



New England Bridge

*Conference of the
American Contract Bridge League*

Minutes
Executive Committee Meeting
Holiday Inn
Mansfield, MA
November 10, 2018

Officers:

Lois DeBlois, President; Jack Mahoney, Vice President; Joseph Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary; Robert Bertoni, Past President

Unit Representatives: EMBA- Neil Montague (B. Montague alt.) Curtis Barton (R. McCaw alt.) ; CMBA- Carol Seager; CBA- Michael Wavada, Sally Kirtley (Esther Watstein alt.) ; RIBA - Paula Najarian; NHBA - Sarah Widhu; VBA -Karen Randle (Wayne Hersey alt.); MBA - Daniel Morgenstern; WMBA -Peter Samsel

Absent - Brenda Montague, Robert McCaw- EMBA, Esther Watstein- CBA, Wayne Hersey - VBA

Invited Guests (non-voting)- Mark Aquino, District Director; Sally Kirtley, Tournament Manager

President's Opening remarks

The meeting was called to order at 6:15. This is Mark's last meeting. For me, he has been a great supporter and mentor. I can't thank him enough. I would like to present this small token of appreciation from the District for everything he has done. I could not be more blessed, if he had to be replaced, that he was replaced by Bob Bertoni.

Secretary's Report - As there were no questions or corrections, the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held at the Ocean State Regional on September 1, 2018 in Warwick, Rhode Island was accepted as sent. A motion was made and seconded and so voted to accept the Secretaries Report as sent.

Treasurer's Report - Joseph Brouillard

The Statement of Financial Position shows that we down. The decline in our working capital concerns me. It dropped \$15,747. This is due to losses at our Regionals. We made money at Warwick, but not as much as last year. The Grass-Roots Fund account is up and the NABC Fund closed at \$100,000. Our total assets have dropped by \$6,595. The Operating Income Statement shows a net loss, which is an increase from last year. Total expenses are up only \$222.00 but our losses are up by \$10,594.

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

President DeBlois commended Tournament Manager Sally Kirtley for the excellent job on her first Regional. Everything was handled beautifully.

Tournament Manager's Report - Sally Kirtley

Summary: Warwick (Ocean State) Regional

Warwick earned a bit less than in 2016 partly due to my salary as trainee. We are close here on table count. Peter Marcus is not here due to illness so we do not have the exact figures. We were a bit down on Wednesday but we should still make a small profit this year.

President DeBlois commented that as the Warwick tournament will come after the NABC in Providence in 2021. We should consider our room block commitment in Warwick. The penalties for not making the room block are heavy. We have a contract for 2021. S. Kirtley added that we would like to reduce the room block as soon as we can. The hotel is more concerned with the playing space that we use. They want to find out as soon as possible if they can rent this to others.

Tournament Site- Update - Senior Regional

President DeBlois stated that she, Sally, and Joe will work on the question of the Senior Regional. We discussed this in Warwick regarding possible contracts with the Hyannis Conference Center and the Cape Coder. Sally got information from both. There is a conundrum in that if we do not cancel Falmouth before the beginning of the regional in 2019 we will automatically be committed to that site for 2020. There are two viable Hyannis sites: the Conference Center and the Cape Coder. Falmouth continues to have location issues. A contract at the Cape Coder would be for one year. However, we would have the right of first refusal for the next year. We could lose it for 2020 even if it were successful. Treasurer Brouillard reminded the delegates that the losses at the Cape for the past two years were almost \$20,000. We lost \$11,966 in 2018 and \$7,156 in 2017.

B. Bertoni added that we might lose \$1,000 at the Conference Center with the Cape Coder a bit more. Treasurer Brouillard noted that the Conference Center offers 5-6 comp rooms per night. B. Bertoni stated that the Conference Center is a better choice on paper. President DeBlois questioned as to who comes to Hyannis.

(S. Widhu) I don't think that we need that tournament.

(President DeBlois) We must have it in 2019 in any case. B. Bertoni added that it is opposite Gatlinburg and we will take a bath. V.P. Mahoney added that the fact that we have added the Gold Mine Regional in the same month will also take away players, as the NLMs will have less incentive to come. It seems crazy to me but B. Bertoni is for it and must have a good reason.

(S. Kirtley) P. Marcus thinks that it is premature to cancel it without giving a last push. We struggled with Newton for a long time until we gave it up. We need to give it our best effort before it is gone forever.

(President DeBlois) The Cape Codder will give us the first right of refusal for 2020.

(D. Morgenstern) the trend is clear. We need to find out if we are at the wrong site or if it is just that the players will not come. Maybe a move back to Hyannis will help.

(C. Seager) What affect will Gatlinburg have.

(President DeBlois) Only a handful of the players who go to Gatlinburg come to the Cape. Many are too young and not eligible. A small group of seniors go to Gatlinburg. There is a small overlap.

(S. Widhu) The Gold Mine is part of the problem. It will put more pressure on the staff and volunteers that the players.

(M. Wavada) We can't have too many tournaments. The feedback is strong. There are a large number who really like and enjoy them.

(President DeBlois) We should risk a loss in 2019. The Cape Codder seems our best bet.

(B. Bertoni) 2019 will be bad wherever it is held.

(C. Seager) We are committed to Falmouth in 2019.

(VP Mahoney) The Bourne Bridge will be under construction. This is the bridge to Falmouth.

(K. Randle) I don't have the history, but it seems that we should let it go.

(P. Najarian) Where were those who love it. We have tremendous attendance in Warwick. We usually make money in Nashua. What we gain, we lose in Falmouth. I don't agree that moving to Hyannis will make a difference.

(B. Bertoni) It did help when we were in Hyannis.

(C. Barton) I support Bob if the key to the problem is Falmouth.

We have been told that the Cape players hate Falmouth. I find Hyannis and Falmouth the same distance wise. If we move back to Hyannis for a year, we might see the numbers go up again.

(President DeBlois) The question is whether we can sustain the losses.

(C. Weiser) How much can we scale it back?

(S. Kirtley) I will try to scale it back as much as possible.

(President DeBlois) We will take this up again in Cromwell. We must make the final decision there.

(C. Barton) We could ask EMBA to survey the Cape regarding the question of Hyannis versus Falmouth.

(L. DeBlois) We have a promotion in place to get the Cape directors invested in promoting the Cape tournament.

(B. Bertoni) We don't need to make money, just break even.

(President DeBlois) We will have a motion in Cromwell and finalize this decision.

(S. Kirtley) I am unable to negotiate anything until the decision is made.

(President DeBlois) If we decide to go forward in 2020 to the Cape Codder, we must do so before the beginning of the tournament in April of 2019. The Conference Center will not give us the right of first refusal for 2021, even if we move there in 2020.

(S. Kirtley) The Cape Codder is easier for everyone to get to. There are lots of restaurants in the area.

(D. Morgenstern) I make a motion that we give up the Seacrest for 2020 and explore the Cape Codder. The motion was seconded and so votes.

(S. Kirtley) I will pursue this and report in Cromwell.

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Vice President Jack Mahoney

VP Mahoney thanked those who attended the Tournament Committee meeting Friday evening. We discussed how we could move forward and put together a sponsoring program for the District. We discussed the types of sponsoring events, how much we would charge and potential sponsors. Sponsoring would be modeled on that for the NABCs but on a smaller scale. Sponsors could be for the whole event, for a day, or a single event.

Sponsors for the whole week could be offered a booth for the distribution of brochures and other materials. There are various types of businesses that could be interested in our demographic such as those that specialize in financial services to the elderly, Senior Living and estate planning. There are lots of potential natural matches.

Naming Games would be between \$50 and \$75. There is a problem in that the schedules are printed a long time before the event. Anything sold after printing would be shown only on the internet schedule, in the Bulletin or at the site. I spoke to Margot Hennings who has chaired multiple NABCs. She shared what she has learned as well as materials. DD. M. Aquino suggested this. I also discussed this with Rusty Crouse. Naming at an NABC is a bigger deal, but we can offer access to an affluent group of people to potential sponsors. We'd like to raise the attendance but raising funds to offset the losses is not a bad thing.

(C. Barton) I think it is a great idea. Would there be enough room for a booth here?

(VP Mahoney) Last year we had an internet company that set up next to Jeremy (the bookseller) We have not yet developed the specifics of what we would offer potential advertisers. Peter Marcus had suggested that we go to some potential advertisers and explain the proposal and offer them a space free in return for their candid assessment of the process and allowing us to use this in our package presentation to others. We could offer a re-up at a reasonable rate. This is what we did with my company (test preparation) in Maine.

Senior Regional Schedule

We will have the main KO on Thursday and Friday. According to Peter, this is the peak attendance of the week. The players do not stick around for the weekend. (C. Barton) Would it be possible to do the “Naming” for Cromwell, at least on the website and in the Bulletin.

District Director’s Report - Mark Aquino

I have been working on several contentious items. The real issues are declining attendance, money issue and the viability of face-to-face competition.

I have resubmitted a motion I actually wrote last summer that would significantly change the format of Board meetings. We would have one in the early in the year near Memphis, one at the Summer NABC. This change is in response to the cost of flying in and housing the Board members for the meetings, as well as the other high costs of running the meetings, including the support staff that also attends. This year it is getting more traction, but I doubt that it will be approved, even though it has great merit.

There is another motion before the board that would change the age of Seniors to conform to that of the World Bridge Federation. This has a sliding scale that will eventually raise the age to 65. I have asked all related questions, such as the impact on the age of Super Seniors. The Board of Governors has asked the BOD to reconsider the decision to eliminate the Senior KOs in the Fall NABC. I agree with the BOG. There will be a trial period to determine if the newly created Soloway KOs will have a positive or a negative impact on the Senior KO attendance.

A very controversial matter is that some on the BOD want to increase the entry fees for anyone who does not stay one of the host hotels. We can’t guarantee that there will be space for all who want to stay at each NABC. I have tried to propose an alternate suggestion what would give an incentive for those who do stay. This would be in the form of discounts in subsequent NABC host hotels. Recently, there have been a number of people booking entire tournament and then canceling. Players make alternate arrangements and then the rooms are cancelled and opened up. The rates are not necessarily the best. If the rates are significantly different at the host and non-host hotels, the players will vote with their feet.

Congratulations and best of luck to Bob Bertoni. There are a lot of challenges moving forward. I hope we’ll have some stability at upper management in the ACBL. Bahar Gidwani was out in one year. He had some good ideas. It is definitely difficult to get people to come to work in Memphis. I support Joe Jones as a candidate. If he is not selected, I hope they find someone who can keep the job for a few years.

Old Business-

Bylaws - Paula Najarian and Linda Ahrens

I sent out the Bylaws from 2010 with the proposed changes for 2018. I heard from only a few people. The proposed changes will be sent to the members of the Board of Delegates and there will be a vote at the Nashua meeting in June of 2019.

There is one change in response to comments and that is for 1.4. This would be changed to "To initiate, modify or ratify will still require a majority vote any act or action of the EC, but to revoke will require a 2/3 vote."

P. Najarian clarified the meaning of a vote of the President who would cast a vote only in the case of a tie. "The President has a vote only if that vote would affect the outcome." If the vote is by written ballot, the President would have the right to vote.

Mike Wavada requested a motion to authorize Bob Bertoni to create an nebridge.org email address for the Tournament Coordinator so that the Tournament Coordinators of the various Units will have an address to which to send their material irrespective of who holds the position. No motion was necessary, B. Bertoni will set one up.

Credit Card Systems - Joe Brouillard and Lois DeBlois

Treasurer Joe Brouillard stated that we used Purple Pass at Nashua and in Warwick. About 25% of the players used the credit card system. This was a trial project. The ACBL picked up the processing fee of 2.7%. If we had to pay this, it would have cost us \$475 in Nashua and \$513 in Warwick. Citizens Bank has offered us a Credit Card merchants account The service fee would be .99. With the ACBL system the selling and processing was done by the directors.

We would use a system like Bridge Bucks. We would sell vouchers with a value of \$15.00. The voucher would have no cash value and not be redeemable for cash. It could not be replaced if lost. We considered security as it was inevitable that someone would try to use a color copier. There would be an invisible watermark that would appear. The vouchers would cost us \$166 (.17 each) for 1000, \$262 (.10 each) for 2500 and \$407 (.08) for 5000. The vouchers would have no expiration date. Each state has different laws regarding prepaid items. Massachusetts states 7 years and the date must be clearly indicated. Rhode Island has no expiration date. To be in compliance with all states the vouchers would not expire. The sample was a first draft. We would take off the year and the one entry. We will include the dollar amount. I spoke to Citizens bank. The processing fee would be .99%. Credit card processing is 2.5% for American Express (or 25 cents) We will not accept American Express or the higher fee corporate cards. Citizens will provide us with \$100,000 in fraud protection n No number of years are required and we can terminate the agreement at any time without a fee. They provided us with a terminal free. I have it. There was not charge for the software. It has an I-pad hook-up. Because we use Citizens Bank, the credit card sales will be swept into the Tournament Account each night. It will cost us .23 to sell the vouchers. ,08 to print and 14.85 to process. I would like to recommend that we try this for one year and then evaluate it. The Directors will not be selling them as they do in Gatlinburg. We will be selling them at a separate station. The Directors like it, as there is no change. Purple Pass could only take one credit card per entry. This way, every player can purchase separately.

P. Najarian made a motion that the Executive Committee approves the experiment using vouchers to begin in Cromwell, if possible. The motion was seconded and so approved.

District Director Mark Aquino- “Thank you, thank you, thank you. I will miss you all.”

President DeBlois read a brief thank you note sent by Helen Pawlowski thanking us for the wonderful retirement celebration. Your friendship over the last 12 years will be deeply missed. Retirement is great!

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:25.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Weiser, Secretary, District 25