

Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors of District 16 of the American Contract Bridge League

Sept 8, 2020

An online meeting of the Board of Directors of District 16 of the American Contract Bridge League was held virtually on the Zoom meeting platform on September 8, 2020. In attendance were:

Executive Officers

Nancy Strohmer	President
Betty Starzec	1 st Vice President
Jim Bauer	2 nd Vice President
Tom Trudeau	Executive Treasurer
Tomi Storey	Executive Secretary

Voting Board Members (Unit Representatives)

Rebecca Brown	Unit 172	
Sue Gerard	Unit 173	
Lauri Laufman	Unit 174	
Jim Bauer	Unit 176	
Steve Shirey	Unit 183	
Carolyn Worsham	Unit 201	(Proxy for E.W. Sweeney)
Neal Perlman	Unit 204	
Lew Crippen	Unit 205	
BJ Sanders	Unit 207	
Jo Smith	Unit 224	
Gay Roach	Unit 225	
Lynn Sykes	Unit 233	
Ian Irving	Unit 254	
Marsha May	Unit 353	

Non-Voting Board Members

Representing District 16 on ACBL Board of Directors

Paul Cuneo, Director

Committee Chairs

Betty Starzec	Awards/Honors
Nancy Strohmer	Charity
Rebecca Brown	Disciplinary
Rachell Jackson	Marketing/Publicity
Sandy Potts	Membership
Lew Crippen	Mexico Regional
Tomi Storey	Tournaments

Standing Positions

Jack LaVigne	District Recorder
Stu Nelan	I/N Coordinator
Scott Nason	GNT Coordinator
Larry Davis	NAP Coordinator
Scott Humphrey	Tournament Coordinator
D16 Board of Governors	Betty Starzec

Call to Order and Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 AM and a quorum was confirmed. President Strohmer began the meeting with by asking for an introduction of all members present. Everyone introduced themselves, giving their unit and position on the Board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDAS

A motion was made and seconded to approve them as written. Betty Starzec noted that the decision to have a breakfast when the awards were able to be handed out face to face had been omitted. A new motion was made to accept the minutes as verbally amended, seconded, and passed unanimously. Reports for the consent agenda had been previously distributed to all members and will be discussed as needed in the committee reports.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Executive Treasurer Tom Trudeau presented the financial report. Another \$500 in pandemic support has been provided to a unit, bringing the total to six. \$1,600 has been allotted for award pins, with \$800 already submitted as a partial payment. In addition, \$5,200 has been paid to the IRS in penalties and interest for the 2016 tax

year, when forms were not filed in a timely fashion. This is currently being appealed, but it is possible that additional interest and penalties may be charged for tax years 2017 and 2018.

Rebecca Brown thanked Mr. Trudeau for all the work he has done to clean up records and for his diligence in resolving issues. A motion was made and seconded to approve the Treasurer's report and passed by acclamation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Special Award Presentation

Betty Starzec began her presentation (with a few technical difficulties along the way) with a very special announcement. Rather than waiting until a live presentation could be made, she announced that Rebecca Brown is the 2020 recipient of the Oswald and James Jacoby Service Award. This award is usually presented at the Dallas Labor Day Regional at this time of year. That means that Ms. Brown, adding to her many other achievements and accomplishments, is our first winner to be announced virtually. Congratulations were made to Ms. Brown, who graciously accepted. She said she deeply appreciated the honor, particularly in light of how difficult this year has been for the bridge community and its many volunteers. This was met with applause, more congratulatory wishes, and several offers of virtual champagne. A second presentation will be made at the next face-to face Regional to be held in the District.

Awards

Ms. Starzec asked the Board to consider some additional recognition for the winners of the Jacoby and District Star awards. She feels that these awards should have some additional reward beyond the presentation itself. She suggested that the Jacoby award winner, along with spouse or significant other, be taken to dinner, attended by the District President, the president of the Unit represented by the winner, the Executive Committee, and the Awards Chair. She also requested the Board budget for dinner for the District Star winners, with the same representation, but not spouses.

A lengthy discussion followed. Rebecca Brown and Larry Davis felt the Jacoby award itself was sufficient. BJ Sanders and Scott Humphrey felt that the expense of this action was an issue at a time when units are financially struggling. Mr. Humphrey said the Star and Goodwill dinner would be at least 30-40 attendees. Neal Pearlman felt that the expense was appropriate for the Jacoby winner, but not for the Star awards. Larry Davis suggested that since the Star and Goodwill Awards are Unit awards, this would be better handled at the Unit level.

Several motions were made on this issue. The first was to table discussion until a later date and this motion failed. A second motion was made to combine the two dinners, and this also failed. Jim Bauer called for a vote on the original proposals. The Star and Goodwill dinner proposal failed. A roll call vote was held on the Jacoby Award dinner

since voting needed to reflect the shares allotted to each unit. After a vote by all representatives, the motion failed.

Membership Retention

Sandy Potts is serving as the Chair of the District 16 Task Force for membership growth and retention. The members are Ms. Potts, Buck Buchanan, Lauri Laufman, Sally Sassen, and Betty Starzec. This task force was appointed by President Strohmer, who stated that this is currently the number one priority for the ACBL. Its purpose is to come up with recommendations for growth and retention, whether F2F or virtual. Ms. Potts is spearheading retention of membership and Ms. Starzec is heading up the growth portion of the committee. President Strohmer congratulated all the task force members for a wonderful job done so far.

Ms. Potts reported the following: With declining ACBL membership, the task force was asked to figure out ways to retain the members we already have. This will require the participation and cooperation of all units, clubs, and players.

Some of the methods being used are:

1. Using the In and Out report as a tool.
2. Personal calls are made to welcome new members into the unit.
3. Contacting transfers to be sure they feel welcome
4. Calling members that have not renewed dues
5. Contacting players who have not made the transition to online play. (Mr. Cuneo pointed out that we lose ½ of new players within 2 years)
6. Finding teachers for online classes. Buck Buchanan has volunteered to help any teacher who wants to have classes on Zoom.
7. Making sure Zero Tolerance is enforced in online play and when we return to F2F play.
8. Highlighting Mini McKenney and Ace of Clubs Awards.
9. Having a contact person in each unit for membership retention and growth.

Membership Growth

Betty Starzec gave us an overview of the Task Force initiative and broke it down into three phases. With the pandemic affecting clubs and teachers, we need to help our current teachers be effective in new ways and provide opportunities to bring in new teachers.

Phase 1 would create a virtual program for understanding online teaching. Buck Buchanan will offer mini seminars on this subject and the District will provide funding for current and new teachers for ACBL's new online teaching certification. Those attending will also receive a free one-year membership to the ABTA from the ACBL Educational Foundation.

The marketing aspect needs cooperation from the units. It is essential that they participate by contacting current teachers and promoting the availability of the

programs. The District will promote them by Facebook and other venues and the ACBL will promote the online certification for us. The District will pay for the Online certification, with a class of approximately 16 students, at a cost of \$125 each. Ms. Starzec recommends that we budget for 2 classes, at a cost of \$4000. Since the District typically hosts two Best Practices Teacher Workshops (formerly TAP), this is an increased expense of \$600. (If any participants have already taken the new *Best Practices Teacher Workshop*, the ACBL Educational Foundation will reimburse \$75 for each eligible participant.) The proposed timeline is mid-October, but Buck's online assistance can begin immediately upon requests from teachers

In **Phase II**, the plan is to host a *Learn Bridge in a Day Program* by Patty Tucker. This program will be for all who are new to bridge and will end up giving them an overview of suits, point count, playing notrump, playing suit contracts and scoring with enough information that will make them want to know how you "bid" to decide on suit contracts. This will again need Unit participation to succeed. Marketing will be through Unit membership committees and the District will again assist in marketing. Cost for this will be \$750 to Patty Tucker and her assistants to do the presentation and provide tutorials. The timeline here is November.

Phase III will be evaluation of the results. (Please refer to the District Membership Growth and Retention document that was included in the meeting packet and posted in GoogleDocs for more detailed information on this plan.)

At the conclusion of this comprehensive plan, Ms. Starzec asked that the Board approve the following: \$4,000 for the suggested 2 Online Certification programs and \$750 for Patty Tucker's LBIAD program. This motion was made and seconded and carried by acclamation. Ms. Starzec will not be in charge of the plan going forward, but will turn it over to Rachell Jackson, the D16 Marketing Chair.

President Strohmer again thanked the Task Force for their hard work on this particularly important project.

GNT

Scott Nason reported on continuing problems with the District Finals. Previously the suggestion was to hold it early in 2021 and now we know all tournaments through February of 2021 are cancelled and is quite likely that will be extended. Mr. Nason spoke to the ACBL about the feasibility of holding it online. While it was possible, he found this to be very burdensome. His proposal at this time is to hold it in Houston, during the April 2021 Sectional, with the understanding that if there is no event held by this time, there will probably be no Summer NABC. The motion was made and seconded to accept this proposal and after some discussion about potential contract changes and sanction requests, the motion passed.

NAP

Larry Davis submitted his proposal for the one-day, two-session final, rather than the current 2-day event. This had been presented at our last meeting and held for future discussion. The two questions to be considered are:

1. Do we want to take any action at this time? and
2. Should we continue to have club qualifications only?

A good deal of discussion followed. Steve Shirey made the point that a one-day event made the winners more random. Jim Bauer questioned Mr. Davis about making a change at this time – possibly waiting and monitoring what other districts do will give us a better grasp of the situation. Mr. Davis said he would be happy to look at conditions of contest in other districts.

On the matter of reinstating unit qualification, Rebecca Brown suggested we continue Club Level only for another year for additional data. Mr. Bauer said he felt making it too easy to participate takes away for the premier event. This move was taken to increase attendance and it certainly did. Sue Gerard said that because the clubs are separated by large distances in Mexico, that unit qualifications are a big problem for them. Mr. Cuneo said that in Mexico, online qualifications are permitted because of that very issue.

A suggestion was made by Scott Humphrey to clarify our objectives before considering changes. The Board agreed that the most important thing to consider was the premier status of the event rather than increased attendance. The Board agreed and put the idea of changes to rest for the time being.

Teacher of the Year

Buck Buchanan and his TOY selection committee made a recommendation for the 2021 teacher of the Year. Because of the pandemic, there is little F2F teaching going on, so there is a small and not representative pool of candidates. Currently, the District is moving slowly toward online teaching. Mr. Buchanan recommended that we suspend the policy and procedures for selection of a traditional TOY for this year, but instead focus on the shift to online teachers, and honor those helping with this shift. His committee will have a suggestion for a different online award at the next meeting. The working title for this is the Keeper of the Flame Award. A motion was made and seconded and passed by acclamation.

ACBL D16 Board of Directors Report

Paul Cuneo brought up several topics in addition to his submitted report.

The restructuring motion that has been in front of the ACBL for some time did pass. Over the next several years, as elections are held in the various affected areas, the Board of Directors will reduce its membership from 25 to 15. District 16 will combine

with District 15, and there will be a regional election next year. All affected areas will reduce its representation by one, and by January 2022, the membership will have come down to 15.

At the current rate of attrition, we could be down to 150,000 in total membership. At present, we are losing 7 1/2 % of our membership annually. Since 1/3 of the ACBL's operating expenses come from membership, we need to do something to stem this loss.

The ACBL's online presence was also discussed. Nancy Strohmer and Donna Compton represented D16 on an ACBL Task Force created to work on online growth and problems stemming from that growth. While online bridge is certainly helping with our membership issues, Mr. Cuneo stressed that everything being done at the present time might not necessarily be done in the future. Club owners should not assume that online sanctions will always be available. A case in point was a club that sold its brick and mortar building with the intent to operate only online in the future.

Mr. Cuneo also reminded everyone that he makes National Goodwill and Charity Committee nominations each year. He would like recommendations from us and needs them by the 20th of the month.

Lastly, Mr. Cuneo requested that we vote to renew our annual Robly contract in the amount of \$264.18. A motion was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

District NABC Subsidy Policy

President Strohmer presented the proposed new subsidy for the District, to be used at all future D16 Regionals. In the past, the \$1 surcharge collected on Saturday during regionals was given to the unit hosting the next NABC, regardless of the amount collected. The policy going forward would be that a ceiling of \$20,000 as a subsidy would be in place for all future NABC's held in the District. Betty Starzec and Tomi Storey, as prior NABC chairs, submitted the suggested guidelines to the Executive Committee and it has been endorsed by them. This had been discussed in the past, but no decision had ever been put into place. A motion was made and seconded to accept the new policy as written. BJ Sanders suggested additional wording to state that once the \$20,000 limit was reached, any additional funds collected may be utilized for a different purpose. Larry Davis asked the wording will also be changed to \$1 per person, not per entry, since entries may cover several players. These friendly amendments were added to the motion and it passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Austin 2021 NABC

BJ Sanders reported that her volunteers have been doing team building with committee chairs. They have contacted their counterparts from prior NABC's to gain from their experiences. Planning issues have certainly been a challenge during the pandemic. She cited the restaurant guide as a prime example. Many restaurants do not know if they will still be open when the tournament begins, but the committee will keep moving forward.

D16 Website

President Strohmer recognized John Magyari for his continued hard work on the website. Everything is current and John has been keeping up with all announcements and changes daily.

Compendium of D16 Policies/Bylaw Changes

Rebecca Brown has completed the review of the Compendium of D16 Policies promised at the last meeting. She made several suggestions to amend the D16 by-laws based on that review. What we see in the compendium (this document can be found in GoogleDocs) is a reflection of researching the minutes from 2004 to the present. She stated that the suggested amendments to the by-laws are meant to review, revise, update, and clean up the wording and intent of the bylaws, not to change them. If the Board agrees, the information will be sent to the membership for consideration through Robly in lieu of publication in the Scorecard. The Board agreed and the suggested changes now go to the membership.

President Strohmer thanked Rebecca Brown and Tomi Storey again for compiling the Compendium of D16 Policies.

Regionals at Sea

The Board had originally denied a sanction for Alice Travel to hold a regional at sea departing Galveston on April 18, 2021. Considering current events, the Executive Committee voted to allow it to take place. There is also another event already approved that leaves from Galveston on Nov. 14, 2021. The District receives \$1250 for each event and an additional \$5 for every member of D16 who sails with them.

GoogleDocs

President Strohmer reminded everyone that all our written materials are now loaded into GoogleDocs. She asked everyone to please review it on a regular basis.

NEW BUSINESS

Paul Cuneo asked if the Board had considered the possibility of moving events that had been cancelled already to dates later in the year. Tournament Chair Tomi Storey and Sanction Coordinator Scott Humphrey spoke to the issue. Both stated that even in a normal year, moving cancelled events into an already crowded schedule is extremely difficult, and in a year with so many cancelled events, it would be almost impossible. There was no further discussion.

Action Item Review and Meeting Critique

President Strohmer thanked all attendees for their input and their patience during a lengthy meeting. She also thanked Tomi Storey for the Dallas hospitality of virtual Bloody Mary's and mimosas and all agreed that the real thing should be served soon. Our next meeting will be held Monday, February 8, 2021 at 10:30 AM.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tomi Storey". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Tomi Storey
Executive Secretary, ACBL District 16