

New England Bridge Conference of the American Contract Bridge League

Minutes
Executive Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 25, 2024
7:00 PM
Via Zoom

Attendance: Officers: President-Susan Miguel, Vice President-Denise Bahosh, Treasurer-Joe Brouillard, Secretary-Carolyn Weiser, Past President-Curtis Barton
Unit Representatives: EMBA -108- Linda Robinson (P. Harris alt.), Neil Montague (B. Montague alt.), CMBA- 113-Michael Kegan, CBA-126-William Seagraves, Michael Wavada, RIBA- 145-Joyce Haley, NHBA- 150-William Kennedy, VBA- 175-Sтивен Ackerman, MBA- 189-Daniel Morgenstern, WMBA- 196-Sheila Ryan
Invited Guest- Bronia Jenkins, ACBL Executive Director

President's Opening Remarks

We have two pressing matters to discuss, one developing and one serious situation.

You may remember my “over my dead body” comment regarding a future NABC in Providence, mostly because the local players and volunteers get nothing for helping the ACBL run a successful tournament. This is being fixed. For Louisville, the people in the district that are hosting will get reduced entry fees and special room rates. The tentative date is the summer of 2027. This will be a test case for a new model. The ACBL is losing a lot of money on NABCs. Joe Brouillard has agreed to co-chair if the ACBL selects Providence for the summer of 2027 and we all agree to host.

(C. Barton) I thought that they (the ACBL) wanted to get away from the convention center model.

(J. Brouillard) At the last Providence NABC the ACBL over booked the space. They took all five areas and the ballrooms upstairs. The lighting there was poor so they had to spend an additional \$20,000 for additional lighting. All we need is the Exhibition Hall. The space can be separated. We can use the Omni for the ACBL rooms.

(Pres. Miguel) The ACBL is getting killed on rooms, because rooms can be booked cheaper without the ACBL.

I received a call from Bronia (Jenkins) regarding our November 2024 tournament sanction. The sanction (Marlboro) was cancelled by the ACBL. We have a signed contact with the Marlboro hotel. Our sanction request was not filed until November 20 and the sanction was approved the next day – the same day ACBL board passed the new mileage rule. District 4 chose to exercise their right to veto our tournament as it falls into the 425-mile rule and they “own” the week as their traditional dates. Although the ACBL approved the sanction, they should not have, either under the old guidelines or new rules. Bronia does not feel comfortable using her authority to over-ride D-4, because of the dubious timing of the application and approval. If our sanction had been submitted in a timely fashion and approved in the usual manner and time, she would have more leeway. A review of the previous tournament shows that D-4 was not damaged as only 4 New York city players came to our tournament and some of our players chose to play there.

Bronia and J. Whipple will try to back channel negotiation to make this work, but they do not think that it will work. I don't think it will either. ACBL Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins has said that the ACBL will cover our \$2,500 hotel losses due to the cancellation. She offered D-4 \$2,500 if they would approve our running the tournament and they still said no.

(Pres S. Miguel) We can't find another place. B. Jenkins has contacted Conference Direct as ask that they work on our behalf to find an alternate site for October or November.

(Pres S. Miguel) There are possible issues if we sign a contract with Conference Direct. Sally called every place. D-4 is intransigent. 2025 is also a date nightmare. When covid hit we lost our traditional sites. Some went out of business and others have changed their rental policies or have more than enough bookings. We can't find new sites.

Marlboro has October 27 open. Sally (Kirtley) asked them to hold it. It is 356 miles from Manheim, a five hour and 40 minute drive. They have not agreed.

Discussion followed.

(Pres. Miguel) The ACBL gives precedence to traditional dates, and we have traditional dates of our own. We used to have the November tournament over Veterans Day. We could use the I/N Regional with an Open Sectional model, but that would still mean that D-25 will lose a Regional.

(D. Morgenstern) I would travel for a regional but not for a sectional.

(M. Ackerman) Would B. Jenkins use her veto.

(Pres. Miguel) I have asked, the answer is "no." Our tournament should have been sanctioned last year. It got put off. It usually takes weeks to get a sanction. This creates the impression that shenanigans took place.

General discussion followed.

(S. Ryan) Is this (the week in contention) their traditional week.

(Pres. Miguel) Yes, we don't even want that weekend because of Halloween.

ACBL Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins joined the meeting. President Miguel introduced her and brought her up to speed on the discussion.

(B. Jenkins) We are still working on the situation. Management and the ACBL Board try to make rules that are doable regarding sanctioning. Under Debbie Vicknair, the rule of thumb has been 500 miles for a regional and 200 miles for a sectional. The Board wanted to codify the rule and choose 425 for Regionals. They also wanted traditional dates protected. We (the ACBL) shouldn't have sanctioned the tournament. We will get Conference Direct to help Sally (Kirtley). We are still working with D-4, but D-4 can stonewall.

(Pres. Miguel) We cannot use a hotel on the Canadian Border. 425 miles is unreasonable in this area.

(D. Morgenstern) Do you have any sense as to why D-4 is so reluctant to approve Lancaster?

(B. Jenkins) They were told in 2023 that D-25 would never do it (have the same week) again.

(Pres. Miguel) If we use 2023 as a barometer, we had only 5 players from New York and there were an equal number of D-25 players who went to Lancaster.

(B. Jenkins) We did make the point. The 425 rule triggered the conversation. Traditional date owners are owners. I had a meeting today and they showed no flexibility on the matter. I think you have until May before the penalty from the hotel goes into effect. If the penalty is already in effect, we will pay the penalty. Do you have a place for 2025?

(Pres. Miguel) We have found none.

(B. Jenkins) If you use Conference Direct, you will be on the hook for their fee. They charge a 7-10% room fee, paid by the hotel to Conference Direct per room.

(Pres. Miguel) Does a Non-life Master regional fall under the same mileage rule?

(B. Jenkins) I will check.

(B. Seagraves) I understand the rule, but I hope that they understand the reality.

(Pres. Miguel) I would like to see the clubs, units and the district in a symbiotic relationship. I would like to create programs up and down the food chain. We created a new position, the Membership Coordinator, to help the units with the new 5-5-5 program.

(B. Jenkins) There is a good FAQ on-line. The Units will get an automatic 5% of the membership dues. There is a spreadsheet to fill out regarding lapsed and at risk members up to 5% as well as 5% for recruiting. Using the 5-5-5 tool, you can see who has lapsed with suggestions on how to reach out. There are alternate trick taking games such as euchre and hearts and spades.

(D. Morgenstern) Much of this is difficult for units with sparse populations, such as Maine. It is hard to recruit and hard for players to travel to tournaments. How is this not just a redistribution of income?

(B. Jenkins) It is based on prior behavior and member numbers. All you have to get is the same number you got before, based on past recruitment. The information was sent out in an email on January 8. J. Whipple programed the instrument. Auto-renewal is broken.

(M. Kagan) Anything targeted to youth?

(B. Jenkins) We have an updated Bridge in Schools initiative.

(J. Brouillard) Has anyone tried to work with AARP?

(B. Jenkins) They won't even talk to us.

General discussion followed.

President Miguel thanked Bronia for her time and efforts to find a solution for our November tournament issue.

(Bronia Jenkins left the meeting.)

Return to the Agenda

Secretary's Report – Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting, Return of the Gala
November 3, 2023 - Carolyn Weiser

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held at the Return of the Gala, November 3, 2023 as sent. The motion was accepted.

Approval of Appointments for 2024

President Miguel reviewed her appointments for 2024 as sent. A motion was made and seconded to accept the District 25 appointments for 2024 as sent. The motion was accepted.

Treasurer's Report – Joseph Brouillard

2023 was not a bad year. Our Total Current Assets show an increase of \$15,732 over 2022. A lot has to do with our investments at Fidelity. The National Fund is up. Our rate of return was 20.9%. We keep our idle money in a money market account. The total earned at Fidelity was good.

Our Operating Income Statement shows that we had three successful tournaments last year, the GNTs, the NAPs, and Warwick. These kept us solvent. Besides tournament income, we had Dividend Income, Grass-Roots Income and STaC Income. Most of the STaC income goes to the ACBL. Our total profit for 2023, income minus expenses, amounted to \$1,855. A lot of credit goes to the tournament committee. Everyone worked very hard.

(Pres. Miguel) In 2022, we lost money on tournaments because we spent a lot of money trying to get the players back.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's Report as given. The motion passed unanimously.

(Pres. Miguel) There are 3 appointments of note.

As the new Membership Chair, Jen Reidy, a member of EMBA who plays at my game, is very enthusiastic. She has about 500 points. She will reach out to help the units implement the 5-5-5 requirements and help to make the District a benefit to the units and clubs.

Linda Robinson has agreed to do the audit for the district.

Cathy Cooper was selected as the new Tournament Coordinator. She already has a cooperative relationship with Crystal at the ACBL. This position had a stipend attached. Peter (Marcus) chose not to accept it. The system has changed and there will be a lot of work involved in getting the units up to speed and managing sanctioning for the future. Previously the stipend was \$50.00 per tournament. Discussion followed and D. Morgenstern made a motion that the Tournament Coordinator be paid a stipend of \$250 per year. The motion was seconded and so voted without opposition. It will be paid at the end of the year.

(Pres. Miguel) We have been at this for two hours. I will keep you abreast of the D-4 situation. Thank goodness for Neil Montague, I have been keeping him very busy. Denise and I will continue to try new and different things to improve the bridge experience at for our District 25 players.

Denise and I had a holiday open house at which anyone could ask questions. Sixty people came. We will try this again the month before the next tournament. We had a second one at which 27 people came to ask questions about Mansfield. This group came and went. This is similar to what Lois and I did before the NABC. We will continue to do them. We want to be more available to the Units and Clubs.

(C. Barton) Have you considered a Speakers Bureau?

(J. Brouillard) What is the status of the 2027 Summer NABC? Are they really considering Providence?

(S. Miguel) Yes, they really wanted Providence as a possible site. Chicago is also in the running. Bronia wants to blow up the current model. It consistently loses money. With five different hotels with different price points working all the paradigms is a nightmare. This summer is a test case. Louisville will be a financial nightmare. We are considering a raffle at Mansfield for 2-free nights at Louisville. We have the same problem. Players can find rooms other than at the host hotel that are cheaper. We need incentives for the players to stay at the site hotel.

(C. Barton) The free breakfast at Mansfield is a big thing.

(Pres. Miguel) Our block was 125 rooms and we have sold 127 rooms. The items bought at the concession stand will count toward our hospitality total. If we have a modest turnout, should break. If we have our usual numbers, we will make a profit. We can put all the games in one room.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and so voted at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Weiser, Secretary D-25