing 22 vs 24 boards. More money for decreased boards leaves a bad taste. I think the way is to cut expenses. What can we do about the ratio of tables per director? President Bertoni answered that is a function of the shape and number of rooms used. We cannot lock in a specific ratio. H. Pawlowski continued that we hire the Directors to run the events who know how many we need. This is based on past experience and projected attendance. We cannot micromanage this. If the night games continue to grow we may need two directors. We have to trust the expertise of the Head Director on staffing. I do not think we should focus on hospitality and directors when we have had no price increase since 2012. Our revenue had increased because of table count, not the price per session. Costs have increased. N. Montague stated that he did not see any reason to raise fees at this tie. D.D. Aquino stated that it is on the record that hospitality was to decrease by 10%. If we are being fiscally responsible we can have it both ways. The Board made a recommendation that there be a reduction by 10% in hospitality. It is Helen's responsibility to find a way to do it. If there is a reason why it can't be adhered to, H. Pawlowski should have come back and explained. L. DeBlois added that though the point is well taken, we are a different District than we were then. If we don't need to raise money we shouldn't. I was in favor of this just as a protection. Maybe we should revisit this. President Bertoni countered that we are spending more money to make the players happy.

R. McCaw said, "I know I can in late but I would like an explanation of the raise in caddy fees. President Bertoni answered that the caddy fee was raised to cover the taxes they would now have to pay due to their getting 1099s. We have 11 directors. P. Marcus receives only a per diem and hotel room. If he were being paid a salary it would \$2,500 to \$3,000 per tournament would be \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year. A. Clamage asked if we could pay the caddies in a similar manner as we pay the TAs, through an agency. President Bertoni answered that this would cost us even more, as the agency would charge us a fee on top of the actual cost. A motion was made to table the discussion with the intention of investigating the possibilities more and talk about the Bulletin. The motion was seconded. D.D. Aquino suggested that a committee be formed to investigate this and report at the next meeting. R. McCaw commented that if we did not have P. Marcus working at a minimal rate we would need an additional \$15,000 a year. There is more than one way to address this. We can raise fees or cut costs. President Bertoni replied that the long-term reality is that we need to find an additional \$10,000. The difference between \$14.00 and \$15.00 is small. If you don't think we need the money, it can wait. The motion to table the discussion until the next meeting was called. The vote was to table the discussion.

District Director- Mark Aquino

One of the nicest part of my job is when I can give out money a local charity. This year I had \$1,000 to give out. Last year it was given to two charities City Mission of Boston and Emmaus of Haverhill. As they only received \$500 each last year, I have decided to give them another \$500 each this year.

New Business

Vice President DeBlois announced after many years of service to the District, Dick Budd has decided to resign as District Recorder. Neil Montague will be the new District Recorder in 2018.

M. Wavada commented that he played with Bob (Bertoni) in Danbury. From his observations we can say that we have excellent, well-run tournaments here in D-25.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Carolyn Weiser
Secretary, D-25