

New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

6:30 PM- Via Zoom

Attendance

Present: Officers: President-Susan Miguel, Vice President-Denise Bahosh, Treasurer-Joe Brouillard, Secretary-Carolyn Weiser, Past President-Curtis Barton

Unit Representatives: EMBA-108- Paul Harris, Brenda Montague; CMBA- 113-Michael Kegan; CBA-126-William Seagraves, Michael Wavada; RIBA- 145-Joyce Haley; NHBA- 150-William Kennedy; VBA- 175-Steven Ackerman; MBA- 189-Daniel Morgenstern; WMBA- 196-Sheila Ryan

Invited Guests: Mark Aquino, Regional Director; Sally Kirtley, Tournament Manager; David Metcalf, Tournament Advisor; Neil Montague, Database

Manager/Communications; Webmaster, Gary Peterson

Absent: ExOfficio Member: Peter Marcus

President Miguel called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. President Susan Miguel I have tried to keep everyone up to date through the various meetings, including the Presidents Table as well as Newsletters. The Sanctioning workshop went very well. It will be offered by the ACBL to the other Units throughout the rest of the country.

Secretary's Report - Carolyn Weiser - A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, of February 8, 2024 as sent.

Tournament Manager's Report - Sally Kirtley

Three-year Comparison financials were sent out for the Presidential Regional. We had small losses for both of the tournaments. Things seem to be getting a bit better. We are scheduled for Nashua in June, Warwick in September, and The Harvest Regional will be in Norwich, CT, for the first time. It has to be scheduled for the week after our traditional weekend, which puts it a bit close to Thanksgiving. Because of that, we have scheduled it from Monday, November 18 to Saturday, November 23.

(J. Brouillard) Since Covid it is difficult to compare tournaments historically or year to year. I am going to show three tournaments per page and drop one off each time.

(S. Kirtley) Southbridge is not looking good. We are looking at a heavy penalty for not meeting our room commitment. They have agreed to give us credit for rooms booked by bridge players other than through the hotel. The \$12,000 penalty was split and is now \$6,000. They will work with us if we sign for a tournament in February of next year and will reduce the required rooms. I do not know why the reservations are so low.

President Miguel added that we are usually inundated with Bridgefest queries, but that she has not gotten any. She is not sure why. Next year Passover and Easter are both in April.

Nashua will be Tuesday through Sunday. All of our flyers are on the website. They show the tournament, not the name. All the dates and times of the tournaments are different.

President Miguel noted that it will be very difficult to find venues in April next year. Sally wants to be able to use Conference Direct. S. Kirtley noted that they were able to find Norwich and got us a great deal. Nashua is on the verge of dropping us.

(W. Kennedy) What do they charge us?

(S. Kirtley) There is no charge for us.

(J. Brouillard) I make a motion that S. Kirtley can use Conference Direct whenever necessary. The motion was seconded and passed without dissent.

Treasurer's Report - Joseph Brouillard

The Statement of Financial Position shows our Current Assets are up from last year. Most of the increase is due to changes in our investments at Fidelity. The NABC Fund is up 9% year to date. Our total return on the NABC fund is up. We are doing OK because of our National Fund investments.

The Operating Income Statement shows net loss at the NLM Regional of \$2,543. The GNT show income but all the expenses are not in yet. The STaC shows earnings, but most of that was used to pay sanction fees of \$2842. The Total Income figure is before the payment of the GNT expenses.

Our total operating expenses are \$4,987. Peter Marcus has offered to reimburse us for the cost of \$4,455 for the new bidding boxes at a certain percent per regional. We owe him a debt of gratitude for this and his continued financial support of District 25. As shown, we have a net loss of \$3,775 to date.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the Treasurer's Report without dissent.

Our annual 990s have been filed with the IRS and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

(President Miguel) Can we call the National Fund "Long Term Investments"?

(J. Brouillard) Back in 20114, the District voted a \$105 budget for the NABC and set aside \$.50 per table. In 2024, we raised \$42,000 and when it was over there was some money left. This was invested. This was similar to what happened in 2022. We have kept it separate. It is listed as a restricted asset and set it aside. If we won't use it, we could use some of it. I would hate to see the money removed.

(President Miguel) If there is a special project, can we vote to use it? Call it "restricted funds?"

(J. Brouillard) We can change the name.

Treasurer Brouillard- Schedule for Financial Reports

Post Covid, tournaments are no longer held at the same time each year, which was traditional pre-covid. Preparing financial statements with the month ending prior to the Executive Committee meeting is difficult to do. We have traditionally used the month end before a regional as the date. Covid and moving regionals around makes it difficult to compare current financials to prior year. I propose that we change the financial statements to quarterly reports: March, June, September, and December.

We have traditionally used the month end before a regional as the date. This would make everything consistent year after year. This would not change accounting or financial results. Most corporations generate financial statements quarterly.

(Past Pres. C. Barton) I make a motion that financial reports be made on a quarterly basis. General discussion followed.

(B. Bussink) How much risk would this pose to the portfolio?

(J. Brouillard) The NABC Fund is in two funds: the Fidelity Balanced Fund and the Pilgrim Fund. Both are conservative with 50 to 60% in equities and the rest in bonds. The motion was called. The motion passed without dissent.

(J. Brouillard) I have been treasurer for over 10 years.

I propose we set a record limit. I have financials records that go back to 2012 that are of no value. I propose a 7-year limit on the retention of financial records. This is standard in most corporations.

A motion was made and seconded to all Treasurer Brouillard to limit his retention of records to only seven-years. The motion was seconded and passed without dissent.

Tournament / Scheduling Committee Report – Vice President Denise Bahosh

We are currently in a quandary as to where, when, and the schedules etc. for our tournament in 2025. We are planning a brainstorming session in Southbridge. Please let me know if you are interested in attending.

We need to work with the Units to find ways to encourage the players to attend. (Pres. Miguel) There are many alternate possibilities. Should we try 3-day regionals? Regionals not in a hotel? Joyce Haley will check the flyers of Regionals that are not in hotels.

General discussion followed.

Unit Presidents Meeting - Denise Bahosh

We hope to have a Presidents Breakfast in Nashua where we can explore the possibilities for more Unit-District and District-Unit cooperation. Perhaps Units could share sectionals. VP Bahosh will let the President's know when it will be scheduled.

District Director's Report – Mark Aquino

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I just returned from Louisville, KY. There was a snafu with Entry Express and they found a very creative way to solve it. B. Jenkins found a very creative way to overcome a potential disaster when we found that we had only 50% of the required room commitment covered with only a few months to go. We were able to avoid a huge penalty.

This was our first meeting with the new 13 member Board. Margot Hennings, of Virginia is the new ACBL President. Several task forces have been formed to tackle the major problems we are facing. I am leading the one that will tackle the long-term strategies for improving the NABCs.

The BBO contract is under review. There is much more money on the line than we ever suspected when we wrote the original contract. In 2016, the contract with BBO was for \$500,000 per year from BBO. Estimates are that BBO is making millions per year. There are other possible online business partners now, including Swan Bridge. We

are trying to figure out what will be best for the future of the ACBL.

Discussion followed about the changes in pricing and other regulations relating to the ACBL and on-line bridge.

We worked out a deal to reinstate 18 board games on BBO that is expected to earn \$1.4 M a year for the ACBL.

I worked very hard for Providence, but failed to find any enthusiasm. There were strong voices against it. The ACBL does not want to deal with Convention Centers and the multiple unions and separate contracts that such sites entail. We will be in Las Vegas or Chicago again in the summer of 2027. The ACBL figures to lose about \$175,000 if we try Providence again. Providence is definitely off the table.

I have had many discussions with Bronia (Jenkins). She is doing an amazing job. She has great enthusiasm.

The Edgar Proposal could have been thought out better, in my opinion. We need to clean up on-line cheating. There were no D-25 members to whom complaints were issued.

Stardust Week is scheduled during Passover. The ACBL should be more alert to this.

President Miguel reiterated that Bronia said that Providence in 2027 was a dead issue. For the future, it was 99% dead.

(RD M. Aquino) A survey just went out to the ACBL membership. About 15,000 responded. I am concerned that we don't have a clear sense of what the outcomes mean.

(J. Brouillard) I am disappointed that Providence is not in the running. The ACBL overbooked the space. Proper use of the exhibition hall could eliminate one or two other spaces. There (the ACBL) model based on using hotels puts Providence at a disadvantage. Using split sites for the events is difficult and inconvenient. They can save money if they are smarter as to the space they rent.

(RD M. Aquino) Boston was very successful but it became too expensive. Philadelphia is scheduled for next year. The whole Northeast has been outpriced. We will see what happens with BBO and how much we can subsidize these tournaments. Right now, they want them to be self-sufficient.

General discussion followed regarding possible New England sites and related issues.

Old Business - none

New Business

Return of STaC Fees going forward- President Miguel

The ACBL has changed how they administer STaC's. Our first STaC under the new rules will be when we have the Royal STaC in May. The clubs will run them. The fees will be calculated and apportioned when they upload their results to the ACBL. The STaC was on a sliding scale depending on size. Here it was \$5.50 now it will be \$7.50. Most clubs see a table increase during the STaCs. The ACBL returns \$2.20 to the sponsor, which here is D-25. We will give the \$2.00 back to the clubs. It is not our goal to make money on the backs of the clubs. I would like us to create a symbiotic relationship between the clubs and the District by proposing that the clubs be allowed to apply for a rebate of \$2.00 giving \$0.20 for the District. In the future, the clubs would be

expected to help with the 5-5-5 requirements of the Unit and support the District Regionals. The STaC fee is totally on the club owner. Discussion followed. G. Peterson asked if it is automatable. President Miguel felt that it would not be possible. We do not want it automatable. We want it to be contingent on the club owners doing something. They will need to submit something to validate their right to receive a rebate.

(B. Segraves) CBA currently supports our clubs in STaCs.

(Pres. Miguel) We want to tie it to some reciprocal action.

John Pieper is our new club guru. Each club will get a personal email from me. If they choose not to participate that is their option.

(VP Bahosh) We will also discuss this in more detail at the Unit Presidents Meeting.

(Pres. Miguel) Do you agree with this in principle? This was affirmed by the presidents who were present.

(M. Wavada) The Hartford Bridge Club has found that the STaCs are very unpopular with the open players.

General discussion followed regarding various club positions.

(Pres. Miguel) We would rebate the fee for anyone the first time, but for the second and subsequent STaCs the club would have to do something.

(J. Brouillard) I make a motion that the District rebate \$2.00 of the STaC fee to participating clubs. Discussion followed. The motion was amended to read "for their first participation" and for second and subsequent STaCs the rebate would be contingent on fulfilling some demonstrable service in support of District activities. The motion as amended was passed without opposition.

The STaC in question will occur in May and there will be another in June.

GNT Fundraising games

For each sanction, a club can have a GNT Fund Rising Game. This gives clubs another opportunity to offer increased masterpoint awards. The money we would receive would go into the GNT Fund to help defray the cost of players representing the District at the finals. Of the cost, \$1.15 would go to the ACBL. General discussion followed.

A motion was made to institute GNT Fund games at a minimum of \$5.00 per game plus a free-will donation and see how they fly. The motion was seconded and passed without opposition.

President Miguel noted that having the GNTs on line has made it possible to facilitate the formation of times across the district. At this time, we save the players the money and logistical complications of travel for F2F play. Peter (Marcus) does the direction and the costs have been minimal. If we did not have Peter, it would be a disaster, as the cost of the directors would make it prohibitive to offer the schedule we had this year with the attendance we had. The number of participating teams continues to drop. The flight C was up to 50+ tables. The last time we had 20+. As of last Friday, we had only six teams. The event is much smaller than it was when it was held in person. There are currently only two "regular" teams that have signed up the rest have been created. Flight B is also down. In the past, we scheduled the "B" second so C could "play up". The schedule did not all for this, this year.

General discussion followed.

(Pres. Miguel) Next year, if we held it in person, it could be held in Southbridge, Marlboro, or Mansfield, in February. The Executive Committee needs to remember that

we cannot depend on Peter (Marcus) always being there to direct the games. Discussion continued regarding the pros and cons of playing in person. B. Bussink suggested that all but the championship flight be played on line. Playing the BAP on line on line means BBO takes money too.

A working group consisting of Bart Bussink, President Miguel, Bill Segraves, and David Metcalf will make a recommendation as to the format for the NAPs and GNTs as we go forward.

Bylaw Update

C. Weiser will chair a committee to review the current bylaws and make recommendations as to changes. The focus will be on removing sections that no longer apply due to changes within the District and ACBL. These will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and upon its approval will be brought to the Board of Delegates for final approval.

Scholarship Program- Bill Segraves

The Grand Slam Collegiate Bridge Scholarship Initiative was forwarded to the members of the Executive Committee.

I propose the creation of the Grand Slam Collegiate Bridge Scholarship Initiative. This initiative will encourage, identify, reward and support potential collegiate bridge leaders. The scholarship(s) would be awarded annually to District 25 student(s) who have done the most to promote collegiate bridge. The District would provide one or two \$500 scholarships to help generate publicity and support for collegiate bridge programs in New England.

General discussion followed. J. Brouillard noted that evaluative criteria need to be established as well as methods to verify statements regarding current programs and activities. B. Segraves added that he did not think that all of this needed to be spelled out in advance. W. Kennedy suggested that a committee be formed and that the committee come back with more details. A motion was made that the District approves in principle, the establishment of a scholarship that would recognize leadership in college bridge, but that the committee must first flesh out and clarify how such leadership would be determined and how the scholarship would be administered before the initiative would be launched. The motion was seconded and approved.

Website modernization- President Miguel

I intend to form an ad hoc committee to look into modernizing the District 25 website. We can't depend on emails as our main method of communication because people are turning them off. I received eight emails from the ACBL in the last 2-days that were more engaging than the website. The committee would look into how this can be done.

A motion was made by J. Haley to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM. The motion was seconded and so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Weiser, Secretary, District 25

