



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

Minutes  
Executive Committee Meeting  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Warwick, RI  
Friday, September 2, 2022

**Officers:** Curtis Barton, President; Mark Oettinger - Vice President; Joseph Brouillard, Treasurer; Carolyn Weiser, Secretary

**Unit Representatives:** EMBA – Saul Agranoff, Paul Harris; CMBA – Denise Bahosh; CBA -Michael Wavada; RIBA - Megan Diorio; NHBA - Bill Kennedy ; VBA;- Steve Ackerman, MBA- Dorothy Kelleher; WMBA – Peter Samsel

*Absent: Sonja Smith, (CBA); Marshall Williams (RIBA); David Lawrence (NHBA); Daniel Morgenstern (MBA)*

**Invited Guests:** Mark Aquino – Regional Director, Sally Kirtley – Tournament Manager, David Metcalf- DIC; Susan Miguel – I/N Coordinator,

*Absent: Peter Marcus – DIC, Lois DeBlois – NABC Co-chair, Bart Bussink – NAP/GNT Coordinator*

**Call to Order-** The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

**President's Opening remarks** – President Curtis Barton

Team Providence did an excellent job, receiving compliments from @Prov.com and here. All of them are absolutely true. They did a brilliant job. Southbridge will be a challenge. We had to find a new venue because Mansfield sold half of our space. Southbridge is a new hotel. We will have a five-day schedule. The building is an official historic site. It is on the border of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Mike Wavada will be resigning as of December 31, 2022. He has done so much for the District that it will take 2 or 3 individuals to replace him. We owe Mike a huge thank you. The official transfer of jobs will take place on January 1, 2023.

We have had some interesting schedule issues. We moved the NAP finals five times. We will fix this in the future at the Regional level and set up our schedule for the units then find out what the ACBL does to us. An example is the Royal STaC, which is Sue's (Miguel) party. Joe ran a game at the Cape.

(M. Wavada) Does CBA have to do anything?

(S. Miguel) They usually opt out of our STaC. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup>.

(S. Agranoff) Will we be at Southbridge for more than this year?

Yes, Southbridge is replacing Cromwell and then we will be at Southbridge again because of a cancellation.

(Pres. Barton) There is a question as to whether we will be able to afford Nashua after its renovation.

(B. Kennedy) There are no other reasonable hotels in southern New Hampshire.

(S. Kirtley) There is another one that has reached out to us. It is a Marriot. I have yet to investigate.

(See addenda for President Barton's pre-meeting email)

**Secretary's Report** - A motion was made by W. Kennedy and seconded by P. Samsel. The Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held at the Gala Regional on May 21, 2022 we accepted without dissent as sent.

**Treasurer's Report** - Joseph Brouillard

As noted in the Statement of Financial Position, our current Total Assets from the Fidelity Cash, Fidelity Investment, NABC National Fund, and the Tournament Managers Account is down. \$42,000 of which is due to the expenditures on the NABC. We have no liabilities or long-term debt.

The Operating Income Statement shows a loss of \$4,097 on the Gala. This will be higher when the total number of free plays for the NABC given out at the Gala are redeemed and reported. I have asked the ACBL for an accounting but none has been received as of this date, I also do not have the financials from the GNTs from BBO. The Tournament Manager's account is stable.

Our Non-Tournament income includes Dividend income, Grass Roots Fund money, revenue from the Royal STaC and \$25.00 in miscellaneous income. The Royal STaC broke even after the ACBL fees were paid. The GNT Stipends came from the GNT Reserve. Expenses of \$12,992 are pretty normal. All of this ends with a \$11,043 loss to date. The GNT money skews that amount. We hope that the GNTs will be profitable.

(S. Agranoff) What happens to the chits that are not redeemed?

(J. Brouillard) Any NABC coupon not redeemed becomes confetti and does nothing to our bottom line.

A motion was made by M. Wavada to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Paul Harris. The Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously as presented.

**Summary NABC Providence** - Joe Brouillard

Treasurer Brouillard handed out a Summary and Detail page. The information is not complete. The ACBL owe us \$10,000 and we owe them \$4-5,000. The money they owe us includes a \$7,500 allowance that we were charged for the Wednesday evening volunteer dinner that we decided not to hold as the volunteers were being invited to the VIP reception at Waterfire. We have asked the ACBL a number of times, but have been told that the accounting has not been finalized. They claim that they lost money at Providence.

The Summary pages indicate that we raised \$44,250 in sponsorships, which is huge considering covid. We received \$10,000 from the Providence Tourism Bureau as well as all the sponsorship money raised by Meghan Diorio and Phyllis Chase. We had sponsors for most days. Of the \$105,000 budgeted by D-25, we only needed \$42,000.

We came in under budget in every category, except one. We were within allowances for all the gifts and prizes. The ACBL owes for the I/N Room deficit.

(Pres. Barton) Mark (Aquino), how can the ACBL lose money?

(RD M. Aquino) I was blindsided. The ACBL treasurer has yet to make a report. They want Providence again in 2026. The \$250,000 total cost is probably the issue.

(J. Brouillard) We exceeded table count. I think that covid cost us 300-500 tables.

General discussion of the Providence NABC followed without any resolution.

(RD M. Aquino) I will review the numbers from the ACBL when they are provided. The Visitors Bureau kicked in \$20,000 for increased lighting in the ballroom. The numbers exceeded predictions. They did an exceptional job covering all the events.

### **Tournament Manager's Report - Sally Kirtley**

I have no numbers on Marlboro, yet. I expect a \$4,000 loss even before the number of chits cashed comes in. We gave away the farm. We expected to lose money.

Update: Warwick

We will not meet our room block here. We expect a penalty and a loss here as well.

Update - Tournament sites and contracts

The next two are in Southbridge. We couldn't cancel April. We had to give them another one to get out of that one. Therefore, we have two in a row in Southbridge. It is actually one of the best locations in New England. It is the most central. It is close to the Connecticut boarder. It is close enough to D-3 that we may actually get players from the Saratoga area. District 24 has it's regional in October.

M. Diorio noted that she might be able to aid with contacts that might be able to ameliorate some on the penalty issues. S. Kirtley stated that she has not agreed to pay any penalties as yet.

(Pres. Barton) We have a contract in 2023 at Southbridge but the remaining sites do not as yet have contracts. Maybe we will be able to find something in Connecticut or Springfield.

### **Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report - Mark Oettinger**

Burlington, VT is a 5-hour drive. Steve Ackerman also came as a representative for VBA in place of Phil Sharpstein. He might be able to fill some of Mike Wavada's positions. The Tournament committee has approved November 15-19 for Southbridge. The schedule is in draft form. It has some of the Gala flare. It will be posted within the next few days. D-25's regionals are inaccurately posted on both the District and ACBL websites. We have to work to fix this. We will try to establish a three-year schedule in skeleton to help the Units determine when they can schedule a Sectional that will not conflict with a Regional. We will work to get both up to date. The 2023 dates are ok. We are leaning toward a Tuesday through Saturday schedule. Sunday attendance has tended to be the lightest. As Sally (Kirtley) negotiates forward, we would like to have consistency in sites from year to year. Our goal is to plan through 2025. We are planning on 4 Regionals per year. Here is Warwick; we are experiencing 50% of our pre-pandemic attendance. This is down from the Gala.

In regards to the NAP stipend, the Tournament Committee recommends that we continue with the pre-existent stipends of \$700 and \$300 for first and second place

finishers respectively. The first and second come from the ACBL, we pick up the third and fourth. We expect that practice to continue.

(M. Aquino) The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, \$200 and \$100 respectively, are just honorariums. These can be cut.

(Treasurer Brouillard) That comes out of the Grass-Roots money.

General discussion followed.

(S. Miguel) It is the C-flight players who make it profitable.

RD Aquino withdrew his proposal.

A motion was made by S. Agranoff to approve the recommendation of the Tournament Committee regarding the stipends for the NAP. This was seconded by P. Samsel. The motion was passed without dissent.

(VP Oettinger) Regarding personal, we are working hard to plan for Mike Wavada's retirement at the end of this year. Some have been set, such as Gary Peterson, Sue Miguel have been set. Others, such as Steve Ackerman, will take on tasks as needed. Denise Bahosh has agreed to take on the problem of partnership for our regionals. The position of having a local person in the roll of Tournament Chair will be eliminated.

(Pres. Barton) The major role of the Partnership Coordinator will be to make partnerships before a regional, and assure that the partnership desk is manned at regionals. This will eliminate giving a Tournament Chair a free room for the duration of the tournament and save the District about \$800. We will put this into effect for Southbridge. Sue Miguel will become the Communications Chair with the help of Gary (Peterson) and Steve (Ackerman). This year we have proposed that Gary receive \$250 per tournament. It will become \$500 next year. D. Bahosh has volunteered to be Partnership Chair and Steve Ackerman will discuss his role with Mike Wavada. Sue (Miguel) stipend will increase to \$500 per tournament. I believe this is a net gain as it saves a room.

A motion was made by Mark Oettinger to accept the personal changes as outlined above by President Barton. The motion was seconded and approved.

Last night's meeting of the Tournament Committee included a proposal for an increase in session fees. A motion passed by the Tournament Committee was to increase the table fees to \$20.00 per session immediately to provide funds to revitalize the organization and provide a cushion for the development of further benefits at tournaments. These would include such things as free lunches at Southbridge. Proportional increases in Junior entrees, etc. would also be made.

(S. Agranoff) As I remember the last raise in table fees was approved to build up funds for the NABC.

(Treas. Brouillard) The NABC did not get any money from the general budget.

(Pres Barton) we didn't want to do it (the increase) in pieces. Everything costs more now. This increase will allow us to do hospitality. Here the hospitality was excellent.

(S. Miguel) This is a whole new world. We need to start fresh. At my club, I am charging \$15.00. We have nothing to advertise. Without that, it could be a blood bath. With this increase, I can make the Spectacle Regional at Southbridge make the Gala look like nothing. The money will allow us to advertise something extraordinary. We need money to invest in the F-F game. The increase will allow us to do this without depleting the treasury.

(D. Metcalf) The table fee was \$14.00 in 2018. It was raised to \$15.00 in 2019. D-3 charges \$20.00. The same is true of other similar districts. Regarding sectionals, New Hampshire charges \$13.00, EMBA- \$15, VBA-\$10.00 and CBA- \$10.00

(D. Kelleher) I agree that it should go up, but this seems like a big jump. I think there should be compromise. Fifteen to \$20 is a lot.

(RD M. Aquino) When business is bad, is not the time to raise the fees.

(S. Agranoff) We should just bite the bullet.

General discussion followed.

D. Kelleher made an amendment that we raise the tables fees to \$18.00 per session.

Seconded by B. Kennedy.

Discussion followed.

M. Wavada noted that it is all about the elasticity of demand. Most don't look at the fees. Most play 2-sessions.

D. Metcalf noted that if the raise to \$20.00 included a free lunch it would still be more profitable.

(J. Brouillard) It will be like raising the fees and then giving it back as hospitality. In the past, Warwick has always saved us (financially). This is not going to happen this year. We can't raise the fees and then give it away.

(S. Miguel) In Southbridge we want to do things such as Sandwich Saturday, Free lunch Friday with possibly pizza, Welcome back Wednesday with a small gift, at a cost of about \$3.00. This will give us a chunk of money to develop marketable items. We need a hook to get the players here.

The amendment was called (raise in table fees to \$18.00) The vote was yea - 4 Nay- 7. The amendment failed.

VP Oettinger called the original motion (increase in table fees to \$20.00) The vote was yea 7, Nay 3. The motion passed

(VP M. Oettinger) In conclusion, I have a sense that the staff augmentation is heading in the right direction. I applaud the sense of volunteerism that was evident at our meeting last night.

(M. Wavada) The Senior Regional is gone for 2023.

(M. Oettinger) It is gone for 2023 but the final decision for 2024 has yet to be made. There will be no Gold Mine in 2023.

### **Regional Director's Report - Mark Aquino**

Everyone was sent my report via email but some of it is worth repeating. I cannot say enough the enormous job that the NABC Co-chairs, Lois DeBlois and Joe Brouillard with their dedicated volunteers did at Providence. The attendance exceeded the ACBL's most optimistic prediction of 7282 tables and is the best post-pandemic NABC attendance yet. I was flooded with kudos for the over-the-top morning hospitality that was organized by Hospitalist Co-chairs Sally Kirtley and Helen Pawlowski. I truly think that what our folks did in Providence truly was a game changer and has helped us turn the corner on what was truly a disastrous trajectory for the ACBL. We still have a long way to go.

Despite low overhead costs during the pandemic, post pandemic tournament losses, huge I/T cost overruns, heavy overhead costs, excessive legal costs due to past

and pending litigations, and a 15% decline in ACBL membership, the financial future of the ACBL is not nearly as rosy as some may have been led to think.

There is a lot of work being done to attempt to improve the ACBL's Information Technology functionality, to increase ACBL membership through new teaching initiatives, improve bridge operations, improve attendance at face-to-face club games, sectionals, and regionals, alleviate online cheating, address the huge challenges we face with online bridge versus face-to-face bridge and to cope with all the various forms of costly internal competition that exists within our organization today.

My position-, which is not yet the majority view, is that we need to dramatically cut overhead, properly re-apportion profits from the online games to absorb short losses to help revitalize long-term growth.

Regarding the attendance here, I should note that the World Championships are being held in Poland. The Grossacks and many other pros are, therefore, not here. M. Oettinger will have to get the 2023-2025 schedule out shortly.

Joe Jones, ACBL's Executive Director, is considering recommending removing the vaccine requirements, and moving to a more personal responsibility model. He believes that everyone understands the risks of attending in-person events. The ACBL has incurred considerable costs in enforcing vaccine requirements at NABCs with unclear results. Also, one can argue that removing restrictions supports a robust return to face-to-face bridge.

I want to remind all that the ACBL Board did approve a 20% increase in masterpoints for all face-to-face sectionals and regionals through the end of 2022.

The regulations for a Regional at Sea have been changed. I don't believe that they will have a major effect on s-25. There will be a coastal cruise to Montreal. It is scheduled for October 9-23, 2022.

(S. Miguel) I understand that the IT department is a disaster. Are there any plans for improvements?

(RR. Aquino) I have sent a letter to the President. The ACBL marketing group was not very effective in Providence. They tested their ideas at Hilton Head and asked for a blank check. The Board voted to direct the President of the ACBL to cease and desist; or at least put things on pause. Other things are going on with high-level expert volunteers to see how we can improve current practices. The ACBL "solutions" have created more problems. I am focusing on representing you as best that I can. It is an honor to be your representative.

Sue Miguel was recognized across the ACBL for her contributions to the NAPs, GNTs flight C numbers that are overwhelmingly far above the other districts. There are many issues to be ironed out.

(B. Kennedy) NHBA has a regional schedule for Grantham on September 20-21.

(RD. Aquino) The ACBL on-line regionals compete with F-F Regionals. I have issues with the meeting schedules. Three days a week, I am at meetings. The ACBL is broken.

(S. Miguel) I understand the On-line issues. The September 9-15 was not on the schedule. They should be scheduled in advance.

(D. Metcalf) The week before Christmas is the next one.

(RD Aquino) D. Metcalf is on the Advisory Council, the Teachers & Clubs and Masterpoint Committee. The Clubs are the feeding line for members but on-line creates

revenue. There needs to be a balance. H. Pawlowski assisted S. Kirtley in Providence. P. Marcus will be working to assist M. Oettinger.

**Old Business-**

Update on Webmaster position

(M. Wavada) There are areas on the website that are devoted to the District Director and District Director Reports. There is no District Director anymore. Should they be up on the website? I think they should be archived.

(RD M. Aquino) We really do have a District Director. On January 1, I will have to focus on how to also serve D-3.

(M. Wavada) The NABC winners and as well as NABC+ winners are out of date. I am stuck as to what to do. I need direction from the Board.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Carolyn Weiser, Secretary, District 25