

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

February 8, 2021

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 February 8, 2021. In attendance were:

Executive Officers

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

Voting Board Members (Unit Representatives)

Ed Rawlinson	Unit 172
Sue Gerard	Unit 173
Lauri Laufman	Unit 174
Scott Nason	Unit 176
Steve Shirey	Unit 183
Helen Lauderdale	Unit 197
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
Education	Sally Sassen
Rachell Jackson	Marketing/Publicity
Sandy Potts	Membership
Tomi Storey	Tournaments

Standing Positions

Jack LaVigne	District Recorder
Internet Coordinator	John Magyari
Scott Nason	GNT Coordinator
Larry Davis	NAP Coordinator
D16 Board of Governors	Betty Starzec
	Nancy Strohmer
	Tomi Storey

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 the sad news that Jim Bauer will be stepping down from his position as 2nd Vice-President and Unit 176 representative due to health reasons. President Strohmer cited Mr. Bauer's many accomplishments in his time on the Board and wished him well. He will still be working on some special projects for us, so we will still have his expertise and work ethic to help the District. We all wish him well. Steve Shirey, the representative from Unit 183, will serve out the remainder of Mr. Bauer's term, ending in February of 2022.

President Strohmer also welcomed Thomas Rush to the Board, in the newly appointed position of Lecture Series Coordinator. Congratulations are also for Scott Humphrey, who has been promoted to Associate National Director. And welcome to Sharon Hoger, President of Unit 207, who attended as our guest.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDAS

A motion was made by Rebecca Brown and seconded by Betty Starzec to approve them as written. A brief Zoom lesson on voting followed and the minutes were approved. As always, reports for the consent agenda had been previously distributed to all members and will be discussed as needed in the committee reports.

President Strohmer thanked Mrs. Storey for her work on detailed minutes.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Tom Trudeau reported on the end of the year financials, as well as the current state of our accounts. Revenue was in excess of \$8,200 in 2020. The Scorecard incurred expenses more than revenues by \$1,910 for the same period, The Scorecard was impacted by waivers of tournament announcement fees related to cancelled tournaments. The normal Scorecard publication was suspended after the April 2020 issue.

A total of \$3,000 was distributed to units that requested and were qualified for COVID relief.

End of Year total cash assets were \$194,949. Cash flows were a positive \$4,456. We still have over \$35,000 in Grass Roots funds for promotion and support of GNT and NAP events, as well as over \$27,000 earmarked for use in future District NABCs.

We also were able to get a refund on a prior IRS penalty. President Strohmer complimented Mr. Trudeau on his continuing hard work in getting and keeping the books in great shape.

Mrs. Starzec had a question about a line item in the reports concerning awards. She requested that the Awards all be grouped together with sub-categories for the various award expenses. Mr. Trudeau will do that moving forward. Betty Starzec moved, and Lauri Laufman seconded that the financials be accepted as submitted with the requested changes. Motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Awards

Betty Starzec reported that units were given until the end of January 2021 to provide the names of recipients for D16 Star and Goodwill awards. This extra time was given to allow the units some additional decision time in the pandemic environment. Goodwill pins were sent to Units 172, 183 and 207 at their request. Other units may do the same. Once that is done, it will be the Unit president's responsibility to award them. Star pins will be presented at the next F2F Regional.

Charity Report

Nancy Strohmer announced that the four Charity games scheduled for March of 2021 were cancelled by the ACBL. Due to this cancellation, the following games have been added:

August 2, 2021 – ACBL Grass Roots Fund
August 3, 2021 – D16 Charity Fund
August 5, 2021 – ACBL Grass Roots Fund
August 6, 2021 – D16 Charity Fund

The ACBL has scheduled ACBL Charity Foundation Games April 12-18, 2021. The next Austin NABC Promotional games will be held the week of August 22-28, 2021.

Education

Sally Sassen reported on current projects. The main project has been the monthly seminars, the ongoing efforts for Learn Bridge in a Day (LBIAD), and the technical articles that are posted on the D16 Facebook page every Monday. Ms. Sassen said that the articles are coming from the Units. She thanked everyone for support and excellent material that has been submitted. President Strohmer complimented Ms. Sassen and her team on the hard work they have been putting into these education efforts.

GNT

Scott Nason reported on the current situation for the 2021 GNT District Finals, which will be held April 9-11, online through BBO. Flight B competition will start Friday night, with the other 3 flights beginning on Saturday morning. All flights will continue Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and afternoon. Scott Humphrey will be assigning a DIC for this next week and Scott will work with him/her on the format details, consisting of the mix of Swiss Qualifying and KO finals. The Conditions of Contest are the same as in the past and will use the same eliminations formats. Anyone who meets the masterpoint and residency requirements as of the ACBL report dated August 6, 2019, is eligible. This translates to anyone having fewer masterpoints than the flight cap as of that date may compete in the District finals in that flight – even if you did not participate in the club qualifying.

Rebecca Brown asked if a list of eligible participants will be available. There are no plans to post such a list, but John Magyari offered to prepare that information. Mr. Nason said that would be extremely useful and he would make it available to the DIC. Mr. Shirey said this should be shared on the District website. As soon as all details are ready, it can be included in the next President's message and on the D16 website. Mr. Nason said that he would encourage advance registration, but he is certain we will still have last minute entries.

Mr. Trudeau asked if we could play with a member of a different district. This condition of contest has not changed and that is not allowed.

A discussion was held on the card fees for the event. Mrs. Storey said that in the past, this has not been voted on by the district, but established by the coordinator or the tournament chair. There is no reason we cannot put it to a vote, but it would be establishing a new precedent. Mr. Nason proposed \$12 per session, a fee less than we would charge for an in-person. Mr. Cuneo suggested we spend the Grass Roots funds

and let it be free. Mrs. Storey opined that this was quite a large event to do it for free, since paying the director(s), sanction fees, and BBO charges are included. She suggested players would be delighted with a \$5 a session fee, since this is less than most virtual club games, and it will still cover expenses. If it does not, we can use the Grass Roots funds to cover any additional fees. This met with agreement by the membership and was not put to a formal motion.

Membership

Sandy Potts reported on the two joint initiatives of the Education and Membership Committees – growing the game and retaining that growth. First of these was the LBIAD mentioned earlier by Sally Sassen. This was given by Patty Tucker in November of 2020, with another scheduled for February 27th. She told us of the great success of the first intermediate bridge lecture. The Zoom meeting was filled to capacity and about 50 members had to be turned away. We have now increased our meeting capacity from 100 to 500 and Thomas Rush has joined the District as a Lecture Series Coordinator. For those who were unable to attend or missed Buck Buchanan's lecture on "Sharpening Defensive Skills" our website has the lecture notes and a video recording.

Mrs. Potts proposes that we start a monthly lecture series aimed at beginners. . We would use the Zoom platform and speakers would be paid \$100 per lecture. The speaker would create notes and deliver a talk aimed at beginning bridge players, with the lecture and video posted on the D16 website. Rebecca asked about intermediate speakers and was assured they were receiving stipends as well. This was well-received by the board members. Rebecca Brown moved that we accept the proposal and Lynn Sykes seconded Motion passed.

John Magyari suggested that we make clear who is the audience for each lecture, since a beginner attending a lecture for a more advanced player could easily become discouraged. President Strohmer said that in her messages, she would highlight that and add a comment.

Mrs. Potts also discussed online Teacher Certification through the ACBL. The ACBL Educational Foundation has made this an opportunity for those looking for completion of certification. There is a workshop this week and again on March 8th. Buck Buchanan has been working with some of the teachers who are not quite ready for large formatted online classes, to prepare them to host smaller events on BBO or other venues.

A second proposal is for a 0-20 District online game sanctioned by the ACBL. There are large areas of Texas and Mexico with smaller units where those players need a place to practice. Mrs. Potts said they have an instructor in mind, but a major concern is that this not conflict with existing Virtual Clubs games within the District. Kim Brinkman and Buck Buchanan are currently working with the ACBL on this. What Mrs. Potts proposes is that we allow the Executive Committee to make this decision, since we would like to move on it before the next meeting. Mr. Buchanan said the advantages are well-understood, but there may be disadvantages we are not aware of at this time. Mrs. Starzec says she is sure that a time slot could be found that would work. It was

also discussed of how or if this might affect plans for the District to join a combined district 99er evening game. President Strohmer said this was really a different audience and she sees no conflict. John Magyari said a 0-20 game had not been a success on Unit 174, so we need a solid marketing strategy. Lauri Laufman said Unit 174 was preparing to roll out a program for players under 100 points. Mr. Buchanan asked if rather than a District event, should we have the units do it. Ms. Laufman said the district would certainly give us a larger pool of players. Ms. Sassen said that in Austin, the bridge center said the 0-20 games did not make, but a 0-50 did, but even with a current game, she would love to see another one set up.

Ms. Laufman suggested a committee. It will be comprised of Sally Sassen, Buck Buchanan, Lauri Laufman and Sandy Potts. Ms. Potts stressed the time element since they would like to have it in place before the LBIAD event on Feb. 27. She asked that the committee present it to the Executive Committee and they would immediately send it out to the voting membership.

President Strohmer added that all we have seen for membership growth and retention has been done by the Task Force, that is comprised of Sandy Potts (Chair), Sally Sassen, Buck Buchanan, Laurie Levin, and Betty Starzec. They have been working non-stop and deserve our thanks. She also thanked Rachell Jackson, who has assisted as Publicity chair.

NAP

NAP coordinator Larry Davis said the 2021 NAP will be held online at the Spring NABC. The ACBL will contact all district-level qualifiers who earned the right to play in the cancelled Spring NABC in 2020 and they can compete this year. No entry fees will be required, but prize money will still be offered.

At the time of this meeting, qualification for next year begins this June and continues through the end of August.

Teacher of the Year

A motion was submitted by Buck Buchanan to suspend the 2020 District 16 Teacher of the Year award that is presented in 2021. Classroom teaching ended early in 2020 and online teaching only began to grow late in the year. In this proposal, the award will be restarted for the 2021 teaching year and presented in 2022. Mr. Buchanan made the motion, Rebecca Brown seconded, and the motion passed without discussion.

ACBL D16 Board of Directors Report

Paul Cuneo discussed several topics in depth from his submitted report. For the sake of brevity, please see his written report on the District website for the report in its entirety.

Mr. Cuneo wanted to comment that January set a record for online play with 60,000 members online, but membership continues to drop. At the current rate, we will be in the 140,000 range, with the close of 2020 at 154,600. It is especially important to find things to interest the membership because it is much easier to retain a member than find new ones.

The discipline pipeline is addressing online cheating issues. We have had two high-level players convicted of cheating, both in non-ACBL sanctioned events. His reason for bringing these names up is that amid discussions of cheating, there is not that much being brought forward. As a virtual club owner himself, Mr. Cuneo said he has only had one incidence of cheating. He feels online bridge is getting a bit of a "bum rap" on this. It is important for players to file player memos so the issues can be addressed and policed.

Mrs. Storey asked if we have any better sense as to when F2F bridge might resume. Mr. Cuneo said the only answer is that we do not know. A lot depends on vaccine rollout and the ACBL will be watching that closely. ACBL Management is looking at tournaments now to decide when they will be willing to staff events. He believes the Summer NABC will not happen, and the Dallas Labor Day Regional is certainly still in jeopardy.

Mr. Buchanan voiced a concern about directors holding the players in virtual games to a lesser standard. Not enforcing convention cards, not insisting questions be answered, and not penalizing offenders creates a concerning atmosphere. A discussion ensued about the lack of consequences for not following rules. Mr. Cuneo said he would convey these concerns to the ACBL.

OLD BUSINESS

Austin 2021 NABC

BJ Sanders said that she and her committee are moving forward in hopes that the Austin NABC will indeed happen. Hopefully, they will know for sure by August. She had high praise for all her committee chairs. They are currently finalizing the schedule with DIC Ken Horwedahl. Communication with the ACBL has been excellent. The restaurant guide and the sale of naming events is ongoing, and they are hoping for lots of local support. President Strohmmer thanked BJ and all her volunteers for their hard work in preparing for this event.

Bylaw Changes

Rebecca Brown is in charge of the proposed bylaw changes. These were sent out to the membership in the President's message in lieu of the Scorecard. After duly posting the proposed changes, the Board can now vote to ratify them. A motion was made by Gay Roach and seconded by Lynn Sykes to accept the new by-laws as published and the motion passed.

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, since there are updates since our last meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Conflict of Interest Policy

President Strohmer read an email from Philip Grothus of Unit 174 that prompted this discussion, requesting a district by-law change that would make bridge club owners and managers ineligible to serve on the D16 Board of Directors. After discussion in the Executive Committee, it was decided that we do need some stated policy, but not a by-law change. She then requested that Jim Bauer do some in-depth research on current ACBL, district and unit policies and make recommendations for Board consideration. Mr. Bauer suggested two possible options for discussion – one that addresses the above sentiment and the second that is modeled on the current ACBL policy.

A lengthy discussion ensued. BJ Sanders said that in Austin, there are 24 owners of the club and Option 1 is not feasible. She feels that representatives could simply recuse themselves. Guest Sharon Hoyer said such a policy exists in Austin and in San Antonio and they have agreed to recuse themselves when an issue conflicts with ownership. Rebecca Brown found Option one to be overly broad and excessively restrictive and believes a blanket prohibition of club owners to be draconian. Gay Roach said clubs in small units are often owned by all members. Buck Buchanan shared the opinion that there is a difference between profit and non-profit clubs, so he agreed with Rebecca that there is a legal issue as well. Mr. Trudeau said that to exclude these members would shut out some of the hardest workers in the District. Mr. Cuneo said he thinks it is very arrogant for us to say who Districts can and cannot elect as their representative.

Mrs. Brown said that she agrees with Mr. Bauer that this should not be a by-law change but a policy. Mrs. Brown made this motion to adopt Option 2 and it was seconded by Ed Rawlinson. This motion was accepted.

District 16 99er Evening Game

The Executive Committee has recommended that D16 join D9, D7, and D24 in a 99er Evening Game. This is a program that was started by Jay Whipple in District 9 and he has accepted our request to join, based on acceptance of the D16 Board of Directors. This would be open to any club holding a sanction, regardless of being virtual or brick and mortar.

We would announce the program to all clubs, schedule a Zoom session to cover the details, announce it to our 99er's, assign a liaison to Mr. Whipple, and supply our logo for promotional purposes.

Betty Starzec moved that we accept the proposal to join forces with the existing group and Rebecca Brown seconded. The motion passed without dissent.

District 16 Facebook Page

Our new D16 Facebook page is growing – we now have 346 members at the time of this meeting. Rachell Jackson says the intent is to involve our members socially as well as technically and it is working well. Sally Sassen is doing a great job of posting technical articles once a week and they are very well received. Mrs. Jackson has asked Unit presidents to submit material once a month, but she is always looking for new material. President Strohmer complimented her and her volunteers for a job well-done.

Financial Transaction Policy

Rebecca Brown shared that this is to replace the elimination of the bonding requirement in the latest bylaw change. Instead, she is making a motion that all checks written in excess of \$5,000 require two signatures. This was seconded by Tomi Storey and passed without discussion.

District 16 Website

President Strohmer thanked John Magyari again for his continued work on the D16 website. He is constantly updating material and is always quick to respond. His hard work is appreciated.

Action Item Review and Meeting Critique

President Strohmer said that we are coming up on the end of the two-year study on the Scorecard for paper versus digital. Since the Scorecard has been suspended, the study will continue for another year, with Jim Bauer continuing in his role to assimilate the information. Tom Trudeau will be helping him with the numbers, so that information will be coming to you as it is received.

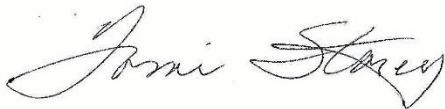
Betty Starzec said that in the past, we had a report at each meeting from the Board of Governors. Since they frequently overlapped with the BoD report, those did not always happen. Now changes are being made to the BoG, so Betty volunteered to make a report at each meeting.

The next meeting will be held on July 6, 2021, at 1:00 PM. Please mark your calendars.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 12:15 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