

WBL Board Minutes

July 28, 2021

Attendance: All Board members attended, along with three WBL members who are running for positions on the Board—Kathy Lynn Kopnisky, Lena Maman, and Alex Stille. Chris Miller (Unit Game Director) and Brad Theurer (Tournament Chair) also attended.

Minutes: The Board approved the minutes of the June meeting.

ACBL Board Election: The ACBL is in the process of reducing the size of its Board of Directors from 25 to 13. For purposes of Board representation, ACBL Districts 6 (which includes the WBL) and 5 will now be part of Region 4; most other district functions (e.g., tournament administration) will be handled by the existing 25 districts. Two candidates, Ms. Margot Hennings and Mr. Dian Petrov, are seeking to represent Region 4 on the Board. Both submitted written statements explaining their qualifications and perspectives, and both attended the portion of the WBL Board meeting devoted to the election. All Unit Board members are entitled to vote in the Region 4 election. The candidates were largely in agreement about the major issues confronting the ACBL and the kinds of approaches that appeared most promising to address these issues. Major themes in the discussion included the following:

- The goal of the ACBL Board reorganization was to create a more effective Board composed of regions that are similar in size. It will be important for the winning candidate to familiarize him/herself with the parts of the region that are outside his or her district of origin.
- The transition to post-pandemic bridge poses major challenges. It will be important to achieve an effective balance between online and face-to-face play.
- Small club games are at a special disadvantage. But they are very important for strengthening personal connections that sustain the bridge community and for creating a satisfying social experience.
- ACBL membership has declined significantly during the pandemic. Margot stressed that marketing was crucial and said that ACBL staff in this area had improved. She also noted the importance of improving technology and the website and noted that we were learning how to adapt bridge teaching to an online environment. She pointed out that school bridge programs had suffered from school closures and social distancing. Dian cited the importance of masterpoints as an incentive and praised efforts to attract young players. Both candidates agreed that a broad array of approaches should be tried to address this issue.
- There was a brief discussion of the balance between event fees and membership dues as sources of ACBL revenues.
- There was some discussion of the advantages of playing face-to-face bridge using tablet computers.

Unit Game: Monday attendance has declined to about five tables, which generates a small loss. The Board agreed that it was useful to maintain an online presence and keep the game open. The Thursday game has also gotten smaller, but remains profitable; Herb noted that we have about \$1100 in monthly fixed costs and that we take in between \$600 and \$700 at the Thursday game when we host it (about

twice a month). He noted that WBL players are a significant presence in the nightly District 6 and 7 99er teaching game, which means that this game brings us significant revenue.

Future Plans: The Board discussed resumption of face-to-face unit games and tournaments. Herb reported that our financial break even point for the face-to-face unit game is approximately 23 tables, assuming a \$12 entry fee, no 0-20 game, one game director, one set up director, five sets of boards, and six free plays. Linda noted that it would be valuable to have a 0-20 game, despite the additional cost of hiring someone to run the game. The weekly lesson is attended by other players as well as the 0-20 game players, and would be worth having even if there is no 0-20 game. She suggested that we ask Novice Game Coordinator Isabelle Thabault if she thought she could recruit enough players to generate a viable game. Chris observed that unit game attendance and costs are likely to change gradually, enabling us to make timely financial adaptation, if necessary. In contrast, he said, losses associated with sectional tournaments were hard to predict and could be large.

Hadi reported that he had spoken to Jerry Kiewe, Ohr Kodesh executive director, who deals with unit game matters. Jerry asked us to submit a written proposal for unit game resumption. Hadi said that resumption of face-to-face play at Ohr Kodesh appeared to be feasible by the end of September and volunteered to draft a proposal. After the meeting, Hadi developed a proposal, and the reopening committee approved a revised version of it. The approved proposal included provisions governing adherence to government Covid guidelines, proof of vaccination, notification responsibilities for players who may have attended the game when unknowingly Covid-positive, plans for limited provision of beverages and pre-packaged food, the rental fee, and arrangements for replacing tables that Ohr Kodesh used and damaged since bridge games ceased in March 2020. However, the committee concluded that growing evidence of increased risk of Covid transmission, even among vaccinated people, necessitated postponement of face-to-face play.

In connection with reopening, the Board discussed methods of enabling credit card payment of entry fees. Herb reported that reputable credit card services charge as little as 10 cents per transaction plus 2.6% of the transaction amount, which amounts to less than 50 cents per entry. However, using a credit card service requires a playing site with good Wifi service; service at the Schweinhaut Center is poor. Herb promised to research this further and report back on his findings. He said he would also look into peer-to-peer payment methods.

The annual meeting of the WBL membership will be online on September 9, 2021.

The next WBL Board meeting will be August 25, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Bell