

Minutes of the District 6 Board Meeting

Virtual Meeting, Wednesday, May 10, 2022

Fifteen Present:

Officers:	President	David Rodney
	Vice President	Barry Fratkin
	Treasurer	Doug Grove
Unit Presidents:	Karen Crowley (Unit 110), Anne Atwood (Unit 109), Ed Rothenheber (Unit 135), Hadi Abushakra (Unit 147), Georgette Weiss (Unit 218), Barbara Duer (Unit 146).	
Other Voting Members:	Barbara Doran (ACBL Advisory Council Rep.), 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), Jay Simon (Vice President, Unit 218)	

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

President's Report

For the previous (April) D6-wide game, due to a snafu and confusion, there was no director. Going forward, the NVBA collective will be sure to provide a director for the D6-wide games.

He provided a variety of comments regarding the future of online and face-to-face bridge:

- The ACBL is trying to update its guest policy to accommodate situations where current policy doesn't work well; for example, Neil Cowie runs a club at the IMF, where former employees sometimes return, and ran afoul of guest rule policies
- Most F2F club games are 5-6 tables, much less than before
- The WBL and NVBA unit games, which together before the pandemic hosted as many as 90 tables, now are alternating, with one site F2F and the other online; the F2F game is very small, but the total is only 50% of what the combined game totaled online just a few months before!
- He received a letter from the President of D7, saying that there should be no pigmented points offered online, perhaps after prompted by the Gatlinburg Regional seeing only 40-45% of its pre-pandemic total.

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. STaCs are showing a small profit. For the Royal STaC, fees were reduced to \$5 to help clubs, and it exceeded projections, with 1200 tables across 4 districts. Two more STaCs are scheduled for this year. Clubs away from the DC-Baltimore corridor are doing relatively better.

Grass Roots – Bill Cole reported that the GNT had been completed. Attendance 2 years ago had been 70 tables, and this year we had 53, still near the top of the ACBL and equivalent to the F2F play pre-pandemic. Because the clubs won't run team games for GNT club qualifiers, we will only have entry

fees, vs. \$12K expenses for trips for the winners. There are some savings for online, but we are doing Zoom for 2nd weekends, so we will lose money.

For the NAP, the Executive Committee decided to go online. Last year we had club qualifiers, which the ACBL will require. The NAP will be Oct. 15-16. David Rodney wondered whether the D6-wide game could qualify, but was not sure. Jay Simon said that club attendance is dropping very significantly, all morning games were cancelled, only Tuesday and Thursday evening virtual club games have survived; the big online clubs have driven them out. Bill agreed that a few big clubs were cannibalizing small clubs. One Tennessee club had 40,000 tables last year! Margot said the ACBL National Board has a special meeting on this on May 16.

Bill is concerned that we can't get enough tables at face-to-face games for qualifiers, so he is planning to do online qualifying; the discussion suggested that for special events, F2F games may be well attended.

Barry Fratkin said that as long as BBO is allowed to give pigmented points, F2F bridge will not survive; online bridge is just too convenient. Margot clarified that BBO is just the platform, and it is the ACBL that awards pigmented points, and that is definitely under discussion right now.

District Tournaments - Lucy McCoy said that people are coming back for STaCs and she had no problems to report.

Regional Management – Shawn Stringer reported that Baltimore will be our only regional for 2022. For 2023, we have three, Richmond, Reston, and Baltimore. All three are under the previous contract format, with way too many rooms guaranteed, so must be renegotiated. Right now we could cancel Richmond for zero dollars, but she is not suggesting we do that. For Richmond, the guarantee of 850 room-nights is too much, but the penalty is limited to \$5000. For Reston, 950 room-nights is also too much. For Baltimore we reduced our room block by 40%, so the hotel forced us to reduce our space by 40%. So if we get great attendance, we may have to turn people away because we lack space, but she is not expecting that to happen. We can cancel Baltimore for 2023 without penalty, for 10 days after the tournament starts; that means only two or three days after it ends, but we should have a good sense about it by then. For 2024 the only signed contract we have is Baltimore, and we have had discussions with Williamsburg and Reston, which would normally be coming up for signature.

In Williamsburg and Richmond we are getting decent deals from hotels, but in the Washington area the hotels are expensive and will never let us bring food in. Marty Bley told me that at the recent 5-day regional in Rehoboth, they rented a very small convention center, but they were allowed to bring food in. They charged \$20 per session, all 2-session events, which included lunch, so that was roughly equivalent to our \$16 for Baltimore, with \$4 from each session covering lunch; a vendor offered a choice of two sandwiches or a salad. Rehoboth had about 50 tables per session, and we are expecting about that at Baltimore. We could accommodate that at the Elks Club or at some of our senior centers, so maybe that is what the future holds. We should also consider reducing regionals to 5 or 6 days at the most. David commented that the Elks Club sometimes formerly had 70 tables for a Sunday Swiss and a regional there would be a different experience, but perhaps times are changing and we should make the best of it.

Goodwill - Winnie Fratkin said (after Shawn Stringer confirmed that the only place into which we can bring food at Baltimore would be to a suite) that a suite would probably be large enough for the

expected attendance at a hospitality reception. Previously it cost \$700-\$800 but was well received. After discussion, the tentative plan would be for just dessert, not dinner, and to have the function perhaps 60-90 minutes after the end of the 3:30 PM session, so that people could enjoy dessert together after returning from dinner. Traditionally the hospitality reception takes place on Friday. Doug Grove suggested not excluding the time period between sessions, especially because new inductees (?) will be honored at that time.

Website - Barry Fratkin explained that for some routine items, people may directly contact Lauren Brown to make changes on the website, but that anything else must go through him, and after he approves them, Lauren will make the changes.

Appellate/Judiciary- Quiet, per David Rodney.

Regional Director's Report – Margot Hennings reported that Mike Kovacich, a really valued former member of our board who was very active in other ACBL roles, passed away suddenly recently and will be missed.

For the Royal STaC, we went in with districts 12, 13, and 14; D5 in February decided that it had too few active F2F clubs to do it. All data is not in, but we are not sure that it brings back F2F play for longer than the single event, which was a principal goal.

Visitor policy- the ACBL Board as a special meeting scheduled on this for May 16; there are strong opinions on both sides.

Florida had a regional at same time as Rehoboth; it ran seven days and had, maybe, slightly fewer tables. They tried a promotion offering online players, if they played at the Regional, a second game free of charge; it got an underwhelming response. Lots of new ideas are being discussed, such as a proposal to prohibit online play by players living within a certain distance of a Regional while it is in progress; the district that considered that decided not to implement it, a decision Margot endorses, because it would have been inflammatory.

NVBA will be having its 1st sectional in 27 months; she is the tournament chair, and is dealing with arrangements such as food, which is complicated by staffing shortages, but there will be sandwiches available. There will be much more space between tables: for example, there will be 40 tables upstairs and 12 each in the two downstairs rooms, for a total of 64, even though pre-pandemic 80 or 90 could be crammed into the same spaces. However, there will be two fewer sessions, and the online session at the WBL Thursday night will not be part of the sectional.

Margot will attend the Cleveland Regional taking place before Memorial Day, in D5 which is part of our region. She will meet lots of people there and will be discussing all of these same issues.

After the May 16 ACBL meeting Margot will send her report to Lauren for posting on the website.

Jane, Barry and others noted announcements on online games, soliciting 499er game entries elsewhere, as possibly poaching. Margot asked that samples be sent to her.

Hadi Abushakra reported on the 1st F2F WBL game. WBL needed 21 tables to break even, and had only 11- 7 in the open game, 4 in the BCD, 0 in the 0-20 game. In addition, rent is going up in the fall. Units can withstand some losses for a while, but can't do it indefinitely. Hadi said there are some people who

prefer online play and the future of bridge must be inclusion, not exclusion. Margot said there will be continued experimentation, trying to find formats that work.

David Rodney said that based upon our discussion, it is beginning to appear that the baseline for routine club level bridge will be online, but people will turn out F2F for something special.

Barb Doran commented that despite having only 11 tables, but everyone had a great time, and if we talk it up may improve over time.

Discussion continued on whether tournaments can survive if pigmented points are offered online, or at Royal STaCs. Margot emphasized that there was a pre-Covid model, a model for during Covid, and hopefully there will be a post-Covid model. Attendance at online regionals is now declining. David said that size of the field may be more important than whether the points are pigmented.

New business- Elections for officers will take place at the next meeting. David will be retiring after his 2 years as President. Barb Doran will recruit candidates for vacant offices.

Next meeting. The meeting will be at the Baltimore Regional, F2F for dinner Saturday 8/27.

Daniel Koch

Secretary, D6

Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. Profit & Loss Statement- FY '22, 8 mos. only
3. Balance Sheet- FY '22, 8 mos. only
4. Management report on Royal STaC April 2022