

Minutes of the District 6 Board Meeting

Virtual Meeting, Wednesday, February 9, 2022

Nineteen Present:

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| Officers: | President | David Rodney |
| | Vice President | Barry Fratkin |
| | Treasurer | Doug Grove |
| Unit Presidents: | Anne Atwood (Unit 109), Ed Rothenheber (Unit 135), David Butler (Unit 139), Hadi Abushakra (Unit 147), Georgette Weiss (Unit 218), John Markey (Unit 231). | |
| Other Voting Members: | Barbara Doran (ACBL Advisory Council Rep.), Steve Robinson (1 st Alt. D6 District Director, Recorder/Competitions & Conventions), Shawn Stringer (Regional Manager, 2 nd Alt. D6 Regional Director), Jane Farthing (Immediate Past President) | |
| Non-Voting Members: | Margot Hennings (Regional Director), Bill Cole (Grass Roots Chair, GNT/NAP), Lucy McCoy (District Tournament Coordinator), Ron Kral (Webmaster, Unit 218/IN Coordinator/Ed. Liaison), Jay Simon (Vice President, Unit 218), Marty Bley (Past President, Unit 218, TC Baltimore Regional) | |

Minutes prepared by Dan Koch, Secretary, from recording of the meeting.

President's Report

David Rodney started the meeting by mentioning recruitment needs: we are seeking someone to take over conducting occasional surveys, preferably someone familiar with SurveyMonkey. In addition, we are seeking someone to replace Jane Farthing as chair of Williamsburg Regional, a position from which she is stepping down.

Next, he stated that the D6-wide pair game on the third Wednesday of each month appears to be succeeding, with 40-45 tables, but only about 4 tables for the 199er game. So the District is seeking ideas for how to improve participation in that bracket.

Next, he mentioned that Anne Atwood has now become a member of the ACBL Advisory Council, and offered his congratulations.

Marty Bley mentioned that when new members join the ACBL, they have no idea to which unit they belong, where to go on BBO, or where to play F2F. Margot made a note of this concern, so that hopefully the ACBL will do more.

David will send an email about the upcoming District 5 round-robin team game, in which District 6 is invited to participate. He enjoyed participation in the previous event, which had about 50-60 tables divided into six or more leagues, and which was very successful.

Bill Cole next gave the Committee Report for the Grass Roots (NAP, GNT). He reported that the 0-6000 GNT had normal attendance and went well. However, he was worried that there were relatively few

entries on the lower flights, especially flight C, even though usually we get most of those entries at the last minute.

Minutes -- the Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report -- Doug Grove said that most of the narrative is in the report he circulated prior to the meeting by email. The balance sheet and financial statements perhaps overstate our financial condition, because we still must pay travel subsidies for the NAP, and we have receipts for the GNT but have not yet paid expenses for it.

Committee Reports

Regional Management -- Shawn Stringer reported that Marty and Ross Bley have agreed to be co-tournament chairs for the Baltimore Regional. However, the event schedule is hard to devise without data. David Butler has been doing great work gathering data from recent tournaments. I/N games have totally collapsed, and have been cancelled. Houston's table count went from 3000 to 1400, but it had no I/N events. The other problem is that we must delete night games, since they are drawing no attendance. Almost every other regional has already switched away from night games, except for Gatlinburg. They are costly because with a director and other expenses, they cost at least \$400/session, and maybe more if they necessitate an extra director for the tournament, and attendance does not recoup these amounts.

For team games, Houston went to bracketed Swiss teams daily, with the open bracket (only) being a round-robin the first day with a K/O the next day. We will follow that format. We are exploring exclusion of high-MP players from the lower brackets- we will see if the ACBL will permit it.

Most regionals are coming in at about 40% of pre-pandemic table totals, with Hilton Head maybe a little bit better, because it is a resort destination. Using the Myrtle Beach tournament as a model, we projected 646 tables, and developed a financial grid showing that at entry fees of \$13/session, it looks like a \$31,000 loss, including a likely hotel penalty. Many expenses are fixed, but some are variable. We have no food and beverage commitment to the hotel. At \$15/session, our loss reduces to \$24K, at \$16/session it is \$21K, and if we get 700 or 900 tables we still get a \$10K deficit, according to our model. So it looks like loss is looming between \$10-30K. The I/N games are a mystery, we don't want to abandon them, but we are drawing no players. One idea was to conduct a "Bridge U" in the evening. There is another man in the Midwest compiling data on all regional and sectional tournament attendance, and we will consult his data too.

A lengthy discussion then ensued. Margot asked about whether giving free plays as prizes was costly, and said our entry fees are low. Shawn answered that we are reducing free plays from \$5K to \$2500. Barry Fratkin said that we will need more promotion by the Units, and it may be time to consider running a bus. They ran a bus to the Fredericksburg Sectional, filling it several times and saving the tournament.

Shawn noted that demographics have also been causing a decline in regional attendance which the pandemic has just been accelerating. The Hunt Valley regional dropped from more than 3000 tables in 2010 to 1800 tables in 2019, for example.

Doug Grove noted that we have the funds in our regional tournament reserves to withstand a \$20K loss. Although we could not do too many of them, we could stand one as we emerge from the pandemic.

Barry also said that BBO giving gold/silver MP's for online regionals will suppress live tournament attendance. Margot said the number of such events will be reduced this year compared to 2020 and 2021.

The Hilton Head tournament is beta-testing a cashless, registrant system. However, it doesn't accept free plays; they will work out a credit back for free plays, or some other way to accommodate them. Ron thought we might want to keep fees at \$13, and advertise it, to bring people back. David Rodney and others thought there was not much evidence for elasticity, i.e., that higher entry fees reduce attendance. Others cautioned that to keep people coming back, the experience must include prizes and hospitality, vs. other tournaments that offer nothing but masterpoints. People should be understanding that costs have increased. Eventually the breakeven point may be \$20, and eventually we will need a long-term plan to raise fees to a sustainable level, and/or make other adjustments.

At the end of the discussion, David moved that the entry fees at the Baltimore Regional be raised to \$16, which passed; however, the fee would not be on the advertising flyer, to allow for last-minute adjustment.

District Tournament – Lucy mentioned the desirability of having an online partnership desk, for teams/pairs. Ron Kral said at a Florida tournament there was a very sophisticated version, disguising identity until users were highly likely to agree to play, but thought it was unsuccessful, because people want to see potential partners. He thought automated systems worked better at the Unit level. But at regionals old-fashioned cards on a bulletin board may be the best.

Finance -- no report.

Goodwill -- no report.

Education -- Ron Kral said that Bridge University would not be educational but rather a marketing program, and it should be early in the week of a Regional in order to bring in new players; we should consider giving free play coupons to those who attend.

Website - Barry Fratkin reported that everything seemed to be working ok with the website.

Judiciary – David Rodney said that things were quiet.

Regional Director's Report – Margot Hennings sent a lengthy email in advance, summarizing topics to be discussed in the upcoming NABC in Reno, although there will be more to report after Reno. There is likely to be an Institute of Bridge Arbitration, for high-level cases of cheating. There will also be discussion of strategic goals at Reno. For example, there may be separate divisions based on online and face-to-face; everything is up for consideration or reconsideration.

In addition, there will be a new convention card coming out this year; there have been articles about it in the ACBL bulletin and lots online. It is the result of a multi-year process and will be unveiled in the next few months.

Other Old Business - Jane Farthing reported that the Longest Day event will be coming in June. It will be an action item for Units. It will be f2f; the ACBL site already has the link.

New Business -- Margot had two action items. First, the Royal STaC (MP's 25% gold/red/silver/black) has been proposed as a 1-off, i.e., not to be repeated, to boost going back to F2F. If we do it, it will need promotion, especially by club managers. A sample flyer is attached. Margot proposed April 11-17 as the dates, giving enough time to promote, and to allow the weather and hopefully virus conditions to improve. The ACBL will do an email blast to all members. Statistics showed that attendance jumped when it was held in Districts 3, 4 and 24.

We will need someone at the D6 level II honcho it. Margot and Doug will think through what D6 effort will be needed. A motion to conduct the Royal STaC April 11-17 was approved.

Margot's second action item is that the Washington DC area has been in the rotation for an NABC every six years, but needs us to approve restoring it. (It was taken off the calendar for 2022 when the venue, the Marriott Wardman Park, went bankrupt. The Summer 2022 NABC was transferred to Providence, RI, whose 2021 Summer NABC was canceled due to COVID. Only two sites are under consideration in the D6 area: in DC, the Gaylord at National Harbor, and in Baltimore, a Hilton combo. The League is proposing the Summer of 2026 or the Spring of 2027. The ACBL will not start examining without our expression of interest, although our commitment is not essential now. The discussion focused on parking rates, which are essential to be negotiated, and volunteers. Historically the host District provided lots of volunteers, but it is not clear that model is viable any more. Every District is facing this issue; we don't know what the model for future tournaments will be. If the ACBL moves forward, it will have to be addressed. If there is a smaller event, of course fewer volunteers would be needed. David's motion to go forward with an expression of interest was approved.

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at 10am, to be held again by Zoom.

Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. Regional Director's Summary (w/ 3 attachments)
3. Treasurer's Report (w/ 3 attachments)