



New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes
Executive Committee Meeting
Radisson Hotel
Nashua, NH
June 22, 2019

Officers:

Lois DeBlois, President; Jack Mahoney, Vice President; Joseph Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Robert Bertoni, Past President & District Director
Unit Representatives: EMBA- Brenda. Montague , Curtis Barton; CMBA- Shirley Wagner, (C. Seager alt.); CBA- Michael Wavada, Sonja Smith; RIBA - Marshall Williams; NHBA - Sarah Widhu; VBA - Karen Randle, (Wayne Hersey alt.); MBA - Daniel Morgenstern; WMBA - Peter Samsel

Absent - CMBA -Carole Seager

Invited Guests (non-voting)- Sally Kirtley, Tournament Manager; Peter Marcus, David Metcalf

President DeBlois called the meeting to order at 5:42 PM. She thanked Sarah Widhu for her work on the Executive Committee during her tenure as President of the New Hampshire Bridge Association.

Secretary's Report - As there were no questions, the Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting held at the Keohane Senior Regional in Falmouth, MA on April 21, 2019 were accepted as sent.

Treasurer's Report - Joseph Brouillard

The Statement of Financial Positions shows that our current assets. The number that concerns me is the Working Capital that stands at \$35,256 as a result of all the losses we have incurred over the last few years. The number was \$61,000 a few years ago. Should this number drop below \$30,000 we would be in a very serious position. The Current Liability of \$1,020 is due to the sale of entrée fees that have yet to be redeemed. As our vouchers do not expire, we will continue to carry them as an Unearned Liability until they are redeemed.

The Operating Income Statements shows that where the working capital has gone. We have lost \$25,700 in Falmouth alone, over the past 3 years.

Our investments are keeping us alive. Our Fidelity Investments are up slightly at the end of May. We had a great June. Grass-Roots money is down after the GNAT stipends have been paid. It was also used to defray some of the costs of the Gnats held in Sturbridge in conjunction with the Gold Mine Regional. In total, tournament income is down \$6,611, year to date. Total losses for 2019 to date are \$11,554. We need to do something about this. We keep losing money. We just raised the entry fees to no avail. We are at a critical juncture.

(M. Williams) How is this tournament doing?

We are down 80 tables. We incurred a loss of \$6288 here last year.

(B. Bertoni) Most of our losses are not tied to entries.

(J. Brouillard) We just raised entry fees. P. Marcus charges us \$1.00 a year. He saves us between \$10,000 and \$12,000 a year.

(K. Randle) Our net loss is better than last year.

(J. Brouillard) It is still \$11,000. Sally did a great job handling hospitality. Our loss was still close to \$6,000, which was about half that of the previous year. We cut two directors.

(B. Bertoni) How are voucher sales going?

(J. Brouillard) (They are going) Very well. We did incur charges of \$951 in credit card bank service charges. We may have to split the fee next year. We may have to charge the players 1.5% extra and we will pick up the other 1.5% in credit card processing fees.

(M. Wavada) What's wrong. We are down 80 tables.

(J. Brouillard) We have an aging population. We have 120 less people here.

(S. Kirtley) We are doing better than other areas.

(J. Mahoney) The Albany Regional was smaller than many sectionals. It was dreadful.

(M. Wavada) It is very difficult to get people from Connecticut to come up here.

B. Montague made a motion that the Treasurer's report be accepted as presented. The motion was seconded (J. Mahoney) and so voted.

(D. Morgenstern) Is the \$5.00 lunch chit really necessary.

(President DeBlois) To cut what is traditional is problematic. The players are used to it.

(J. Mahoney) We have to do something. We have to face reality.

(President DeBlois) The players are under the impression that we make oodles of money. If we take it away, right after we have raised the fees. They will think that we are trying to increase our coffers. We need to share the good and the bad.

(S. Kirtley) Here we have to spend a minimum of \$12,500. We did a good job explaining this to the delegates. We need to do it again.

(S. Kirtley) I am doing what I can. I try to pull hospitality to the minimum we have to spend. The number of tables we rent has to be dropped.

(S. Widhu) We got the flyers late. They did not arrive until June.

(J. Mahoney) All clubs close to our tournaments should be blanketed with flyers.

(President DeBlois) They were provided at the Cape.

(S. Widhu) I was not there.

(D. Morgenstern) Lunch costs \$20.00 per table.

(M. Wavada) I move to eliminate the chits at Warwick.

(B. Bertoni) We would do just the morning hospitality.

(J. Mahoney) I think we should wait until Cromwell. Start the new year with a new format. We could let the players know why we have to do it. Does it cost less for a sweet roll than a bagel?

(S. Kirtley) I will look into doing half-and-half. We can't cut everything. I have to spend a specified amount of money. Here it is \$12,500.

(J. Mahoney) Could you write out the different amounts for the different tournaments?

(M. Wavada) I withdraw my motion.

(S. Kirtley) The contracts are set for next year. I can try, but our room count is going down. I cannot ask the hotels to reduce our required expenditures and also reduce our room block.

(J. Mahoney) I make a motion to discontinue chits (for lunch on Sunday) starting in Cromwell. We explain to the players in the bulletin in Warwick and Mansfield.

(J. Brouillard) we can tell the Board of Delegates at the meeting tomorrow and in Mansfield. The motion was seconded.

(S. Kirtley) what happens to the hotels where the chits count toward are required minimum hospitality purchases?

The motion was called. The motion passed 11 yeas and 1 nea.

Tournament Manager's Report - Sally Kirtley

Gold Mine Regional

We lost \$120 at the Gold Mine Regional. This was primarily due to the fact that we had no idea how many players would come and we were overstaffed and over committed to hospitality. Next year this tournament should make money.

Presidential Regional Cromwell lost approximately \$1,000, which was less than the previous year.

Senior Regional

We still lost money at Falmouth. I will continue to work on containing costs. Next year we will be in Hyannis at the Hyannis Resort and Conference Center. The space is great. What concerns me is that the rooms and the playing site are miles apart. This is difficult for those who have issues with stairs. We have reserved 20 handicapped rooms. The Cape is full of old buildings. For those who wish one, the hotel will assist players in renting scooters. The staff at the conference center was accommodating and very helpful.

(J. Mahoney) Are you still looking in central Massachusetts for the spring of 2021?

(S. Kirtley) Southbridge is not available until 2022. They do not have enough space.

(J. Brouillard) If cannot afford to lose money at the Cape again. We have lost almost \$25,000 at the Cape Regionals in the past 3 years.

(R. Bertoni) Can we ask the CBA representatives to talk to their Unit about moving Cromwell. In the past, there has been strong resistance to any alternative location. Would they consider a Sunday through Friday regional at a casino? If they agree to let us look into this, we can proceed. If CBA is not behind a move from Cromwell, we would have difficulty making a new site a success. The hotel in Cromwell is very tired.

(M. Wavada) The biggest reason for not moving the regional is that the Hartford Bridge Club closes for the week. If we moved the regional farther away, they might not close.

This does not mean that there is no solution.

(S. Kirtley) The hotel in Cromwell is in bad shape. As yet, they have not begun to work on the roof. We have contracts there for the next two years. One elevator is still out of order. I'm concerned as the Sales Manager, who has been there for many years, is leaving. I can look into other hotels. We might find one in the Stamford area.

District Director's Report - Robert Bertoni

The Las Vegas meeting is coming up. Nothing has changed regarding the issue of cheaters. I will vote to strip them of their titles and award the titles to the players who came in second.

There is a motion to increase the age for both the Senior and Super Senior designation. There is a counter motion to have the ACBL use the WBA formula, which increases the age minimum one year every two years. The Seniors would move from 60-65 and the Super Seniors would move from 70-75, using the same formula. The average age of the ACBL is 72, so most of this is moot.

There is a motion to roll back the \$20 table fees increase for the Regional events held at NABCs. There has been considerable local committee pushback. For that price, the players can do something else, as there are always local Regionals at lower rates available for those who need red/gold points. I intend to vote to roll the fees back to the current rate.

There is a motion to bump up the 0-99 newcomer awards a little. The increase as presented is not overwhelming, but I will support it.

There are 25 other motions, which are basic which I will put on line for those that are interested at District25director@acbl.org and BobBertoni@acbl.org.

At the last meeting, the Executive Committee voted to give the McDevitt team a 5 year entry fee waiver. It turned out that one of the teams that has won a place dropped out and they became team 2. They will get \$1200 from the District. I ask the Executive Committee to modify the original award from 5 years to two years. The team is in agreement. A motion was made to accept the change in entry fee waivers from 5 to 2 years. The motion was seconded and passed without dissent.

Regarding the Alzheimer's Foundation, I did some research. They rate 3 of 4 stars. 4% of the money raised goes to administration, 19% for fundraising and 76% to charitable work.

The ACBL is continuing with their REACH (Regionals at Clubs) initiative.

The Board voted not to contribute any more money to the Educational Foundation until the required Mission Statement is completed. They said that they would be available in Las Vegas. The Executive Board did an end run to give the Educational Foundation the money from the REACH program. For \$4.40 per table, they will make gold points available at clubs. This breaks the line for the awarding of gold points that was the domain of the Regionals and NABCs. This is not good for anyone. There will be some controversy over this at the meeting.

(M. Wavada) Are the other districts as upset about this as we are?

(R. Bertoni) They do not like the fact that we are losing our special position regarding Gold and Red points. The person who runs the program and developed the software is backing it.

(J. Brouillard) How do they justify refusing us permission when we asked to run our side game at Falmouth as a REACH?

(R. Bertoni) It has been suggested that it would not work.

(C. Barton) Every State employee of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is subject to conflict of interest laws. The ACBL is a non-profit cooperation, incorporated, I believe, in the State of New York.

(R. Bertoni) Ever member filled out a Non-profit form, which states our conflicts of interest.

(C. Barton) Apparently, not everyone is abiding by this. This is very serious.

(R. Bertoni) This is listed, but the Board chooses to ignore it. There will be some changes in the Board at the end of the year. I am not sure what real effect this will have. I see a huge conflict- not a lot of money but a lot of power.

(J. Mahoney) I see this as an arrow shot right at the heart of the Regionals.

(R. Bertoni) In my opinion, there will be an eventual negative effect in the smaller districts.

Old Business- none

New Business-

Documentary - Aces and Knaves

Susan Burt sent a letter to the Executive Committee that I shared with you regarding the movie Aces and Knaves. The cost for showing it is \$1,500. I hear it might be good, but the cost is very high and it is money we do not have to spend.

(R. Bertoni) It might be something that you might consider at the Providence NABC.

(B. Montague) They showed it in New York and it was a sellout. Individuals had to buy tickets.

(M. Williams) I saw it when it showed in Boston. It was not a wonderful movie. It was better than *Doubles and Dummies*. They gave pretty good examples of cheating. I am not sure bridge players would like it but college students might.

(President DeBlois) It will always be available.

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Jack Mahoney

The Expert Panel needed a microphone. C. Weiser's lecture was a sellout. We are working with Sue Miguel and may make this a regular feature.

In Cromwell, Friday will be Expert Day. The lecture and the Panel will be before the first session. Many of the experts are not available on Wednesday.

At the Cape, we ran a KO using the new format. Using the old format, with 8 or less there were only 3 sessions. At the Cape, we used 6 team brackets. It turned out that 4 of the 6 teams got gold. It is not illegal. In fact, the ACBL developed and promoted it for KOs for small numbers of teams. We intend to use it in Warwick. All the brackets will be 5 teams, except the top bracket. The number for that bracket will depend on the number of teams that sign up. We may have to use the old format for the top and 2nd bracket. The rest will be grouped in round robins of 5 or 6 for the full first day. Four will qualify for the 2nd day and will receive gold. We will be paying gold to 80% of the entrants. The ACBL is actually encouraging this. We see it a marketing tool. We are going to call it the Knock-In Knockouts. The proposal also will advertise that if you do not make the second day, you will get a free entry for a session on Friday. This is an experiment. We do not intend to use it on the weekend or with the top bracket. The ACBL may decide it was a

mistake, but we intend to put it on our flyers and on our schedules. Once that is accepted, it cannot be taken away. We can always choose to take it off if it proves not to be a success. I think that it will be wildly successful.

We will schedule a Gold Rush event during the week under the upper event. This will maximize the point awards as the Gold Rush (750 and under) will count toward the total awards. (Pairs with Pairs/ Swiss with Swiss) This is an experiment as we have no model to follow, but it should increase the awards for everyone.

Our big concern is Thursday and Friday in Mansfield. We are not sure where we will put all the teams if the format takes off.

(S. Wagner) Can we tell out NLMs?

(J. Mahoney) Absolutely. This is not insider information. Please get the word out.

(President DeBlois) Because this is now, I would like a show of hands of anyone who has a problem with it.

(J. Brouillard) I think it is a great idea. I am concerned, considering our year to date \$11,500 loss, whether we can afford the free plays.

(S. Wagner) Players are used to just coming to play. We do not expect to get a free play if we lose. Most players are prepared to go home or pay for the 2nd day.

(J. Mahoney) If this increases our attendance by 30% we will break even. We won't be giving away that much. We don't need to do the giveaway. It is just a marketing ploy. We voted to end the vouchers for Sunday lunch. That saves \$20 a table. I think we should give it a chance. If it works, we will make a bundle.

(P. Marcus) The Monster Knockouts cost us \$11,000. The knockouts have been a success since then. We are not obliged to give the free plays. The idea can stand on its own.

(J. Mahoney) For me, this is a desperate measure to makeup our losses.

(M. Miles) Why risk it. The free play won't bring any people in.

(S. Wagner) We are used to knowing that we will have to play the next day.

(D. Metcalf) We would only need to add two new teams, I think, to break even.

(M. Williams) Do you think we will get 20 brackets? 50% will have had no previous experience with KO's. I see players starving for gold points. I am not sure that the free play is necessary. The 2nd day commitment might be different.

(S. Smith) That will be the draw, the chance to advance for 80%.

(B. Bertoni) In my opinion, it should be illegal, but it isn't. I love free but we are giving away gold points. The lower brackets will only get a % of the award in gold. We could consider giving away an entry to the evening super-point series game. That would only cost us the sanction fee. The Friday change in schedule was not brought up at the meeting. A motion was made to change the Wednesday schedule. With the current schedule, the winning Swiss team received 11.9 points and the winning pair received 32 points. The reason for this was that there was no flight under the Swiss. If the Gold Rush (24 teams) were added below, it would push the awards up considerably. I propose that we change the Friday schedule. Currently neither the Swiss nor the Pairs have a strat under them. The NAP begins Saturday. I would like to see teams come to play on Friday.

(P. Marcus) In Mansfield we have changed Wednesday to Flighted Pairs and Flighted Teams, If this works, we won't have enough for a second event. The new KO format is targeted for the Gold Rush players. We will have a relatively small number that do not place in the KO's.

(R. Bertoni) If we bring in more people on Thursday, we will have a number looking for Friday.

(P. Marcus) If you want a flighted event, you can only have pairs or teams. I don't care if you have pairs or teams. You clearly have to limit the number of events.

(D. Metcalf) I am not sure the effect will be as large as you think.

(J. Mahoney) For right now, we need to get the schedule done. Can we agree on just a pairs event on Friday: Open and Gold Rush.

(President DeBlois) Warwick has the same issue. Sue will have to change the Warwick schedule. We cannot do it in print, but the website will be correct.

(J. Mahoney) I make a motion that the Knock-in Knockouts be run without the Free play component. The motion was seconded. The motion passed with 10 voting against the inclusion of the free play provision. We will run flighted pairs on Friday with the Gold Rush below. Wednesday in Mansfield we will run a Gold Rush Swiss under the Swiss and a Gold Rush Pairs under the Pairs.

(P. Marcus) I suggest the strats of 750-1250 and 1750. There is no big masterpoint benefit. Just having something below ups the mps. There is no benefit to splitting on Friday when you just have pairs.

(K. Randle) We should be using the discontinuance of the chits to let the Delegates know how severe our financial condition is. Perhaps it is time to discontinue the flyers and go to electronic flyers only.

(J. Mahoney) It is important to reach out to the clubs near the Regionals.

(President DeBlois) I believe in 100% electronic, but the problem we have is the club owners who won't print for us. The cost to print as needed is nothing compared to the cost of mailing. Mike (Wavada) always sends a copy of the flyer.

(P. Marcus) This doesn't get to those who are new. Flyers to the clubs may not be the best way.

(President DeBlois) The club owners will not post the flyers, promote the Regionals or print the flyers.

(J. Mahoney) I propose that we continue to send flyers to the clubs and should maximize them to the clubs near the tournaments.

(D. Metcalf) I routinely run out of flyers.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:30.

Respectfully submitted, Carolyn Weiser, Secretary, District 25.