

# NATIONAL BOARD REPORT SUMMER 2023

## ON A PERSONAL NOTE

I am excited about the future of the game of bridge and the ACBL, more-so than ever before in my time on the ACBL Board. Most of this is due to the energetic and contagious personality of our new Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins, who has brought enthusiasm to both Management and the Board. Bronia has many ideas to push bridge out into the general population, ranging from “Duplicate Spades” to Bridge4Friends—social bridge games—to “Pickle-Bridge,” where she hopes to piggyback onto the Pickleball craze. She hosted a very popular “Games Night” at our recent Summer NABC in Chicago with another planned for Atlanta in the Fall. Stand by for more info on all these ideas as they are tried out and hopefully found to bear fruit by bringing in new members.

There are several signs that face-to-face bridge is also on the upswing. The Chicago NABC surpassed the predicted table count of 7,606, with 8,347 tables in play. Most of our sectionals and regionals are showing small but steady increases in table count over tournaments held in 2022.

Future bridge play will of necessity include opportunities for both FTF and online play, and changes are being made to improve online play: When the pandemic hit, a plan was put into place that was designed to protect virtual clubs so that they would remain viable until the pandemic was behind us. “Include Lists” and “Guest Lists” were created at that time. As of August 1, 2023, however, these restrictions were removed. Now, when you click on “virtual clubs” on BBO, you will see every game listed according to the time they are being held and you can choose to play anywhere. Be aware that there is still a cap on overall masterpoint awards for games over 25 tables. This restriction allows smaller club games to be more competitive and creative with pricing and advertising—and your chance of winning masterpoints is greater in a smaller field and the masterpoint advantage of large games has been removed.

One final note: Many of us dislike change when we have been entrenched in doing something one way for a long time, and the new convention card that was approved in late 2021 is an example. In response to member feedback, the ACBL’s Competition and Conventions Committee unanimously decided at its July meeting to allow players to use either the “new” convention card, or its predecessor, the “old” card (the one in effect immediately before the 2021 change), in all ACBL events.

Players who prefer the older version – and who may still be using them in sanctioned play – may continue to do so. An updated version of the old card – one that features a few minor changes to colors based on the current Alert and Announcement procedures – will be available soon. The card looks almost identical to the previous iteration.

The sections that follow are part of a report to which all Committee Chairs contribute regarding specific motions and policy initiatives that were discussed by the ACBL Board of Directors at its face-to-face (F2F) spring meetings Monday, July 10 through Thursday, July 13, 2023 in Chicago. Individual Board members, committees and work groups meet regularly through Zoom and conference calls to help ensure that these FTF discussions are productive and efficient.

Other information presented in this report has been sourced from the summer Management Report.

Thanks for reading...--*Margot Hennings, Region 4 (D5 and D6) Director*

## FINANCE

The change in net assets from January 1, 2023 to May 31, 2023 was \$627K. \$364K of this amount was income from operations, largely due to increased NABC income, and \$263K reflects the change in the market value of investments. These numbers are \$209K better than the 2023 budget and \$624K better than the same time period in 2022.

There is a continued investment in technology that was capitalized in the first five months of 2023. \$147K was spent on the development of the new Masterpoint Engine and \$139K was spent on the AS400 modernization.

Management proposed fee increases in all areas that will go into effect January 1, 2024. Member dues, club sanction fees, special game fees and tournament fees will increase along with cruise and land cruise sanction fees and NABC entry fees. Many of these fees have not been increased in several years, since before the pandemic. Communications to follow.

Planning is underway for tiered regular and social memberships. The new social memberships will have an annual cost of \$29 per year or \$2.99 a month and will allow players to accumulate up to 100 masterpoints.

Management also proposed a plan for tiered patron memberships that will range from patron to silver and gold patron memberships with varying benefits associated with each level.

Item 232-FN01 moved to clarify the language and specific procedures and tools used by ACBL as referenced in the Codification, Appendix 2-A Accounts Payable and Check Cashing Policies: Chapter II - Business Management, A. Finance.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One representative absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediately

## **MEMBERSHIP**

As of June 2023, ACBL membership totaled 132,247. New member recruitment is up 32.9% from 2022. Guest memberships continue to increase. To date, 2,576 guest members have converted to regular memberships. As of June 30, there were 1,897 active guest members.

## **MEMBERSHIP BUILDING TASK FORCE**

The Membership Building Task Force is actively reviewing the ACBL Codification relating to membership building and retention to determine synergies and whether improvements to processes, and redistribution of funding, are warranted.

Additional initiatives for consideration by management include the implementation of a Member Referral Program, and an initiative to expand ACBL presence digitally as well as F2F within organizations and associations that appeal to youth and to the 50 to 65 age demographic.

In Chicago, the Task Force brought forth the following motion and fostered a discussion on the utilization of the 11% of full dues payments and life master service fees paid to Units by their members.

Item 232-ME01 moved to redefine the requirements for the Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP) reimbursements. This includes providing ACBL with program plans and evaluations and offering guest memberships to program participants. ACBL will garner best practices to support future planning efforts.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: January 1, 2024.

A discussion (DI232-MEO) regarding the utilization of the 11% of full dues payments and life master service fees paid to units by their members occurred in the Finance Committee meeting and in Full Board.

In March 2022, the Board unanimously passed (Item 221-GV02) which eliminated the requirement for Units to hold at least one sectional every two years, and clarified that the 11% of full dues payments and life master service fees paid by their members is intended to supplement Unit funds for activities related to membership building and retention. Based on this clarification, discussions focused on building awareness of the intended use of funds, determining how Units are using the funds and providing Units with collaborative materials, including best practices. Management and the Board agreed that a reporting component should be added to ensure compliance with the intended purpose of funds usage.

The Task Force will compile feedback provided by the Board, management and stakeholders, collaborate with management to communicate with Units and provide fund distribution and usage scenarios for presentation in fall 2023.

## **BOOST F2F BRIDGE**

Boost F2F Bridge, a joint pilot initiative with ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation, is aimed at building membership by providing support for F2F beginning bridge teachers and F2F bridge clubs. ACBL uses social ad campaigns to identify individuals interested in learning bridge. Leads generated from these campaigns are then funneled to participating teachers. Selected teachers must offer guest memberships to students and have access to F2F clubs where students can take lessons and advance to in-person supervised play.

For summer 2023, 21 campaigns generated 1,406 leads and 131 students. An additional 166 individuals expressed interest in taking classes in the near future. ACBL is accepting submissions for third quarter. Currently, over 22 campaigns are scheduled.

## **BYLAWS**

The second reading (Item 231-BY01) to amend Bylaws Article III, Section 3.5 to include an expanded list of who is subject to binding arbitration, and to add Article XII detailing how arbitration will work, passed the Board by the required two-thirds majority vote. The first reading was passed by the Board in March 2023.

Effective: Immediate upon ratification by the Advisory Council which occurred during its July 25 meeting.

## **GOVERNANCE**

In keeping with the fast pace of our new Executive Director and thinking ahead as to how Board operations can accommodate the downsizing in 2024 to a smaller Board of 13, the Governance Committee developed streamlined procedures that were presented at the summer meeting. These “Interim Guidelines” meet the requirements of our ACBL bylaws, but provide a more flexible way of doing business in advance of and during “Regular” and “Special” meetings. These Interim Guidelines will be in effect on a trial basis through our fall meeting in Atlanta and can be adapted as needed for meetings after that. Ultimately, the procedures the Board adopts will drive a new version of its regulations (the Codification) that will facilitate better communication, cooperation and coordination among working groups, task forces and committees across the organization (management, the Advisory Council, other volunteer groups and the Board) to address the bridge business functions that are critical to ACBL.

As part of its routine work, and in addition to the development of the Interim Guidelines that were based on Discussion (Item DI232-GV01) the Governance Committee reviewed five motions:

The first (232-GV01) was submitted through its Regional Director by a District concerned with expanding the criteria that would define a Member Not in Good Standing to include not serving “in any club administrative capacity.” Currently, a Member Not in Good Standing is not permitted to serve as a club manager or club director (among other non-allowed positions and responsibilities as detailed in the Codification, Chapter I – Membership, Section 2 – Definitions and Rights of ACBL Membership, 2.3.2, a. through j.). This motion was debated in Committee and brought to the Full Board with a narrow margin of approval. After considerable discussion by all Board members, the motion failed by a vote of 6-12-0-0. The concern was that as much as the Board wanted to honor the District’s request to ensure integrity at the Unit and club level, there is already the ability for a club to make its own rules in this regard. To codify this across all clubs would be difficult, given the ambiguity about what “administrative capacity” would mean to each club.

Item 232-GV02 was unanimous in Committee and submitted to the Board as part of the Consent Calendar. This motion deleted many of the administrative requirements for the monthly ACBL Bridge Bulletin as had been listed in the Codification ,Chapter II - Business Management - D. ACBL Bulletin. The Bulletin functions should be the responsibility of the Editor and editorial staff as part of the editorial decision-making process and therefore, do not need to be included in the Codification. The changes to this section of the Codification reflect that and are effective immediately. There are several additional references to ACBL Bridge Bulletin throughout other sections of the Codification, and the Governance Committee will be reviewing these to ensure they are deleted or changed to be consistent with the policy approved at this meeting.

Item 232-GV03 revised procedures dealing with requirements for the individuals the ACBL Board recommends to the United States Bridge Federation (USBF) to represent the ACBL on the World Bridge Federation (WBF) Executive Council and on the North American Bridge Federation Board; and clarified how and for what purpose the ACBL makes payments to the National Bridge Organizations (NBOs)—in the case of the WBF Zone 2, this includes the USBF and the national Canadian and Mexican bridge organizations. These procedures are detailed in the Codification, Chapter VII - International Bridge A. Zone 2 National Bridge Organizations (NBOs), Chapter VII – International Bridge B. WBF Representatives and NABF Board Members, Chapter VII – International Bridge C. International Fund and to Chapter VII – International Funds D. World Junior Championships.

Carried: 15-0-1-2. Two representatives were absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

At the spring meeting in New Orleans, three motions were tabled, all having to do with ACBL Hall of Fame (HOF) Operating Procedures—ensuring that nominees are appropriately vetted for their “ethics, deportment and sportsmanship” by the ACBL disciplinary bodies responsible for conducting such investigations; proposing consistency across the number of years before deceased individuals could be nominated for both the von Zedtwitz and Blackwood Awards; and other minor cleanup

changes to the procedures. The semantic and procedural differences in the changes proposed by these three motions were subsequently discussed at length among the HOF Chair, the Board Liaison to the HOF, the Governance Chair and the motion makers. There was no disagreement that it is a privilege to be nominated for any ACBL honorary award, that the standards for nomination must be high and that proposed candidates should be vetted by ACBL—how to accomplish these goals was the issue to be resolved. This was done in Item 232-GV04, which proposes the Executive Director as the appropriate person to make this determination, with the confidentiality of players maintained. Vetting includes candidates not only for the HOF, including the Von Zedtwitz, Blackwood and Sydney Lazard, Jr. Sportsmanship Awards, but also the ACBL Honorary Member of the Year, the Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year and the Nadine Wood Honorary Member of the Year.

These changes to the Codification, Chapter I - Membership Operating Guidelines F. Discipline and the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations, Section 3 – Disciplinary Administrative Policies were approved.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One representative was absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

Item 232-GV05 reflects these approved requirements that the HOF Committee will follow per its revised Operating Procedures before publishing the nomination of its candidates.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One representative was absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

## **APPEALS & CHARGES**

The Appeals & Charges Committee reported on hearings it held since its last report to the Board: One Automatic Review of an Online Ethical Oversight Committee matter and two reviews of Negotiated Resolutions. Hearing reports are available at the Ethics & Discipline area of the ACBL website: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>

Item 232-AC03 moved to delete references to American Arbitration Association (AAA) from the CDR, bringing the CDR into alignment with the Institute for Bridge Arbitration's (IBA) actual implementation.

Carried: 18-0-0.  
Effective: Immediate.

Item 232-AC04 moved that CDR 403(d)(3) Suspension, maximum of six months be revised to maximum of twenty-four months.

Carried: 18-0-0.  
Effective: Immediate.

## BRIDGE

The Board engaged in several bridge-related discussions and considered the following motions:

Item 232-BR01 clarifies and provides consistency to the information presented in the Codification, Chapter X: Sectionals, and introduces bridge camps, a special instance of a local sectional, where a residential program of bridge instruction incorporates games similar to tournaments-at-sea where silver points are awarded.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: September 1, 2023.

Item 232-BR02 moved to approve the 2023-2024 GNT Conditions of Contest. Substantive changes to the GNT Conditions of Contest are: Flight C to use the Basic+ Convention Chart instead of the Basic Chart and to permit un-proctored online play. Most COVID-specific provisions were removed.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: September 1, 2023.

ACBL maintains a list of top lifetime masterpoint holders which is published annually in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. A discussion (DI232-BR01) resulted in the decision to review current criteria established for inclusion or removal from the list, ensuring consistency and transparency moving forward. This review, to be conducted by management and the Bridge Committee, may result in policy and/or modifications to the Codification.

In 2021, a strength of field motion (202-21 first reading and 20S6-03 second reading) was unanimously passed by the Board. This discussion (DI232-BR02) focused on concerns over the cost, the timeframe for implementation and how the implementation ranks in terms of organizational priorities. Rather than relying on an outside vendor, the IT team, headed by Jay Whipple, determined a cost effective and simplified solution for implementation to occur before year-end.

A discussion (DI232-BR04) centered on whether a change to the grass roots funding structure will invigorate these prestigious events. This resulted in an action item to management to review the financial spreadsheet as well as past motions/regulations affecting Grass Roots. Management will work with the Bridge Committee to propose a potential solution that will be considered at the fall meeting.

A discussion (DI232-BR05) resulted in approval for virtual clubs to run a week of Club Appreciation games in October 2023 and a week of Charity games in November and in December 2023 with funds allocated to the ACBL Charity Foundation. Upon further investigation, management is unable to implement the extra charity games in 2023 due to additional programming requirements.



## **NABC SITE SELECTION**

The NABC Site Selection Committee recommended Seattle, WA as the location for the fall 2027 NABC. The site visit to the Summit Convention Center and Hyatt Regency (host hotel) was conducted on June 21-22, 2023. The committee reported the financial projection and the benefits of the space, e.g., many nearby restaurants, bars and attractions, a high walkability rating and an affordable room rate of \$189.

The Board unanimously supported Seattle, WA for the fall 2027 NABC.

## **ACBL CHARITY FOUNDATION UPDATE**

The dual challenges of declining membership and the effects of the pandemic have prompted the ACBL Charity Foundation Trustees to propose a revised giving strategy communicated to the Board by Foundation President Jackie Zayac. It includes resuming the grant rotation to Districts on a two-year rather than a four-year rotation, awarding each District \$10,000. The rotation will begin in 2023 with Districts within Regions 2-6 and in 2024 with Districts within Regions 7-13. Region 1 (Districts 1 and 2) receives charity funds from the Canadian Bridge Federation and are not included in the rotation. Region 13 (Districts 18 and 19) share one grant because its membership is split between Canada and the U.S.

The Foundation will continue grants in the amount of \$5,000 to a qualified 501(c)3 organization at each NABC, but will suspend individual grants. The Foundation also proposed the establishment of a catastrophic relief fund, maintaining a minimum balance of \$50,000.

An election to fill two Trustee positions will occur at the Foundation Membership Meeting in November. Declarations are due by October 15, 2023. For details, contact ACBL Election Secretary: [elections@acbl.org](mailto:elections@acbl.org).

## **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

Jon Brissman, Jan Martel, Karen Allison and Marjorie Michelin were each appointed to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee for a three-year term from the end of the Summer 2023 NABC through the end of the Summer 2026 NABC.