

NATIONAL BOARD REPORT
SUMMER 2023
Comments in Blue by Larry Sealy, Region 7 Director
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ACBL Board of Directors held its summer meetings face-to-face (F2F) Monday, July 10 through Thursday, July 13 in Chicago. The Board, working groups, task forces and committees continue to meet regularly through Zoom.

FINANCE

The change in net assets from January 1, 2023 to May 31, 2023 was \$627K. \$364K of this amount was income from operations, largely due to increased NABC income, and \$263K reflects the change in the market value of investments. These numbers are \$209K better than the 2023 budget and \$624K better than the same time period in 2022.

There is a continued investment in technology that was capitalized in the first five months of 2023. \$147K was spent on the development of the new Masterpoint Engine and \$139K was spent on the AS400 modernization.

Management proposed fee increases in all areas that will go into effect January 1, 2024. Member dues, club sanction fees, special game fees and tournament fees will increase along with cruise and land cruise sanction fees and NABC entry fees. Many of these fees have not been increased in several years, since before the pandemic. Communications to follow.

Planning is underway for tiered regular and social memberships. The new social memberships will have an annual cost of \$29 per year or \$2.99 a month and will allow players to accumulate up to 100 masterpoints.

Management also proposed a plan for tiered patron memberships that will range from patron to silver and gold patron memberships with varying benefits associated with each level.

Item 232-FN01 moved to clarify the language and specific procedures and tools used by ACBL as referenced in the Codification, Appendix 2-A Accounts Payable and Check Cashing Policies: Chapter II - Business Management, A. Finance.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One representative absent at the time the vote was taken.
Effective: Immediate.

The budget is in better shape than it was at this time last year. Hopefully, with tournament attendance increasing, that will hold.

While membership dues will go up next year, members can renew early. If you would like to take advantage of the “old” dues, you can renew for up to 3 additional years on ACBL.org. Just click on “Renew” near the upper right corner.

MEMBERSHIP

As of June 2023, ACBL membership totaled 132,247. New member recruitment is up 32.9% from 2022. Guest memberships continue to increase. To date, 2,576 guest members have converted to regular memberships. As of June 30, there were 1,897 active guest members.

MEMBERSHIP BUILDING TASK FORCE

The Membership Building Task Force is actively reviewing ACBL Codification relating to membership building and retention to determine synergies and whether improvements to processes, and redistribution of funding, are warranted.

Additional initiatives for consideration by management include the implementation of a Member Referral Program, and an initiative to expand ACBL presence digitally as well as F2F within organizations and associations that appeal to youth and to the 50 to 65 age demographic.

In Chicago, the Task Force brought forth the following motion and fostered a discussion on the utilization of the 11% of full dues payments and life master service fees paid to Units by their members.

Item 232-ME01 moved to redefine the requirements for the Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP) reimbursements. This includes providing ACBL with program plans and evaluations and offering guest memberships to program participants. ACBL will garner best practices to support future planning efforts.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: January 1, 2024.

A discussion (DI232-MEO) regarding the utilization of the 11% of full dues payments and life master service fees paid to units by their members occurred in the Finance Committee meeting and in Full Board.

In March 2022, the Board unanimously passed (Item 221-GV02) which eliminated the requirement for Units to hold at least one sectional every two years and clarified that the 11% of full dues payments and life master service fees paid by their members is intended to supplement Unit funds for activities related to membership building and retention. Based on this clarification, discussions focused on building awareness of the intended use of funds, determining how Units are using the funds and providing Units with collaborative materials, including best practices. Management and the Board agreed that a reporting component should be added to ensure compliance with the intended purpose of funds usage.

The Task Force will compile feedback provided by the Board, management and stakeholders, collaborate with management to communicate with Units and provide fund distribution and usage scenarios for presentation in fall 2023.

BOOST F2F BRIDGE

Boost F2F Bridge, a joint pilot initiative with ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation, is aimed at building membership by providing support for F2F beginning bridge teachers and F2F bridge clubs. ACBL uses social ad campaigns to identify individuals interested in learning bridge. Leads generated from these campaigns are then funneled to participating teachers. Selected teachers must offer guest memberships to students and have access to F2F clubs where students can take lessons and advance to in-person supervised play.

For summer 2023, 21 campaigns generated 1,406 leads and 131 students. An additional 166 individuals expressed interest in taking classes in the near future. ACBL is accepting submissions for third quarter. Currently, over 22 campaigns are scheduled.

Feedback I have received has all been positive. If you have not used Boost yet, think about giving it a try.

BYLAWS

The second reading (Item 231-BY01) to amend Bylaws Article III, Section 3.5 to include an expanded list of who is subject to binding arbitration, and to add Article XII detailing how arbitration will work, passed the Board by the required two-thirds majority vote. The first reading was passed by the Board in March 2023.

Effective: Immediate upon ratification by the Advisory Council which occurred during its July 25 meeting.

Previously, we were required to use the American Arbitration Association (AAA) for resolving all disputes. This will allow arbitration of ethical violations to go through the Institute for Bridge Arbitration (IBA). The cost will be much less (~\$900/case rather than \$4000).

GOVERNANCE

In keeping with the fast pace of our new Executive Director and thinking ahead as to how Board operations can accommodate the downsizing in 2024 to a smaller Board of 13, the Governance Committee developed streamlined procedures that were presented at the summer meeting. These "Interim Guidelines" meet the requirements of our ACBL bylaws, but provide a more flexible way of doing business in advance of and during "Regular" and "Special" meetings. These Interim Guidelines will be in effect on a trial basis through our fall meeting in Atlanta and can be adapted as needed for meetings

after that. Ultimately, the procedures the Board adopts will drive a new version of its regulations (the Codification) that will facilitate better communication, cooperation and coordination among working groups, task forces and committees across the organization (management, the Advisory Council, other volunteer groups and the Board) to address the bridge business functions that are critical to ACBL.

As part of its routine work, and in addition to the development of the Interim Guidelines that were based on Discussion (Item DI232-GV01) the Governance Committee reviewed five motions:

The first (232-GV01) was submitted through its Regional Director by a District concerned with expanding the criteria that would define a Member Not in Good Standing to include not serving “in any club administrative capacity.” Currently, a Member Not in Good Standing is not permitted to serve as a club manager or club director (among other non-allowed positions and responsibilities as detailed in the Codification, Chapter I – Membership, Section 2 – Definitions and Rights of ACBL Membership, 2.3.2, a. through j.). This motion was debated in Committee and brought to the Full Board with a narrow margin of approval. After considerable discussion by all Board members, the motion failed by a vote of 6-12-0-0. The concern was that as much as the Board wanted to honor the District’s request to ensure integrity at the Unit and club level, there is already the ability for a club to make its own rules in this regard. To codify this across all clubs would be difficult, given the ambiguity about what “administrative capacity” would mean to each club.

I was one who voted yes on this motion. I feel that players who have been suspended and should not be in allowed to hold administrative positions while under probation. And I think it is easier to have a rule that clubs could point to when having these discussions. BOD members who voted against the motion felt it should be left to the clubs.

Item 232-GV02 was unanimous in Committee and submitted to the Board as part of the Consent Calendar. This motion deleted many of the administrative requirements for the monthly *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* as had been listed in the Codification, Chapter II - Business Management - D. ACBL Bulletin. The Bulletin functions should be the responsibility of the Editor and editorial staff as part of the editorial decision-making process and therefore, do not need to be included in the Codification. The changes to this section of the Codification reflect that and are effective immediately. There are several additional references to *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* throughout other sections of the Codification, and the Governance Committee will be reviewing these to ensure they are deleted or changed to be consistent with the policy approved at this meeting.

Item 232-GV03 revised procedures dealing with requirements for the individuals the ACBL Board recommends to the United States Bridge Federation (USBF) to represent the ACBL on the World Bridge Federation (WBF) Executive Council and on the North American Bridge Federation Board; and clarified how and for what purpose the ACBL makes payments to the National Bridge Organizations (NBOs)—in the case of the WBF Zone 2, this includes the USBF and the national Canadian and Mexican bridge

organizations. These procedures are detailed in the Codification, Chapter VII - International Bridge A. Zone 2 National Bridge Organizations (NBOs), Chapter VII – International Bridge B. WBF Representatives and NABF Board Members, Chapter VII – International Bridge C. International Fund and to Chapter VII – International Funds D. World Junior Championships.

I did not have a strong opinion on this motion. The first part relates to people who were on the BOD and resigned before their term was up. It “strongly recommends” that they resign from the WBF Executive Council. Since this cannot be required, this part has no real effect. The second part is to require regular reports. I did support this.

Carried: 15-0-1-2. Two representatives were absent at the time the vote was taken.
Effective: Immediate.

At the spring meeting in New Orleans, three motions were tabled, all having to do with ACBL Hall of Fame (HOF) Operating Procedures—ensuring that nominees are appropriately vetted for their “ethics, deportment and sportsmanship” by the ACBL disciplinary bodies responsible for conducting such investigations; proposing consistency across the number of years before deceased individuals could be nominated for both the von Zedtwitz and Blackwood Awards; and other minor cleanup changes to the procedures. The semantic and procedural differences in the changes proposed by these three motions were subsequently discussed at length among the HOF Chair, the Board Liaison to the HOF, the Governance Chair and the motion makers. There was no disagreement that it is a privilege to be nominated for any ACBL honorary award, that the standards for nomination must be high and that proposed candidates should be vetted by ACBL—how to accomplish these goals was the issue to be resolved. This was done in Item 232-GV04, which proposes the Executive Director as the appropriate person to make this determination, with the confidentiality of players maintained. Vetting includes candidates not only for the HOF, including the Von Zedtwitz, Blackwood and Sydney Lazard, Jr. Sportsmanship Awards, but also the ACBL Honorary Member of the Year, the Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year and the Nadine Wood Honorary Member of the Year.

I fully supported this motion. We need to ensure that the people we are honoring have adhered to the highest standards.

These changes to the Codification, Chapter I - Membership Operating Guidelines F. Discipline and the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations, Section 3 – Disciplinary Administrative Policies were approved.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One representative was absent at the time the vote was taken.
Effective: Immediate.

Item 232-GV05 reflects these approved requirements that the HOF Committee will follow per its revised Operating Procedures before publishing the nomination of its candidates.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One representative was absent at the time the vote was taken.
Effective: Immediate.

APPEALS & CHARGES

The Appeals & Charges Committee reported on hearings it held since its last report to the Board: One Automatic Review of an Online Ethical Oversight Committee matter and two reviews of Negotiated Resolutions. Hearing reports are available at the Ethics & Discipline area of the ACBL website: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>

Item 232-AC03 moved to delete references to American Arbitration Association (AAA) from the CDR, bringing the CDR into alignment with the Institute for Bridge Arbitration's (IBA) actual implementation.

Carried: 18-0-0.
Effective: Immediate.

Item 232-AC04 moved that CDR 403(d)(3) Suspension, maximum of six months be revised to maximum of twenty-four months.

Carried: 18-0-0.
Effective: Immediate.

The original motion was to change to 12 months. I pushed to increase to 24. Even if all cases that Management intends to seek over six months suspension are routed to the IBA, there are reasons we would not want to limit the OEOC's authority. There could come a time when INA is overloaded and some cases (intended to go to IBA) must be sent to OEOC. In addition, some cases might be deemed less serious and sent to OEOC, but later found to be more egregious.

BRIDGE

The Board engaged in several bridge-related discussions and considered the following motions:

Item 232-BR01 clarifies and provides consistency to the information presented in the Codification, Chapter X: Sectionals, and introduces bridge camps, a special instance of a local sectional, where a residential program of bridge instruction incorporates games similar to tournaments-at-sea where silver points are awarded.

Carried: 18-0-0.
Effective: September 1, 2023.

Item 232-BR02 moved to approve the 2023-2024 GNT Conditions of Contest and to change the contact for members seeking exceptions to residency requirements from the

District President to the District/Regional Director found in the Codification, Chapter XI - Special Events, A. Residency Requirements, Section 1 - Grand National Teams and North American Pairs.

I plan to coordinate any such requests involving Region 7 with the District Presidents or someone they designate.

Substantive changes to the GNT Conditions of Contest are: Flight C to use the Basic+ Convention Chart instead of the Basic Chart and to permit unproctored online play. Most COVID-specific provisions were removed.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: September 1, 2023.

The Basic+ Chart was thought to be too restrictive. Many Flight C players are used to playing a more extensive set of conventions.

Districts may elect to require proctoring (play being monitored at sites approved by the District). If they do not require proctoring, there must be an ongoing video (e.g., Zoom, Facetime) or audio connection between opponents. For example, North/East and South/West must have these connections.

I am in favor of having sufficient security to ensure a level playing field. These events qualify teams for NABC/NABC+ Championships and most winners receive subsidies from their District.

The Advisory Council met shortly after the NABC and voted to require the BOD to reconsider this motion. They feel proctoring should be required for all Districts. The issue will be taken up at a Special Meeting before the Fall NABC

ACBL maintains a list of top lifetime masterpoint holders which is published annually in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. A discussion (DI232-BR01) resulted in the decision to review current criteria established for inclusion or removal from the list, ensuring consistency and transparency moving forward. This review, to be conducted by management and the Bridge Committee, may result in policy and/or modifications to the Codification.

Currently, if a player forgets to renew their membership (or is taken ill and cannot) they are removed from any Masterpoint lists. Since deceased players remain on the list, I felt it was unfair to remove someone just because they are late in renewing. [Note: this will not affect players under suspension or probation that results in them being "Members not in Good Standing." They will continue to not be shown in these lists until they regain Good Standing.]

In 2021, a strength of field motion (202-21 first reading and 20S6-03 second reading) was unanimously passed by the Board. This discussion (DI232-BR02) focused on concerns over the cost, the timeframe for implementation and how the implementation

ranks in terms of organizational priorities. Rather than relying on an outside vendor, the IT team, headed by Jay Whipple, determined a cost effective and simplified solution for implementation to occur before year-end.

[It is thought that this will make Masterpoint awards for team games more consistent from tournament to tournament.](#)

A discussion (DI232-BR04) centered on whether a change to the grass roots funding structure will invigorate these prestigious events. This resulted in an action item to management to review the financial spreadsheet as well as past motions/regulations affecting Grass Roots. Management will work with the Bridge Committee to propose a potential solution that will be considered at the fall meeting.

A discussion (DI232-BR05) resulted in approval for virtual clubs to run a week of Club Appreciation games in October 2023 and a week of Charity games in November and in December 2023 with funds allocated to the ACBL Charity Foundation. Upon further investigation, management is unable to implement the extra charity games in 2023 due to additional programming requirements.

NABC SITE SELECTION

The NABC Site Selection Committee recommended Seattle, WA as the location for the fall 2027 NABC. The site visit to the Summit Convention Center and Hyatt Regency (host hotel) was conducted on June 21-22, 2023. The committee reported the financial projection and the benefits of the space, e.g., many nearby restaurants, bars and attractions, a high walkability rating and an affordable room rate of \$189.

The Board unanimously supported Seattle, WA for the fall 2027 NABC.

[I am one of two Board members on the Site Selection Committee and attended the site visit. I was impressed by the facilities and the location. While it will be held at a convention center, we received a very good deal. The hotels are close and there are plenty of restaurants nearby. We have not had a NABC in the Pacific Northwest since 2011.](#)

ACBL CHARITY FOUNDATION UPDATE

The dual challenges of declining membership and the effects of the pandemic have prompted the ACBL Charity Foundation Trustees to propose a revised giving strategy communicated to the Board by Foundation President Jackie Zayac. It includes resuming the grant rotation to Districts on a two-year rather than a four-year rotation, awarding each District \$10,000. The rotation will begin in 2023 with Districts within Regions 2-6 and in 2024 with Districts within Regions 7-13. Region 1 (Districts 1 and 2) receive

charity funds from the Canadian Bridge Federation and are not included in the rotation. Region 13 (Districts 18 and 19) share one grant because its membership is split between Canada and the U.S.

The Foundation will continue grants in the amount of \$5,000 to a qualified 501(c)3 organization at each NABC, but will suspend individual grants. The Foundation also proposed the establishment of a catastrophic relief fund, maintaining a minimum balance of \$50,000.

An election to fill two Trustee positions will occur at the Foundation Membership Meeting in November. Declarations are due by October 15, 2023. For details, contact ACBL Election Secretary: elections@acbl.org.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Jon Brissman, Jan Martel, Karen Allison and Marjorie Michelin were each appointed to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee for a three-year term from the end of the Summer 2023 NABC through the end of the Summer 2026 NABC.

VACB UPDATE

If you play online in Virtual Clubs, you have noticed a big difference in games that are available to you. Management proposed eliminating the Visitor Policy (effective August 1), which restricted the number of guests that clubs could accommodate in their games. This policy was instituted at the beginning of the pandemic when VACB games were beginning. It was meant to protect the small-to-medium sized clubs from possible predatory practices (including pricing and poaching) by larger, more active clubs. The policy was never meant to last forever. Virtual Club attendance has been declining. Management felt that opening all games to everyone could benefit many of the small/medium sized clubs. Since there is a cap on Masterpoint awards (more than 25 tables get no extra award), they did not think this would drive all players to the largest clubs.

I was initially against this change. While I liked the idea of making many more games available to our players, I was not convinced it was in the best interest of the smaller clubs we have been trying to keep afloat. However, a straw poll of the Board showed a majority approved.

Initial results indicate Management seems to have been correct. It has not only made finding games at desired times much easier for our players but it seems to be helping the clubs we have tried to protect.

NABC EVENT SCHEDULES

I am one of two Board members serving on the Competition and Conventions (C&C) Committee. A sub-committee was instituted earlier this year to review the "National" events schedules at our NABCs. We met a number of times before the Summer NABC and developed a couple of proposals which were shown to the full C&C. A final recommendation was approved by the Committee. I made the presentation to the Board in Chicago. The BOD approved. With the down-sizing of the BOD from 25 to 13 members, some responsibilities have been delegated to committees not entirely composed of Board members. In the future, these decisions will be made by C&C.

A few highlights:

- We have added the Women's Swiss for the last weekend in the Spring on a (2-year) experimental basis. If we get sufficient attendance, we will keep it.
- We moved the start of the IMP Pairs back from Day 3 to Day 1 of the Spring. This will allow players who are not qualified for the Platinum Pairs and not old enough for the Silver Ribbon Pairs to have a NABC+ event to play in those days.
- We added a new 2-day NABC+ Open Pairs starting Day 3 of the Spring.
- We moved the Fast Pairs from the Spring to the last 2 days of the Summer. Now, players competing in the Roth Open Swiss who do not qualify for Day 2 have another NABC+ event to play in.
- Moved some events to have similar events back-to-back (e.g., 0-10K games).

Our goal was to provide NABC/NABC+ games for as many players as possible and not to have multiple days where players have nothing to play in.

Another change is that we are reducing the cut for smaller events. For example, the cut may be 30-40% rather than ~50%. This will result in larger "finals," avoiding possibility of a Howel/Howel-type movement.

The full schedules can be found here: <https://web2.acbl.org/nabc/NationalEvents.pdf>.

Good luck in your bridge endeavors. I hope to see you at a tournament soon.

Larry