

## NATIONAL DIRECTORS REPORT SPRING 2023

Larry Sealy, Region 7 Director (my comments in Blue)  
[Region7Director@ACBL.org](mailto:Region7Director@ACBL.org)

ACBL Board of Directors held its spring meetings face-to-face (F2F) Monday, March 6 through Thursday, March 9, 2023 in New Orleans, LA. ACBL Board of Directors, committees and work groups continue to meet regularly through Zoom and conference calls.

The information presented in this report has been sourced from ACBL Board Committee Chairs and the spring Management Report.

### FINANCE

The Operating Budget for 2023, which indicates a gain from operations of \$109,000, was approved. The budget for revenue and expenses is \$15,119,000 and \$15,010,000, respectively.

This budget was revised from the original (submitted at the Phoenix Fall NABC) that was unanimously disapproved. This one was unanimously approved. There are obviously a lot of projections regarding tournament attendance, expenses, and membership levels that are only estimated. We should get a mid-year update in Chicago.

The Capital Budget of \$635,000 was approved. The Capital Budget is comprised of a \$75,000 allocation for the Masterpoint Engine Phase 2.0, a \$500,000 allocation for AS400 modernization and a \$10,000 allocation for maintenance items.

The reduction of net assets for 2022 was \$1,847,000. This resulted from an operations loss of \$991,000 vs. a budgeted loss of \$867,000, a reduction in the value of investments of \$1,174,000, offset by an adjustment for pension plan future costs of \$317,000. The loss from operations resulted from revenues of \$15,099,000 vs. the budget of \$15,833,000, a worsening of \$734,000, and expenses of \$16,091,000 vs. the budget of \$16,750,000; an improvement of \$659,000.

### AUDIT

Item 231-AU01 moved that Codification, Section 4 - Corporate Compliance and Whistleblower Policy, Chapter 2B - Employees & Consultants, be updated and clarified to better protect employees from adverse employment consequences as a result of reporting activities believed to be illegal, dishonest, unethical or otherwise improper. The procedures for reporting violations, mainly who to contact, were better defined.

Motion carried: 18-0-0  
Effective: Immediate

Item 231-AU02 moved that Codification, Appendix 4-D1 Audit Committee Charter, Internal Controls and Risk Assessment be amended to ensure Management raises issues that pertain to risk to ACBL with the Audit Committee before agreements or contracts with third parties are executed.

Motion carried: 18-0-0  
Effective: Immediate

## **MEMBERSHIP BUILDING TASK FORCE**

There are approximately 132,700 ACBL members. New member recruitment is up 118.6 percent from 2022.

To continue to drive membership growth, the Membership Task Force is actively analyzing existing ACBL membership building programs, determining synergies and ensuring measurability. Additional initiatives include a member referral program, expanding digital presence and creating a process for identifying, collecting and sharing best practices that relate to membership building.

## **SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND CLUBS**

The Board approved continued funding of Boost Face-to-Face Bridge, a pilot program of ACBL and ACBL Educational Foundation, which launched in September of 2022. The program is aimed at building membership by providing support for F2F beginning bridge teachers and F2F bridge clubs. Selected teachers must offer guest memberships to students and have access to a F2F club where students can take lessons and advance to in-person supervised play.

ACBL uses social media ad campaigns to identify individuals interested in learning bridge. Leads generated from these campaigns are then funneled to participating teachers. ACBL is tracking program results and analyzing the data to ensure efficiencies in lead acquisition/cost.

In the summer of 2022, the Board approved an initial program investment of up to \$100,000. As of February 9, \$28,400 of the \$100,000 has been spent on round 2 campaigns. The campaigns have generated 4,661 leads, produced 275 students, 59 guest members and 10 new members. The campaigns also produced students for advanced bridge classes and new players for club games.

If you are a teacher and would like to be considered for participation in the program, please contact Blakely Meyers, Education Program Manager, [Blakely.Meyers@acbl.org](mailto:Blakely.Meyers@acbl.org)

I voted in favor of continuing this initiative. I would be interested in hearing how it is (or is not) working in our Region.

## **APPEALS & CHARGES**

The Appeals & Charges Committee (A&C) reported on 11 hearings since its report provided during a Special Board Meeting held January 13, 2023. The 11 hearings included three Automatic Reviews of matters heard by the Online Ethical Oversight Committee, an Automatic Review of a matter heard by the District 22 Disciplinary Committee, reviews of six Negotiated Resolutions involving ethical violations and a

review of a Negotiated Resolution involving a conduct violation.

Hearing reports are available at the Ethics & Discipline area of the ACBL website: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>

A&C continued work on the development of internal processes for the implementation of EDGAR, a computer-based cheating detection tool. This includes templates for EDGAR summary reports to ACBL and criteria, a process flow and templates for ACBL's handling and use of EDGAR reports. Objective criteria have been established to minimize vulnerability to bias. Where there will be discretionary decisions, an oversight panel has been established to review such decisions. EDGAR's developers and independent evaluators have provided documentation and responded to questions in support of determination of EDGAR's fitness for use in ACBL's disciplinary regime.

I am the Vice-Chair of A&C. We continue to try to work through the process of incorporating EDGAR and the Institute for Bridge Arbitration – including changes to the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR).

## **BYLAWS**

Item 231-BY01 proposed ACBL Bylaws be amended to require bridge arbitration cases be handled by the Institute of Bridge Arbitration. Arbitration applies to all members, previous members and non-members who avail themselves of ACBL bridge activities. A new Article XII has been added to the Bylaws to specify in detail how arbitration will work.

Since it is a Bylaws change, the full amendment must be published in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*. Then after a period of 30 days, a second reading of the motion must pass the Board with a 2/3 majority. After that, the Advisory Council (AC) must ratify the amendment by a majority vote.

Motion carried: 18-0-0

Effective: Immediate upon ratification by AC

Item 231-BY-02 was passed by the Executive Committee prior to Board meetings in New Orleans. It re-defines the Bylaws Committee to consist of three members: two from the Board and the third member being the Chair of the Advisory Council or designee. The Chair of the Bylaws Committee shall be one of the two members from the Board.

Effective: Immediate

I recommend the Advisory Council approve this change. It will help us deal with some of the cheating cases by (hopefully) speeding up the disciplinary process and incurring much less cost than if we had to use the American Arbitration Association (AAA).

## **GOVERNANCE**

The Governance Committee Chair outlined the work that this committee hopes to accomplish during this current year. Among these efforts are streamlining our regulations; facilitating the establishment of 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 moving forward when a smaller Board is in place, and working with the Interim Executive Director to

ensure an effective transition to a permanent Executive Director, once one is in place.

As part of its work, Governance reviewed five motions:

Item 231-GV01 proposed a reduction in the number of Goodwill Receptions held at NABCs. Starting in 2024, instead of the usual three a year, with one being held at each NABC, there will be one Goodwill Reception annually, held every three years at an eastern, a central and a western NABC venue. This rotation will provide an opportunity for Goodwill members to be better able to attend a reception than if the reception were always held at a spring, a summer or a fall NABC. With the introduction of the morning and mid-afternoon event start times, it has become increasingly difficult to schedule receptions at times conducive to providing an enjoyable experience for the players. Having just one reception a year to honor the Goodwill Member of the Year, the Volunteer of the Year and the Honorary Member of the Year will make the reception more meaningful and make the recognition of key volunteers a ceremony that Goodwill members will look forward to attending.

Motion carried: 15-2-1

I abstained on this motion. I thought we had not adequately fleshed out how/where the yearly reception would be held. While it will save some money, it will result in a number of our Goodwill Committee members being unable to attend.

Effective: March 29, 2023

Item 231-GV03, Item 231-GV04 and Item 231-GV05 all had to do with ACBL Hall of Fame Operating Procedures, ensuring that nominees are appropriately vetted for their “ethics, deportment and sportsmanship” by 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.

There were several key semantic and procedural differences in the changes proposed in the three motions and after considerable discussion, all motions were tabled until Chicago. This will allow the motion makers and the Hall of Fame Committee Chair time to propose one comprehensive set of changes that are agreed upon by all in advance of one or more motions being submitted for the summer agenda.

Item 213-GV02 moved to eliminate the requirement for ACBL to mail a set of address labels of electors upon request to candidates running for the national board, in addition to an electronic file.

Motion failed: 7-10-0-1

Effective: Immediate

This modified motion did not clearly require the vetting. I voted against it, thinking we should hold HOF nominees to the highest of standards.

## **BRIDGE**

Item 231-BR01 moved to amend Codification Part 2 - Bridge Operations, Chapter IX - A - Regional Tournament Scheduling and Sanctioning Sections 1 and 2, redefining requirements for District regional tournament allotments to provide additional time for table counts to rebound post-pandemic. Additional updates were made to reflect the

increase in NLM regional allotments from 3 to 5 passed during the Phoenix Board meetings held fall of 2022.

Unanimous in committee and moved to the Consent Calendar  
Effective: Immediate

Item 231-BR02 moved that the 2023-2024 North American Pairs Conditions of Contest be approved without substantive change.

Motion carried: 17-1-0  
Effective: June 1, 2023

Item DI231-BR01 proposed that the sectional surcharge be raised from \$180 to \$190 and applied in full to local sectionals. Rising transportation and processing costs are sighted as justification for the increase. The sectional surcharge had not been increased since April of 2016.

Straw poll: 18-0-0  
ACBL communication(s) to follow

Item C-AI231-BR0 proposed that an optional online regional event (two sessions held in one day or two sessions run across consecutive evenings) be held in conjunction with a F2F District regional, and would include a revenue-sharing component.

Straw poll: 18-0-0  
ACBL communication(s) to follow

This will be limited to players who are members of the host District. A pilot event was run during the Gatlinburg Regional. It was quite successful (69 tables), mostly due to the Gold Rush game. "Lessons Learned" were gathered and will be used for later Regionals who want to add this event.

Item NA231-01 (a bridge Non-agenda Item introduced at the outside of these meetings) moved that Codification Chapter I - Membership Operating Guidelines, B. Ranking, Masterpoints and Races, Section 3 - Masterpoint Races be amended to add a masterpoint race for international players living outside of North American who win masterpoints in BBO silver and gold instant matchpoint games.

Motion carried: 18-0-0  
Effective: April 1, 2023

This will hopefully generate additional revenue for the League by encouraging foreign players to compete in our games.

Item NA231-02 (a second bridge Non-agenda Item introduced at the outset of these meetings) moved that Codification Part 1: Bridge - Chapter X - Sectionals - A: General - Section 3: STaCs strike the requirement for STaCs to be advertised in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* calendar at least one month before the scheduled STaC tournament date.

Motion carried: 18-0-0  
Effective: Immediate

This resulted from a STaC District 8 wanted to hold on less than two months' notice. It

was initially denied. Georgia Heth and I got involved and got the decision reversed. This motion was needed to avoid a similar issue in the future.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH**

The task of the five-person Executive Director Search Committee appointed by the President is to identify an appropriate individual to lead the ACBL as the organization faces a challenging future. This individual needs to have demonstrated executive-level leadership skills, with business and financial success in growing membership organizations; must possess an understanding of bridge and our organizational structure with its critical grass roots, volunteer base; must exhibit excellent communications capabilities; and be willing to move to the Memphis area. Finding one person who excels in all of the qualifications identified by the committee as key to success is a tall order. Surprisingly to many, the final requirement was the least difficult to satisfy.

To date, the committee has received and reviewed application packages from 17 individuals, with all but two coming from within the bridge community. One application came from the Execunet external online search service the Committee worked with for 30 days from mid-December to mid-January, and one application was received from a well-qualified individual outside the bridge community at the recommendation of a long-time player. In total, four applicants were women and 13 were men.

The Committee conducted screening interviews by Zoom of those candidates whose resumes were aligned with the characteristics noted above for the ACBL Executive Director. During these interviews, the candidates were asked to respond -- both orally and in writing in advance -- to questions as to how their experience and skills would prepare them to meet the challenges ACBL faces. In addition, candidates were asked to complete Behavioral and Cognitive Assessments from a company specializing in matching assessment results with the characteristics identified as important for success in the position for which they were applying. Those candidates whose assessments matched closely with the Executive Director characteristics and whose weighted skill and experience ratings by the Search Committee were high were invited to develop presentations focusing on ideas for membership recruitment and retention. These presentations required an understanding of the problem and current programs in place to address declining membership; of the need to establish timelines and goals, and of metrics to measure the achievement of identified goals; and of the resources necessary to pursue the proposed ideas.

The deadline for the receipt of applications is April 3. The Committee expects to complete its search by the end of April, with the goal of having a new Executive Director in place by the start of the Summer NABC.

Bronia Jenkins was one of 20+ people interviewed by the Search Committee, then by the BOD in April, and hired later that month (May 8 start date). I believe this is a great choice and she will provide the needed energy and new ideas.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Mitch Dunitz, District 23, Eddie Wold, District 16, and Ifikhar Baqai, District 23, were appointed to the Hall of Fame Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2023 NABC through the end of the Spring 2026 NABC.

Owen Lien, District 12, and Sabine Auken, District 99, were appointed to the Competition



and Conventions Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2023 NABC through the end of the Spring 2026 NABC.

Cheri Bjerkan, District 13, Marty Fleischer, District 2, Rick Roeder, District 22, John Fout, District 21, and Kevin Wilson, District 7, were appointed to the Ethical Oversight Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2023 NABC through the end of the Spring 2026 NABC.

Lisa Berkowitz, District 9, Christal Henner, District 24, Nagy Kamel, District 16 and Tom Peters, District 2, were appointed to the ACBL Disciplinary Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2023 NABC through the end of the Spring 2026 NABC.

Ifikhar Baqai, District 23, was appointed to fill the remaining term of the vacancy through the end of the Spring 2025 NABC.

Lynne Feldman, District 22, and Matt Koltnow, District 19, were appointed to the Laws Commission for a five-year term from the end of the Spring 2023 NABC through the end of the Spring 2028 NABC.

Alex Kolesnik, District 23, was appointed to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee to fill the remaining term of the vacant position through the end of the Summer 2024 NABC.

### Other

In Phoenix, we agreed to a six-day National Online Bridge Championship (NAOBC), with a concurrent four-day online Regional, to be held the week after the 2023 Summer NABC. After internal discussion, it was determined this would be too much of a burden on the directing staff. The NAOBC was deferred to 2024. There will be three online Regionals this year: One was held March 23-26. The others will be July 27-30 and Dec 19-22.