

Date: Sunday, July 19, 2020 2:53 PM

Subject: This week's 3 day board meeting (Virtual Montreal)

Hi everyone,

Hope that everyone is doing well.

We had six, two hour plus board meetings on Zoom this past week. The purpose was to conduct the business that would have been done at the Montreal summer Nationals.

The big news is that we (finally) passed the **second reading** of the board restructure plan. The vote was 18-7, one more than the minimum 2/3 required and a bit less than last time. I voted for this again. It required passing by the Board of Governors as well, which happened today with a 77% vote, 2/3 required. It was their motion to begin with.

For refence, I have pasted my writeup earlier this year from the **first reading**:

The biggest news is that the “reorganization plan” did pass this time, first of 2 required readings. Next vote will be in Montreal this Summer. If it passes again, the Board of Governors must approve, as it is their motion originally. The vote required a 2/3 majority, and was 20-4-1 (abstain), whereas it was defeated in San Francisco. The board size will be reduced from 25 to 13 over the next few years. If approved, the next election for our area will be in 2022, where voting will be for a Regional Director to represent District 8 (Illinois, Missouri area), 10 and 11 (Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana areas). Currently the number of members from the three Districts is 2574, 6370, and 4190 respectively, (the numbers as of May 2020 QUIP are 2567, 6247, and 4211 respectively) making our District roughly the size of the other two combined. In other words, representation of the three Districts will be merged into one. Voting is the same as before, with the proportion of membership weighting the Unit board members vote. One major objective of this change is to achieve a significant shift in board members focus – in the past where the primary job for many was to advance the needs of their Districts, the Regional directors primary job will be to “serve the bridge related interests of others,” meaning

that they must do what is in the interest of the ACBL as a whole. The first term will be 4 years, and up to 3 additional terms after that may be served. (That is longer than I would prefer, but I compromised on this point to get this done.)

There was a new alternate motion offered and defeated, 8 yes, 17 no. I voted against this because it was time to move on and get the first one passed. The big part of this motion was that the board would not be elected by the Units, instead it would be by the other District Directors. In that way, there would be no guarantee of geographic representation on the board. Some believe that when Regional Directors are elected from combined Districts, that the largest District represented will automatically get elected and as such the smaller ones will be disenfranchised, because they think people will vote for their geographic representative rather than the best candidate. I disagree and would certainly hope that everyone votes for the candidate that they think is best.

The transition task force proposed its first motions to move work off of the board. 202-42 moves the credentials committee to management oversight, passed 24-0-1. 202-43 moves member transfers of under 100 to management, passed 25-0-0. 202-44 moves oversight of honorary member of the year to management, 24-1-0. 202-45 moves minutes committee responsibility to management, 25-0-0. I voted for all of these. Yay, this is a good start. A lot more to come! Kevin Lane, chair of the transition task force, made a presentation outlining his thoughts on the process. The goal is for the board to end up spending the bulk of its time with the strategic, much less on the tactical. Consistently, the ACBL executive team wants to hear from the board more of the “what to do” and less of the “how to do.” It will be quite a challenge for some of the board members who are used to the “old way”. Currently we are bound by the codification structure to be largely tactical, and that is reflected on the huge amount of time spent on tactical issues in our board meetings.

Memphis 2025 Spring Nationals was presented by management for approval. The board loves Memphis for Nationals, for a lot of reasons. However, in the current environment, the board views that committing to any Nationals right now is too much risk. There is a lot of uncertainty in the Convention Center

and hotel landscape right now. Memphis specifically has a low room block minimum, so if it was held, very likely that would not be a problem. But if it could not be held, potential risk is around \$ 1 million, though unlikely it would be that much. All of this considered, the board voted 23-2-0 to not approve Memphis at this time. If things clear up and Memphis is still available for this slot, it would get strong consideration. There is a possibility that we will lose Memphis for this time slot. I voted with the group to not approve at this time. I think it is fair to say, that no site would have been approved right now, unless the financial risk profile was zero.

Bridge Committee Dennis Carmen: offered 202-20, special conditions for 2019-20 GNT, in the 2020-2021 Conditions of Contest. Passed 25-0-0. 202-21 Masterpoint formula modified for strength of field. Chaired by Doug Couchman. He wowed us with an extremely professional presentation. The new formula will overall make just a slight increase, but there will be moderate variance both ways. Masterpoint calculations will be based only on the number of entrants, how strong the entrants were, the number of deals, and the kind of competition – (Sectional or Regional, pairs or teams). Other factors that are currently used will no longer be used: Other events that are taking place in the same tournament (such as open pairs/gold rush, what the masterpoint limits of the tournament are, and what restrictions apply to the event. Bottom line is that players will no longer be either penalized for playing in difficult events or rewarded for seeking out easier fields. This is an example of successfully moving a committee off of the board, done last year. If anyone is such a bridge wonk they want to read his report, let me know and I will send it to you. Passed 25-0-0 202-22 was a minor tweak of gold point places in web and barometer movements. Passed 25-0-0. 202-23 was a Barry Crane tribute, recognition for those that reach his career masterpoint total of 35,135. Passed 22-2-1. 202-24 was a BOG proposal for clubs and units to recommend teachers for ACBL to include in a list of such. The board felt that this was a slippery slope – how does one determine who is better? The motion unexpectedly did not address what the motion makers reasoning was. Defeated 1-23-0. I voted against. 202-24 was also from BOG and wanted to establish teaching clubs centers. The motion did not offer any reasoning as to why they wanted to do this. Defeated 0-24-0. 202-26 was a minor tweak of the number of boards required in STAC games for players with under 199

masterpoints. Passed 24-0-0. 202-38 rescinded item 181-19 which required match pointing across the field for STAC effective 1-1-21. There were a lot of issues with this, but the key point right now is that the system to do it does not exist and will not in the near term. Passed 24-1-0. 202-56 0-2500 four Session Swiss Team National Event was approved 25-0-0. The thinking is that it will build participation within that group. Participation statistics by masterpoint holding are upside down at nationals, but 94% of our members are under 2500 masterpoints. 202-55 was a reconsideration motion from the Board of Governors about the game time at the Atlanta 2023 Fall Nationals for 7 events. The board had previously approved 21-4-0 a schedule for 10:00 am 3:00 game times, as requested by the Atlanta team. Bottom line, the board sided with the wishes of the host group, for the times preferred by local residents. Original motion was approved again 23-0-0, defeating the reconsideration motion.

Strategic committee offered 202-60 eliminated temporary membership and replaced it with a free 120 day maximum guest membership, easier for membership to work with in the online environment. Passed 25-0-0. Strategic talked about a new initiative to achieve sustained membership growth. Included in this are alignment of the organization structure, resources dedicated to improvement, data collection, analysis and data driven decisions to increase recruitment and retention, documenting best practices and each implementation step so local level can replicate, and to create a culture of continuous improvement. This is not going to be easy, but the fact is that we have not had a concerted growth effort about 15-20 years. It's time to step up and develop something meaningful. ACBL has a new membership analysis tool can help us capture and analyze information; the board will work with management on implementation. We will correlate that to club activities to determine what successful practices had meaningful results and should be replicated. Stay tuned.

AJ Stephani presented the result of a whole lot of work to simply codification on the Appeals & Charges committee. So glad someone is willing to take this on. It's important the detail is tedious - a lot like watching paint dry. 202-01, 02, 03, 04, 05, and 06. Motion passed 25-0-0.

AJ and committee also is working on a proposal for bridge arbitration, and got the board input in preparation for a motion later this year. Existing binding arbitration has a legal loop hole that was exposed in Europe where cheaters were allowed to come back to play, because an arbitration court without bridge knowledge was unable to understand what the bridge world thought was a problem. When we get this done, it will also offload much of the involvement that the board has in this area, as well. I think this is awesome, and the rest of the board was supportive as well. Makes life simpler, gets better results, with less risk. Sounds like a winner!

We had an “executive (closed) session” on the “Guest Member Policy”. As good as online bridge has been in many ways, Guest Policy has been a contentious issue for some. I am bound by confidentiality that comes with “executive session”, but I can say that an update will be coming soon. Please keep your feedback coming.

JoAnn Glasson and Finance committee update: Key point in this area is that finances have improved enough that ACBL was able to establish a \$600,000 reserve out of a “book” potential loss of \$ 3.2 million for possible cancellation of 2021 Nationals. Overall, the projected gain from operations is similar to the pre-covid budget. The board will be asking soon for information about any units in financial distress. The league is trying to get a feel for how many and how much, but we do think it is low. The ones that are losing money tend to be very vocal so we need to make sure we are ‘hearing it” appropriately. In June, ACBL returned 7 tournament directors and 3 headquarters staff from furlough. Through the end of the year, we anticipate getting headquarters staff back to 95% capacity, and field staff gradually fewer furloughs as online bridge grows. From a financial planning perspective, we assume very little face to face play through year end. At the end of June, 83 out of 3000 plus clubs were playing face to face, and just two in our District. (I sent Larry the list.) ACBL wide there have been minimal Sectional and Regional cancellation fees from Units and Districts; our District reported none and overall it is still being calculated but expected to be well under \$100,000.

Out of our 162,650 total members in January, 2020, 101,210 or 62% played that month and 106,397 or 65% in February, all face to face. In April it was

online only 36,397 or 22%, and 48,487 in May or 29%, 49,806 in June or 31%. This means that around 50,000 members that were playing earlier in the year face to face are not playing now. The better news is that club table count is about 2/3 of a typical face to face month while only 43% are actually playing, so those that are playing are playing more. I am very concerned about the 50,000 who are not playing. If the pandemic continues for a while and those players membership renewal comes up, I think we are more at risk to lose some of these folks. So far membership is down 1.5 % year to date, so little if any impact yet. I expect that a list will be forthcoming of the group that is not playing, to be sent out to you. I have asked for best practice ideas to be included with that - for example, a local club in my area has a couple that is literally going over to homes of players who are not playing, wearing masks, etc., and getting them setup and going and even playing with them. Gradually, one by one they are starting to play online. It takes some real heroes to move this forward!

Marketing informally presented information on a potential “brand refresh” including a new logo. They wanted some feedback before they spent any significant time on it. There was some discussion with no vote or general agreement, and management will come back at a later date with more of a full presentation. The genesis of this effort was in 2019, and has been off and on based on turnover in the marketing director job. The executive team feels like they want to show the world that we are not “the same old ACBL”.

The board has asked for more communication from management on the priority of systems projects related to BBO. It is covered in the weekly club manager updates, but not much in other places.

Claire Jones District 18 resigned from the ACBL Board and JoAnn Glasson was elected treasurer in place of him. Vote was 24-0-0.

Management report highlights: (some of what they reported was covered above in other reports)

Tampa Nationals loss is around \$30,000. Mary Stratton was hired in April to be Director of Marketing. Longest day raised \$ 631,000.

Please contact me anytime with questions or concerns. 501-922-8608

Thanks,

Ned Irving

District 10 Director, ACBL Board