

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

Sept. 14, 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 Sept 14, 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
E.W. Sweeney	Unit 201
Neal Perlman	Unit 204
Lew Crippen	Unit 205
BJ Sanders	Unit 207 (Proxy Sharon Hoger)
Gay Roach	Unit 225
Lynn Sykes	Unit 233
Ian Irving	Unit 254

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
Thomas Rush	Lecture Series
Rachell Jackson	Marketing/Publicity

Sandy Potts	Membership
Sam Khayatt	Intermediate/Newcomer Chair
Scott Humphrey	Tournament Coordinator
Tomi Storey	Tournament Chair

Standing Positions

Jack LaVigne	District Recorder
Scott Nason	GNT Coordinator
Larry Davis	NAP Coordinator
Sue Caulfield	Scorecard Editor
Betty Starzec	D16 Board of Governors
Nancy Strohmer	D16 Board of Governors
Tomi Storey	D16 Board of Governors

CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM

President Strohmer welcomed everyone. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM and a quorum was confirmed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDAS

A motion was made and seconded to approve them as written. President Strohmer reminded the new members of the group that only unit representatives may vote on motions. The minutes were approved by acclamation without discussion.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

No financial reports were submitted for this meeting since we remain in the same financial quarter as the July meeting. Tom Trudeau mentioned that we had anticipated losses in August of \$19,400, driven by payments for the Austin NABC and covered by previously collected funds.

MEMBER RECOGNITION

President Strohmer recognized our newest member to the D16 Board of Directors – Sue Caulfield, editor of the Scorecard. She also thanked Ira and Ellen Hessel for their years of service.

Sam Khayatt was also introduced since she was unable to attend the July meeting. She is now serving as our Intermediate/Newcomer Chairman.

John Smalley has retired from directing. Thank you, John, for your hard work and your smiling face. You will be missed.

Sharon Hoger, president of Austin Unit 207, is also in attendance today. She is serving as proxy for BJ Sanders and will be presenting an update on the Austin Fall NABC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Awards

Vice-President Starzec introduced a possible new award for volunteers who have stepped up in trying times. This type of volunteerism does not require the years of service needed to win the Oswald and James Jacoby Award, but VP Starzec believes it is vital to recognize all our volunteer efforts and this would encourage them. This award would be at the President's discretion, with no committee input and no yearly mandate to award it. She proposed this award be called the Presidential Extra Mile Award. Since the President serves a two-year term, they would be allowed a maximum of two awards, and she also asked that it be grandfathered to allow President Strohmer two awards before leaving office. A motion was made, seconded, and passed by acclamation.

District Star and Goodwill award requests have been sent to the Unit presidents. Deadline for submissions is December 31, 2021. District Star Awards require a picture and brief biography; Goodwill Awards require only the name.

A District Award Ceremony will be held at the Houston Long Star Regional on Saturday, January 29, 2022. District Star, Goodwill, and the Jacoby Awards will be given out for 2020 and 2021. When the Jacoby Award for 2022 is presented at the Dallas Labor Day Regional, we will be back on schedule. The District Board has already approved making this a special event and Vice-President Starzec is still getting prices from the Marriot for refreshments to be served between the morning and afternoon session. A discussion followed regarding budget and logistical concerns. She also requested and received permission for banners to be made for both Houston and Dallas that can be used each year.

The final item was the announcement of the 2021 Oswald and James Jacoby Service Award. The Awards Committee consisted of Vice-President Starzec, Rebecca Brown, Tom Corlette, Scott Humphrey, and Gerrie Owen. All nominations that were not successful this year remain in consideration for 2022, and new nominations will be accepted through June 30, 2022. This year's winner is Jim Bauer of Dallas Unit 176. His accomplishments are too lengthy to list here, but it will be shown in the new edition of the Scorecard. Congratulations were made to Jim, along with a heartfelt thank you for his hard work for the District.

Education

Kristen Onsgard thanked the District Board for allowing the change in masterpoint limit in the 0-20 game to 0-50. The games had been averaging 4-5 tables and now there are having 8-10. Games are growing and interest is high, due to this adjustment.

President Strohmer reported on the multi-district 99er game. We are the only District participating that is not on the East Coast. The game has been in existence for about one year now and that have had over 10,000 tables in that time. District 16 players are very visible, and BAND has the largest participation level of all clubs. Tom Trudeau started that \$4,400 has been sent to D16 clubs that take part.

GNT Report

Scott Nason presented his suggestions for the 2022 GNT format. The ACBL has made club and unit qualifying optional, so we need to decide if we will have Flights B and C qualify at the club as we did before the pandemic. If we do, we keep the grass root event as it was intended, since qualifying is the first step. If we do not, would it dilute the event if anyone can qualify. These are the key issues.

Mrs. Brown felt that in this environment, we need to be flexible and let anyone go. Mr. Nason said he has no problem with that but was concerned that it takes away some of the excitement. Ms. Laufman asked for clarification about dates to qualify since she had seen end dates for both November and February. Mrs. Roach also spoke for no qualifying, staying that F2F events to qualify at the club level were not feasible now in her unit. After some additional discussion, it was agreed that no qualifying would be necessary for any flight for the 2022 event.

The district event would be held in conjunction with the Houston Sectional in April 2022. The normal structure will start with a Swiss Team and end with Knockouts, unless the field is small, and then it may have to shift to a Swiss Team and round robin.

Lastly, Mr. Nason asked us to approve the \$13 entry fee again. (Last year's event was online and only \$5.) The Board approved the entry fee as suggested. Everyone is looking forward to going back to the tables.

NAP Report

Larry Davis presented two motions that would affect the current method of district subsidies for the NAP. The current subsidy is \$100 per person for each flight. This is in addition to the awards given to the players by the ACBL in the amount of \$700 for Flight A, \$500 for Flight B and \$300 for Flight C.

Mr. Davis's suggestion is to raise the subsidies to the Flights to level the awards, since subsidies are need-based rather than merit based. The first motion presented was to increase the district subsidies to pay \$200 per player to Flight C, \$100 to Flight B, and zero to Flight A, making the payment structure much more level. Vice-President Starzec seconded this. After a brief discussion, the motion passed.

The second motion was to ensure that if the NAP did play online in 2022 (as it was in 2021), no subsidies would be paid. This was seconded by Secretary Storey and the motion carried. It was also moved that this same policy would apply to the GNT, should it be held online rather than F2F. The motion carried.

Mr. Davis reminded the group that the F2F event will be held at the San Antonio sectional January 15-16, 2022, if all goes to plan.

Board of Directors Report

Paul Cuneo reported that the Board of Directors had its regular meeting in July and a special meeting in August. They continued the work which was discussed in his last report. At this point, the Board is continuing the current strategies to have a robust return to F2F bridge, focusing on clubs, and continuing the "invitational/restricted" model of virtual clubs. The Delta variant has slowed the return to F2F. The total table count for clubs is holding steady as F2F reopens, but we continue to work on longer-term options for virtual clubs.

The Board has revised the mask policy for tournaments which had been issued in mid-July. It now includes following the recommendations of the national public health agencies. Currently, the CDC is recommending masks for large group gatherings of fully vaccinated people. Most September tournaments were cancelled by ACBL and some by the sponsors. Expect an update for October later this month, but for now, the Austin NABC is moving forward. The outlook is murky as the Delta variant continues to generate a lot of cases and hospitalizations

As a point of clarification, Lew Crippen asked how these guidelines would apply to Mexico. Mr. Cuneo said this has not been dealt with directly by the BofD, but the recommendation is to comply with local health officials. Mr. Crippen said that as of this meeting, the guidelines are no gathering larger than 150 people. This severely limits the table count at an event to less than 37 tables.

Jack LaVigne asked whether a rise in F2F play will affect the status of online points. Mr. Cuneo said the BofD voted to eliminate the current online masterpoint multiplier, but they have delayed that implementation due to the rise in the Delta variant, so it is still in effect for now.

Mr. Cuneo also asked that the Board authorize the renewal of the Robly contract that we use for communication throughout the District. A motion was made to authorize that expense of \$264.18. seconded, and passed unanimously.

Board of Governors Report

Vice-President Starzec submitted a report on current meetings of the Board of Governors. Under the direction of incoming President Doug Couchman, the BofG has held a series of town hall meetings. These meetings were comprised of unit presidents, club owners, BofG members, and others. These are hopefully the first of many, to establish a rapport between the BoG and their constituents and to ensure that their concerns are being heard.

There were several key concerns regarding online club play and tournaments. In considering online play, most people prefer large club games, but they also prefer to play against players they know. They prefer games run by their local club or an affiliate, not ACBL-run games. For tournaments, the key takeaways were that a substantial number (about 35%) feel we should not be running tournaments right now and only 17% feel that tournaments should be run if local organizers believe it is safe, with specific rules under local control. Remember, this is from a group of, among others, unit officers (local organizers themselves). Additionally, about two-thirds of players would attend a tournament right now, but a majority of those have specific and sometimes conflicting requirements regarding safety (specifically masks).

Mr. Couchman addressed under Old Business the discussion of a name change. After debate and vote, the new name of the Board of Governors is the Advisory Council.

There is a great deal of other information in Vice-President Starzec's report that has been previously printed in the Scorecard and the ACBL Management Report. You can see the report in its entirety under Google Docs.

Austin NABC Report

Sharon Hoger, President of Unit 207, presented an update on the Austin Fall NABC for Chairman BJ Sanders. At the present time, the NABC is still a go, although we are still awaiting the official announcement that can come as late as October 25. They have delayed spending district funds as much as possible. Ms. Hoger shared that they are fortunate to have an amazing group of Committee Chairs, who have chosen the items for Welcome Packs, I/N gifts, and Prizes for Section tops. However, through research, each committee is aware of the lead times for their items and will hold off purchasing if reasonable in case of cancellation of the Tournament. FYI, we are adding two weeks to the stated lead times, so we are certain to have all items before the tournament. Secretary Storey suggested that the committees may want to think about removing dates from prizes/awards/section tops in case of a cancellation so that these items can still be used if the event must be reassigned at the later date.

Locally, many of the smaller Clubs in Unit 207 have remained open over the past several months. The largest Club in Austin, the BCA, closed for the month of August due to the Covid Delta Variant, after being open in June and July. The BCA reopened 9/8. Like so many other Clubs in D16 and across the ACBL, it is losing money every month and is more than ready to turn a corner and be home to a vibrant Bridge community once again.

OLD BUSINESS

Ad Hoc Scorecard Committee

Rebecca Brown, chair of this committee, presented the findings after being tasked at the July 2021 to consider the future direction of the Scorecard. Cost is only one

consideration; after surveying other district practices and products, the committee concluded that District 16 is behind the times and needs to advance our technology and approach to meet present best practices.

A detailed report was presented to the Board with their findings. Since the last meeting, two of the largest units in the District have changed their subscriptions from paper copies to digital, including Houston Unit 174, who currently carries the brunt of the total yearly assessment of paper subscriptions (45.3%) and San Antonio Unit 172 (9.7%). Based on this change, Ed Rawlinson of Unit 172 made a motion to reconsider allowing units to select either paper or digital copies and asked that the District go to all digital. This motion was made, seconded, and passed, allowing discussion to follow on how the Scorecard would move forward.

Mrs. Brown now moved that the District go to an all-digital Scorecard. If this passes, a PDF version would be available to facilitate printing for any unit that would like to have printed copies for its members. The new size would be a standard 8½ x 11 inches.

Because of the importance of this issue and the fact that after a motion to reconsider, a new motion must pass by a two-thirds majority, Secretary Storey called for a voice vote rather than a show of hands and the weighted votes from each Unit came into play. The motion passed and going forward, the Scorecard will be sent out digitally.

Mrs. Brown now moved that the new editor fees be set at \$500 per issue. E.W. Sweeney asked if this was in line with other units and Mrs. Brown confirmed that it is. In comparison, District 16 has paid an average of \$3,000 per issue i.e., \$18,000 for the past several years, so this is a substantial savings. The motion was seconded and passed without further discussion.

Mrs. Brown stated that the committee will continue to review the current pricing to units for advertising and investigate software purchases to facilitate publishing as needed.

Sue Caulfield took this opportunity to introduce herself to the Board and give some background on her extensive publishing and editorial background. She also answered questions about printing the new publication. Once we go digital, there is NO per person fee. Since we will now be able to keep this money in the Units' treasuries, they may have the funds to print copies if so desired.

Lauri Laufman asked if we have considered sending anything to the membership announcing the new Scorecard and creating excitement. Vice-President Starzec said the District would be sending postcards to the members without current email addresses, but this amounts to less than 15% of the total membership.

Neal Perlman asked how soon copy needs to be in for a tournament in February. Ms. Caulfield said that the end of December would be in plenty of time and said that she would be happy to assist in putting the information into a format for units if needed. Digital publishing gives us more flexibility in time sensitivity.

President Strohmer thanked Mrs. Brown and her committee for their work on this issue. For additional statistics on District 16 and the ten other Districts that publish a newsletter, please refer to the committee report in its entirety on Google Docs.

Mexico Committee

At the last meeting, Unit 173 had asked the District Board to reconsider the current Regional split of revenue. Unit 254 asked that the two units be allowed to get together and work the situation out on their own. After this did not happen, President Strohmer asked Secretary Storey to reconvene the Mexico Tournament Committee and make a recommendation.

The Committee agreed that since nothing has changed, the current 60-40 split will remain in effect. Since both units had issues with expenses and whether they were properly documented, the District will require revenue and expenses from both units to be written and submitted to the District.

The Committee also expressed disappointment that the two units did not try to manage this on their own and asked that going forward, they should make a concerted effort to manage issues on their own, without continued arbitration from the District.

NEW BUSINESS

Lecture Series

Thomas Rush reported on the ongoing Lecture Series. The Beginners Series started in February and an Intermediate Series was added in April. Sessions have overlapped but are running between 70-100 participants. They have been very well received. John Magyari does an excellent job of posting the sessions online for those who want to review or were not able to attend. Sandra Sarnow of Mexico City conducted one session and Mr. Rush is now collaborating with her on a possible Spanish-speaking series. He asked that the District fund the speaker payments for these additional events and that passed unanimously.

Unit Representation

Secretary Storey asked to speak so that this issue would be a matter of record. It is the responsibility of each unit to send a representative to the District meetings and it is the responsibility of that representative to be sure someone is in attendance for each meeting. If you cannot attend, you are expected to send a proxy. Please notify the secretary prior to the meeting who that will be.

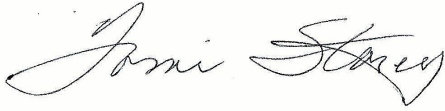
Action Item Review and Meeting Critique

The next meeting will be held at 8:30 AM on January 29, 2022, at the Houston Lone Start Regional IN PERSON and possibly on Zoom as well. Please mark your calendars.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 2:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tomi Storey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "S".

Tomi Storey
Executive Secretary, ACBL District 16