

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

July 6, 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 July 6, 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
E.W. Sweeney	Unit 201
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
Kristen Onsgard	Education
Rachell Jackson	Marketing/Publicity
Sandy Potts	Membership
Jim Bauer	Scorecard
Scott Humphrey	Tournament Coordinator
Tomi Storey	Tournament Chair

Standing Positions

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

CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM and a quorum was confirmed. President Strohmer welcomed everyone. Since there is a great deal to cover, the meeting began immediately.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDAS

A motion was made and seconded to approve them as written. A brief reminder on voting procedures was held and the minutes were approved by acclamation without discussion. Reports for the consent agenda had been previously distributed to all members and will be discussed as needed in the committee reports.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Tom Trudeau reported on the current financials. There has been little activity in the first six months, but revenue has exceeded expenditures by \$322. Expenses were driven primarily by expenditures on education and workshops. At the end of the 2nd quarter, there was \$6,830 in the district's primary account, \$4,033 in the Scorecard account, and an additional \$183,637 in an interest earning Vanguard account, for total cash assets of \$194,500. We have \$35,174 in the Grass Roots Fund for future promotion of NAP and GNT events. There is also \$27,838 earmarked for future D16 NABC's.

D16 continues to be in a strong financial position and is in good standing to continue its mission.

Motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes and the motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Charity Report

Nancy Strohmer announced that the Charity games scheduled are:

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
March 22, 2022 – ACBL Grass Roots Fund
March 23, 2022 – D16 Charity Fund Game
March 24, 2022 – ACBL Grass Roots Fund
March 25, 2022 – D16 Charity Fund Game

Austin NABC Promotional games will be held the week of August 22-28, 2021.

President Strohmer also mentioned the District Directors Lecture Series that has been ongoing. Melody Euler offered this to the District at no cost and President Strohmer wanted to offer a huge thank you to Ms. Euler for this. She also thanked Kevin Perkins and Scott Humphrey for conducting a lecture as well, to keep everyone ready for our eventual return to F2F bridge.

Education

While there was no written report, President Strohmer pointed out that Kim Brinkman had been directing a 0-20 games series with great success. The goal is to transition the players when they reach 20 MP's to the club games. Many thanks to Kim for this effort.

Another initiative has been our 99er games. It has also been extremely successful. There are 7 east coast districts that are participating, and we are the only non-east coast district included. The Honors Club in New York is the #1 participant and #3 is our own Bridge Academy of North Dallas. #12 is Westside Bridge Academy of Houston, so D16 is wonderfully represented.

The Lecture Series headed by Thomas Rush is doing very well. We are averaging 90 attendees in each lecture – kudos to Thomas who was unable to attend today due to a class.

Membership

Sandy Potts reported on the District membership. We are still struggling with numbers, but we are making an effort with the lecture series and continuing to work on retention and growth.

Mrs. Starzec asked if we can include several months report each month to better see the trends. Mrs. Potts said that certainly could be done. Mrs. Storey said that Mrs. Potts

sends that report monthly and she would be happy to combine the reports each month. Mr. Magyari stated he had just updated these reports and the trends are available online.

Dr. Hessel said he has that data from the Scorecard, and he can go back several years. He stated that we lose 10% of players yearly in the ABCL and also gain, except for this COVID year, where we have not been able to replace the loss. He believes it will improve. We do retain members if they play.

Intermediate/Newcomers

President Strohmer regretfully announced the resignation of Stu Nelan as of June 30. He has served us for 3 years and we thank him for his service. We are lucky to have Sam Khayatt of Houston step into the role. She is a Unit 174 Star recipient, has served as co-editor of the Houston unit newsletter for the past 4 years, and has been the Hospitality chair of the Lone Star Regional. We welcome her and look forward to seeing her at the next meeting.

NAP

Larry Davis reported that the D16 NAP finals will be held in conjunction with the San Antonio sectional Jan. 13-16, 2022, at the Drury Plaza Stone Oak. No unit qualifications in needed, and qualifications can be achieved anywhere. All flights will play Jan. 15-16.

District Director's Report

Paul Cuneo submitted his written report to the group. The key points the ACBL board is covering were:

1. A strategy for a return to F2F clubs and tournaments in 2021 and for 3-5 years thereafter.
2. Improving the processes and staffing to handle the discipline cases arising from online cheating and other ethical violations.
3. The transition of the Board of Directors to 13 regions and the Board of Governors to a more effective and active group.

(This report is available for review in its entirety on Google Docs.)

Since there were no questions on these issues, Mr. Cuneo moved to a presentation on plans for tournament policies.

A tournament policy was issued last week requiring masks and vaccinations for all ACBL events. The ACBL Board has been working on it since then. This was decided in June, but since that time, the CDC updated their guidelines, and the policy was no longer consistent with those updated guidelines. A new policy should be released around July 19 after the next Board of Directors meeting, stating that masks will not be required for fully vaccinated players. In states where they are asking for proof of vaccinations is prohibited, such as Texas and Florida, local committees will have to design an exception process and work with the ACBL on that process, so there are options where

unvaccinated players can opt out of the mask policy or daily testing to prove they are not infected.

This is important not only for the upcoming NABC in Austin, but also for upcoming sectionals and regionals. August 12 is the earliest event, and a policy should be in place.

Mrs. Storey asked if she understood correctly that in Texas, we are not allowed to require proof of vaccination to be shown, but that we can only accept a declaration. Mr. Cuneo said this was subject to interpretation, but he believes that we can require everyone to wear a mask unless they voluntarily show proof of vaccination. Mrs. Brown said she thought the state prohibition against requiring proof only went to businesses that receive state funds. Any committee that meets would have to take this into consideration when crafting a policy. Mr. Cuneo said he was trying to encourage a policy to be stated and it would make sense for the District level to create a policy for all units to follow, rather than individual units creating their own.

Mr. LaVigne asked if this burden of proof would be handled by the directors or if it might be something that could be done in advance, possibly online, to expedite the process. Mr. Cuneo said that some people are concerned that these records are in violation of HIPPA laws. Mrs. Brown stated that if the District takes a position on this, it would also need to be stipulated how far down the policy would extend. Mr. Cuneo said clubs could not be bound by this, only tournaments.

Ms. Gerard asked if this would apply to the tournaments in Mexico, particularly the Puerto Vallarta Regional in November. Mr. Cuneo said that any policy should state that the local conditions must be met as well. Mrs. Storey said it was her understanding that tournaments must comply with ACBL mandates unless they are superseded by state or local laws. Mr. Cuneo said those are her words, but that was also his interpretation.

Mr. Cuneo also shared that we are in arbitration with District 15 over the impact of the San Antonio Regional in December conflicting with the Regional being held in Kansas City at the same time. D15 believes that they have a traditional date after Christmas and that San Antonio will affect their attendance. San Antonio rescheduled their July 4th event and when the hotel demanded \$85,000 to cancel, they selected a new date in December. Even though the tournaments do not overlap, KC still believes they are damaged. 26 players from Texas and Oklahoma played in 2019, so they are concerned about table count. They would like to have monetary compensation, but if the arbitration finds in favor of KC, they could cancel the SA event. He wanted to make the Board aware of the situation.

Mr. Cuneo discussed virtual clubs and operating conditions. There is a debate going on about longer term events. The Board proposed that the longer term would be operated similarly to the current situation: in other words, you had to be an active F2F club owner to continue your virtual games. They also anticipated that there would be restrictions on the number of visitors allowed in each game. That is currently in place. They also discussed eliminating cross-district pooling, since this takes place across time zones and gives them an advantage to attracting players, creating problems for local

club owners. This discussion will continue at the ACBL Board of Directors meeting later in July.

Lastly, Mr. Cuneo addressed a question from Sandy Potts at our last meeting, asking if anything could be done about better enforcement regarding convention cards and requiring players to answer questions. He made the point at the Directors meeting and was assured they would improve this at tournaments, but in virtual or F2F club games, it is up to the club to enforce this.

Board of Governors Report

Betty Starzec said that right now there is not a great deal to report. The Board of Governors is trying to make changes that will make them more relevant and essentially become the focus point for clubs and teachers. There are two meetings in the next two weeks and Mrs. Starzec hopes to have a full update at our next meeting.

Austin 2021 NABC

BJ Sanders said that on June 15th, she finally was able to do a walk thru in the hotel. All the committee chairs were in attendance, and they are thrilled with the facility. All NABC games are on the 4th floor, all Regional Pairs and I/N games on the 3rd, and Daylight team games are on the 2nd, making a great layout for events. Hotel reservations opened two weeks ago and by the first Friday, the ACBL reported they were on track for 6500 tables. One of the top questions they are getting is whether masks will be mandatory, and the hope is that they will not. People are enthused. Charities have been selected – Meals on Wheels and Parent to Parent, an organization supporting parents of children with disabilities.

Parking options are still being explored. More options will be available 30 days out.

President Strohmer stressed that we all encourage everyone to come. Mrs. Starzec asked if the Unit needed any funds yet, but Mrs. Sanders said they were probably good until September. Congratulations were offered from the group on the outstanding job being done.

Before moving on to old business, President Strohmer introduced another new member to the D16 Board of Directors. Kristen Onsgard will be our new Education Coordinator.

OLD BUSINESS

Scorecard Review

Jim Bauer was tasked with updating the Board of Directors on the two-year test starting in May of 2019 and asked to make recommendations. Since the pandemic caused the suspension of the Scorecard in June of 2020, the test was not completed. President Strohmer asked for an update on current issues associated not only with the test, but with resuming publication of the Scorecard as we return to F2F bridge.

Based on the data available to him and discussed at length in his report (see Google Docs for the report in its entirety – Scorecard Electronic vs Paper Test), Mr. Bauer made the following recommendations:

1. Terminate the electronic vs. paper test and go to an all-digital Scorecard, eliminating printing and mailing costs, and reduce the number of issues to 3, published after each NABC.
2. Based on membership at the time the Scorecard is reinstated, determine the cost/member and to determine the annual assessment and/or the subsidy the District wishes to provide and adjust the cost per unit accordingly.
3. Establish an ad hoc committee to determine the future direction of the Scorecard and explore alternatives to bring the cost in line with other districts.

President Strohmer asked if there was a motion to accept Mr. Bauer's recommendations. Ms. Laufman asked if there was any data to compare the number of online players with the number of players in our district and our units, especially from those units who opted for paper copies. Mr. Bauer said he did not.

Mr. Trudeau moved that we accept the recommendations as written and Mrs. Brown seconded. The floor was then opened for discussion.

Dr. Hessel said this issue has been going on for some time – there has been committee after committee. He stated that the increase in the cost of the Scorecard over the years is not very big. He stated that salaries have been constant, that costs, while increasing, have been managed, and that the \$3.60 cost per member is less than the cost of gas to and from the club. There is also additional information in Dr. Hessel's report.

Mrs. Brown told Dr. Hessel that a quite exhaustive study was done approximately 5 years ago, including people both in and out of our district. It was not just on the relative costs, but what the prevailing interest was. Soon after was when the decision was made to test the units by allowing them to go digital or print, with costs adjusted by their decision. She also agreed with Mr. Bauer's statement that in the time of the pandemic, habits have changed. We are adjusting to being online out of necessity and convenience. Our districts fixed costs are also out of line with others. Dr. Hessel is correct that this has been discussed at length over the years, but she feels that it would be disingenuous to say that things have not changed now. The question of the continuity of the Scorecard has never been driven solely by the question of subsidizing or not subsidizing. She feels that it is very important to recognize that the people who have worked on this issue have taken it very seriously.

Mr. Trudeau said that as he sees these recommendations, the only true action item is to go to digital copies. This option wasn't open to us 20 years ago and he feels it now is a solid solution. Mr. Bauer said the other action item was to reduce the number of issues. President Strohmer reiterated the 3 points for clarification.

Ms. Laufman stated she had read the minutes, going back to 2010. She noted that she had just seen the information from Dr. Hessel yesterday and she felt the board members had not really had time to digest all the information. She also noted the amount of the

subsidy had gone down during Dan Leightman's tenure as treasurer and that the trial was inconclusive due to COVID-19 and halting the Scorecard. She was concerned about the reduction in issues because it might inhibit the flow of information to the membership.

Jo Smith said she never fails to read the Scorecard and felt that she would never read it online. She took a survey of players in her unit when the choice needed to be made for digital or paper and the desire for paper copies was unanimous.

Ms. Gerard said that the membership in Mexico appreciates the digital copies they can receive.

Mrs. Starzec asked if it would be possible to survey the D16 membership as to their preference. Mrs. Storey asked if this would be done by postcard, because doing an online survey when we are concerned about a computer-challenged membership would not give a fair sampling. Ms. Laufman said only 20-30% of Unit 174 even open notices.

Mrs. Brown said we are a representative body. When Mr. Bauer agreed to be the head of the Scorecard committee, one of the undertakings was to enlist from each Unit the results of a survey of their membership as to their preference of digital or paper. We have those results. Mr. Trudeau suggested that even if some members preferred paper, it did not preclude them reading it digitally if that was the only option.

Neal Perlman said his Unit overwhelmingly voted for paper. It appears the smaller units prefer paper. Mr. LaVigne recommended staying with paper and that nothing prevents those who prefer digital from downloading their copy. Dr. Hessel reminded the Mexico units that they receive digital copies only because the District is unable to mail them there.

The question was called to vote on the motion. The motion is only to vote on whether the Scorecard should go all digital. The motion failed.

The second motion was to reduce the number of issues from 6 to 3. It was made and seconded and discussion was opened. Jo Smith asked why we would want to reduce the amount of information we provide to our membership. Mr. Bauer said it has to do with costs. Mrs. Roach said the District has plenty of money and this is something that everyone enjoys and reads. It was never intended to make money. Mrs. Starzec feels that it is a great way to say we are here, and we are back. Ms. Laufman questioned how we would advertise our sectional and regionals, as well as recognize our membership on a timely basis. A call for a vote was made. The motion failed.

President Strohmer asked for discussion on the suggested ad hoc committee. A motion is not needed, and President Strohmer will appoint one. Mr. Bauer asked if Units would still have the choice to opt for digital only and the answer was yes. Mrs. Starzec asked when our first issue of the Scorecard might be available. President Strohmer will talk to the committee members and the Scorecard editors and let the Board know options for this.

Mr. Perlman asked if the choice for digital or paper options were still available. The option now is still open for a one-time change and the committee will address this as well.

NEW BUSINESS

Policies and Procedures Manual/Marketing

Rachell Jackson shared progress on the Policies and Procedures Manual. It is going slowly since it is great deal of work. The Job descriptions are basically completed. The policies and procedures are almost complete. Lauri Laufman has done an outstanding job working on the tournaments. Ed Rawlinson has worked on the tournaments also and Larry Davis has served as editor and technical consultant. Ms. Jackson also thanked President Strohmer for being the ultimate reviewer and contributor.

The Facebook group page now has 528 members. Ms. Jackson thanked the Units who participate and contribute regularly. They post news and announcements, and it helps the page grow.

Marketing at this point is done as an on-demand basis. Mrs. Storey said she could attest to this – if she asks for help, Mrs. Jackson always says YES. President Strohmer thanked Mrs. Jackson and her team – we were assured that when we see the final manual, we will see what a huge task it has been.

Agreement Between D16 and Unit 205

Tomi Storey reported on the official agreement voted by the D16 Board of Representatives. Going forward, the Puerto Vallarta Regional will be handled as all other Regionals throughout the District. The District has terminated the current profit-sharing agreement with Unit 205. This means the Unit will now be subject to all sanction table fees and will be solely responsible for purchasing their own scoring devices, equipment, and supplies. All profits will belong to Unit 205. This new agreement went into effect on May 19, 2021. President Strohmer asked for official ratification and it passed unanimously.

Night and Weekend Games

Sandy Potts gave the Board details on the current plan for night and weekend games. The plan is to get people who are working or have daytime commitments involved in the game.

Austin has been holding these as a test. There is a way to register online so players will know if the games will make. There is a form they use that Mrs. Potts will be happy to provide if anyone would like to use. There are drawings for free plays and discounted coupons. They also have volunteers to encourage and answer questions for newer players. If anyone has ideas or comments, please contact Sandy. This is a part of her membership growth and retentions program.

Request to Review the Agreement between Unit 173 and Unit 254

Sue Gerard asked that we take another look at the existing agreement between the two Mexico Units that gives a 60/40 profit split between 173 and 254 because the event is held in San Miquel de Allende territory. Ms. Gerard stated that Unit 254 allows 173 to rent their dealing machine and provides very few volunteers who are given free plays. She stated that she has been talking to Ian Irving, the representative from Unit 254, but so far, they have not reached an agreement.

President Strohmer requested that the previous Mexico Committee meet with the two units to discuss and make a recommendation at the next meeting. This committee is comprised of Tomi Storey (chair), Scott Humphrey, Rebecca Brown, Larry Davis, and Betty Starzec.

Ian Irving expressed surprise to have seen this on the agenda. The arrangement was made because the event is held in San Miguel. They would be happy to run it, but it has historically belonged to Unit 173. He would prefer that we allow the two units to talk and hopefully work things out before turning it over to a committee. President Strohmer asked Ms. Gerard and Mr. Irving to get together and then report their findings to her.

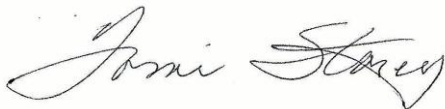
Action Item Review and Meeting Critique

The next meeting will be held on September 7, 2021, at 1:00 PM. Please mark your calendars.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Tomi Storey
Executive Secretary, ACBL District 16