

2024 SPRING NATIONAL BOARD REPORT

The 2024 Spring NABC was held in Louisville, KY. Congratulation to the local committee and ACBL Meeting Services/Management for making this an excellent tournament. The playing areas were spacious; the site was close to quite a few restaurants of all price ranges; there were plenty of activities after the bridge sessions; there were inexpensive food and beverage items outside the playing areas; and the weather cooperated.

The ACBL Board of Directors held its spring meetings face-to-face (F2F) Monday, March 11 through Wednesday, March 13. The Board, Task Forces and Committees continue to meet regularly through Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

FINANCE

February had a gain from operations of \$198k, better than budget by \$136k and \$80k better than 2023. Revenues for the month totaled \$1.2M, which was \$100k more than the budget of \$1.1M. Expenses were \$999k which was \$36k or 3.5 percent less than the budget of \$1.03M.

Overall, the year-to-date (YTD) gain in net assets was \$294k, which was above budget by \$232k and \$333k better than the prior YTD loss of (\$39k).

The balance sheet is strong with investments of \$8.2M and deferred revenue up 15 percent vs. 2023, reflecting paid memberships that expire in the future.

Special weeks for VACBs (e.g, Silver Linings), Online Regionals, and North American Online Bridge Championships (NAOBC) add a significant amount to the bottom line. There are three more online Regionals this year: August 1-4, November 18-20, and December 12-15. While there was no NAOBC last year, we will have one September 16-21 of this year. The Online events Calendar can be found here: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/onlineevents/>.

MEMBERSHIP

ACBL membership continues to stabilize. As of March 1, ACBL membership totaled 130,615; down 1.2 percent from the previous year. New members totaled 1,199; an increase of 1.0 percent from the previous year. New guest members totaled 895; an increase of 6.5 percent from the previous year.

Management has been trying several new things to increase retention and help generate new members. The new 5/5/5 program is one attempt to provide Units financial incentive to help. It went into effect April 1.

STRATEGIC

The Committee of the Full Board established the strategic goals of the organization. Focus remains on building and retaining membership, financial stability and combating cheating, mainly online. The development of a social bridge division is a new strategic goal. Improving IT infrastructure remains an operational priority.

Four Task Forces—Clubs, Recruitment and Retention, Online Provider and NABC Business Model—were initiated to facilitate and streamline the planning process. Each is comprised of Board members and non-Board liaisons.

I am on the NABC Task Force. A survey was taken to get member input on what factors impact their attendance. We are looking at several possible options (for both mid- and far-term strategies) to refocus our NABCs for smaller attendance. We will give a status report at the Summer NABC in Toronto.

APPEALS AND CHARGES

The Chair of Appeals and Charges (A&C) reported the disciplinary matters A&C reviewed on January 31, 2024 - three Negotiated Resolutions (NR), one automatic review of an Online Ethical Oversight Committee (OEOC) decision and one appeal of a District Disciplinary Committee decision. Also, an NR submitted to A&C on February 6, rejected with condition for acceptance, revised and then accepted on February 23. The Report was received by the Board.

Item 241-AC02 moved to streamline the Codification as it relates to discipline, clarifying language and removing procedures and “redundant” content that is already included in the Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR). Clarifications to the Codification include that each Unit is responsible for handling non-compliance with its bylaws, and that slow play should be reported to the ACBL National Recorder and not to Tournament Directors.

Item 241-AC02 includes an Action Item that states if an A&C Committee member is unavailable to seat a panel of three for a disciplinary procedure, an alternate member of the Board shall be chosen by the A&C Chair in consultation with the ACBL Board President. All Board members are approved for consideration.

Carried: 13-0-0.

Effective: March 13, 2024.

I chair the A&C Committee and gave the hearing report. The Codification streamlining motion was a Management proposal that was needed to remove inconsistencies with the CDR, among other things. I voted for.

COMBATING ONLINE CHEATING

ACBL is using a Computer-Based Cheating Detection Program (CBCD) EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach) to detect cheating in ACBL Masterpoint® (MP) games held on BBO.

EDGAR went through a rigorous validation program of statistical review, testing and evaluation, demonstrating to independent outside experts, the A&C Committee and the Full Board that it is fit for use.

The initial launch included 7,226 players who were screened during six weekly runs that occurred from January 31 through March 7. There are an estimated 30,000 ACBL members currently playing in ACBL games held on BBO. All players will be screened within the next year or so.

EDGAR places screened players in one of three categories: Red (cheating beyond a reasonable doubt), Green (not cheating) and Yellow (needing further review). Of those screened during the initial launch, 96 players, with MPs ranging from fewer than 300 to over 10,000, were identified as Red, 7,044 were identified as Green and 84 were identified as needing further review.

The severity of discipline will depend on the total MPs of each player and on aggravating factors: previous discipline for ethical violations, members in positions of authority or honor (ACBL Board members, ACBL employees, Advisory Council (AC) members, national committee members, District and Unit officials and awardees), cheating with multiple players and players with over five platinum points.

Discipline is as follows:

Partnerships where both players have fewer than 300 MPs will receive warnings if no aggravating factors exist.

Partnerships where both players are under 2,500 MPs are eligible for Fast Track discipline (FTD) if no aggravating factors exist.

Partnerships where one or both players have 2,500 or more MPs or those with aggravating factors, are not eligible for FTD, but will be sent to the Institute of Bridge Arbitration (IBA) if an agreement on an NR is not made.

Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List can be found on the Ethics & Discipline page of the ACBL website: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>

Initial results from EDGAR show 1-2% of the online players who have been screened cheated (at least for some length of time) since the start of the pandemic.

Some unforeseen issues and lessons learned from the initial EDGAR roll-out resulted in a need to update the CDR again. Several meetings were conducted, leading up to a May 8 Special BOD Meeting, where the revised CDR was approved. A few of the changes include:

- a. Discipline now based on each player's Masterpoint® holding.
- b. Only Unit/District Officers (Pres., VP, Sec'y, Treasurer, District Recorder) will be subjected to "Heightened Scrutiny" (HS) and stronger penalties. In the Feb 2, 2024, CDR, all Unit/District BOD members were included in HS.
- c. Players subject to FTD will be prohibited from playing with the partner(s) they cheated with during their probation.
- d. Players who cheated with multiple partners will get a lengthier suspension than those who only cheated with one.

On May 8, we also voted to:

1. Retroactively modify discipline for players who received FTD discipline based on their partner's MP level. This was to be consistent with the punishments that will be given moving forward.
2. Allow players on suspension to perform volunteer work for the Unit or District. This will not allow anything prohibited for "Members Not in Good Standing," such as serving on a Board or being present during a tournament or club game. It will allow activities such as: scheduling, making flyers, reviewing and editing

documents, and helping repair of equipment. This may help keep them engaged with the bridge community.

I voted in favor of both of these motions.

GOVERNANCE/COMMUNICATIONS

Governance continues to refine its roadmap to streamlining the ACBL Codification, the compilation of the rules and regulations passed by the Board. The goal is to create a user-friendly document that is less complex in language and in structure.

Guidelines (SOPs) for ACBL regulations, policies and procedures were completed in January, and include definitions, scope and positions responsible for enforcement. The SOPs will be used to identify ACBL regulations, policies and procedures that will be removed from the Codification and then “live” in an online document library for ease of access and scheduled/periodic review. Redundancies and outdated provisions and language will continue to be removed from the Codification.

Governance/Communications produces the *National Board Report* and provides content for the Board page of the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*. Board policies and protocols are being reviewed. A correspondence to stakeholders that clarifies the distinction between Regions and Districts and the use of Regional logos is underway.

As part of its preparation for Louisville Board meetings, Governance reviewed five motions, provided input on one discussion item and put forth one action item.

Item GV01 moved to amend the Codification, Chapter IV – Board Procedures, B. Expenses, Sections 2 and 3; and Chapter IV – Board Procedures, C. Meetings, Introduction and Section 6, to increase the Board of Directors’ stipends from \$1,000 to \$2,000 three times yearly and to hold fall Board meetings online instead of F2F. The motion failed and was reintroduced as a divided motion with a second from the floor.

The motion to increase the Board of Directors’ stipends from \$1,000 to \$2,000 three times yearly passed 7-5-1. It has been 15 years since the stipends have been increased. Regional Directors have greater geographical territory to cover due to the downsizing of the Board and incur greater expense. The increase will facilitate F2F and online communication with membership and stakeholders.

One of the arguments for increasing the stipend is we do not want our Board to be an elitist group – excluding those who cannot afford to spend the requisite money to attend tournaments in their Region. Although the stipend had not been changed in ~15 years, I thought a 100% increase was too much, though.

Effective: March 13, 2024.

The motion to hold fall Board meetings online instead of F2F failed 3-10-0. The value of holding F2F meetings, particularly in the fall when the budget is approved for the next calendar year, outweighed the cost savings of holding the meetings online.

I voted against this motion for the reason cited above, as well as the fact we accomplish more in F2F meetings than we do online. In addition, I think it is important for BOD members to be present for (at least) part of each NABC.

One of the points cited in favor of this motion was that it would allow our employees and BOD members, who must attend the meetings, to spend Thanksgiving with family. To this end, we agreed to determine whether we could start the Fall NABCs a day earlier and end on Tuesday. For Las Vegas (Fall 2024), the meeting space was available at a minimal cost, so we will meet Sunday through Tuesday (November 24-26).

Item 241-GV02 moved to amend the Codification, Chapter IV - Board Procedures, B. Expenses, Section 1 - ACBL President Expenses and to remove from the Codification, Appendix 4-A1, Duties, Responsibilities and Authority of the ACBL President. There were no substantive changes to Chapter IV. The Appendix is being modified as the majority of the President's time is now allocated to coordinating task forces, committees and meetings and interacting with management to ensure alignment with the Board's strategic focus and the financial oversight of the organization. The Appendix will "live" in a space accessible to the Board and to membership.

Carried: 13-0-0.

Effective: March 13, 2024.

This was primarily just to clean up language. I voted yes.

Item 241-GV03 moved to amend the Codification, Chapter I - Membership, A. Membership, Sections 2 and 4; Chapter VI - Club Sanctioned Games, D. Club Championships and Special Events; and Appendix 4-D2, Hall of Fame Operating Procedures. Also, to remove references to "service fees".

GV03 carried 13-0-0, giving ACBL the ability to remove the Life Member category from ACBL membership options. As a result, all Inactive Life Members will be reinstated as regular members through the end of 2024. For 2025 and beyond, to continue to remain an ACBL Member, and to receive the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*, Life Members must pay annual dues. Transitioning Life Members to Regular Members will help to standardize the arbitration clause for all members, reducing legal exposure.

Current, inactive members have been given a full membership through the end of the year. At that point, they will need to renew to continue membership.

The primary need for this is (as cited above) the fact that we have no arbitration agreement on file with many inactive Life Members This can lead to issues dealing with EDGAR cases.

Effective: May 1, 2024.

Item 241-GV04 moved to delete from the Codification, Appendix 5-D - Current ACBL Educational Foundation bylaws. The Educational Foundation is a corporation independent of the ACBL Board of Directors and maintains its bylaws.

Carried: 13-0-0.

Effective: March 12, 2024.

Item 241-GV05 moved to create and to codify a Committee of the Corporation to advise management and the Board on decisions that affect clubs and teachers. This motion was adopted by the Advisory Council (AC) in fall of 2023 and was brought to the Board

by the AC Chair for consideration in Louisville. A Club Task Force was established by the ACBL President in January 2024, eliminating the need for a Committee of the Corporation. As a result, the motion failed: 0-13-0.

As stated above, President Margot Hennings instituted a Club Task Force at the beginning of this year. Management thought this proposal would result in redundancy and extra work for some of their team. Therefore, I voted no.

Management requested Board input regarding the next steps to ACBL COVID protocols. ACBL proposed to eliminate COVID vaccination requirements for all ACBL tournaments and the need for a safety officer. Also, to shift the responsibility to furnish masks from the tournament sponsor to the masked pair. After a discussion, all ACBL COVID protocols will be eliminated effective May 13, 2024.

Everyone agreed that it was time to eliminate the COVID protocols.

An Action Item to management to ensure Regional Directors' emails are removed from their email accounts and moved to the Cloud on their last day in office was deferred to June while management revisits and refines its overall document retention policy.

BRIDGE

The Committee reviewed five motions and a proposal by the Competition and Conventions Committee:

Item 241-BR01 moved to update the Codification, Chapter X - Sectionals, A. Sectional Tournaments - Scheduling, Sanctioning and Events and B. Finance.

Substantive changes are as follows:

- Removes management's ability to override sanctioning rules.
- Adds a section on sectional scheduling to clarify required timeframes of sectional tournaments.
- Removes management's ability to grant an exception for the weekend requirement; i.e., STaCs may be scheduled for up to seven consecutive days, but may include only one weekend.

Carried: 12-0-0 with one Board member absent at the time the vote was taken.
Effective: April 15, 2024.

I was a co-sponsor of this and voted yes. Among other things, this makes it easier for decisions to be made regarding Sectional tournament sanctioning. The 250-mile distance (from another Sectional) rule, added at the Fall 2023 NABC, was removed.

Item 241-BR03 moved to update the Codification, Chapter VI - Club Sanctioned Games.

Substantive changes are as follows:

- Gives management the ability to fine clubs for noncompliance with sanctioning rules.

- Reduces lesson time allocated to pupil games from 45 minutes to 30 minutes to give teachers the flexibility for students to play six boards and to hold the play/learn time to under two hours.
- For weekly clubs, increases Club Championship sessions for each regularly scheduled weekly game from four to eight yearly.
- Requires clubs to hold two of the eight Club Championship sessions during a different calendar quarter of the year. Also, to not allow clubs to carry over Club Championship sessions from one quarter to the next.

Carried: 12-0-0 with one Board member absent at the time the vote was taken.

Effective: March 13, 2024.

Another non-controversial motion submitted by Management. I voted yes.

Item 241-BR06 moved to update the Codification, Chapter IX - Regionals, A. Regional Tournament Sanctioning and Scheduling, Section 3.

Substantive changes are as follows:

- Adds a limit of five years in advance for sanctioning regionals.
- Removes language that gave management the ability to override the rules listed in the section.
- Removes references to an arbitration panel – with the clear rules now in place, no panel is needed.
- Adds language that the earliest sanctioned tournament prevails in a conflict in a situation where neither regional tournament has a traditional date.

Carried: 12-0-0 with one Board member absent at the time the vote was taken.

Effective: March 13, 2024.

I was a co-sponsor and voted yes. This cleans up the process for sanctioning competing Regionals that are reasonably close to each other.

Item 241-BR04 moved to approve the 2024-2025 North American Pairs Conditions of Contest. The Competition and Conventions (C&C) Committee is discussing a proposal to add a fourth flight to NAPs in 2025 to mirror those of the GNTs. Due to IT issues, C&C will put forth its proposal in summer. Two board members requested that the fourth flight be added to the 2024-2025 Conditions or Contest and voted no to approving the C of Cs.

Carried: 10-2-0 with one Board member absent at the time the vote was taken.

Effective: June 1, 2024.

There is no significant change from last year to this year. I voted for the motion. There is some momentum to add a fourth flight of the NAP. The desire is for GNT and NAP to have the same MP limits. There will be a cost involved (mostly due to the stipends given

to the NAP winners). However, it is hoped it will generate additional revenue from more people playing. We will take this up again in Toronto.

Item 241-BR05 moved to approve the 2024-2025 Grand National Teams Conditions of Contest.

Carried: 12-0-0 with one Board member absent at the time the vote was taken.
Effective: September 1, 2024.

Again, not much change from last year.

The Bridge Committee and the Board rejected a proposal by the Competition and Conventions (C&C) Committee granting Grand Life Master (GLM) qualifying status to the winners of the Senior and Mixed Trials starting in 2024 providing that there are a minimum of six entrants. Also, that the trials cannot be held entirely online. Both the Bridge and C&C Committees will collaborate to determine the optimum number of entries for both USBF and ACBL events, including a review of the Codification which states that any event that falls under 30 tables for three years must be reviewed by the Board to retain GLM eligibility. This would include the new Women's Swiss event that debuted in Louisville with only 16 teams entering.

I voted no. This motion needs further work, as stated above, and will be considered again soon.

NABC SITE SELECTION

Non-agenda Item 241-01 was introduced to select Chicago or Las Vegas as the location for the 2027 summer NABC. Following a discussion of the financials for Chicago (Sheraton) and Las Vegas (Caesars), the Board by a majority straw poll vote, approved both locations and provided the Executive Director with the discretion to choose the final location in consultation with the NABC Site Selection Committee. View upcoming NABCs: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/nabccalendar/>.

I gave the Site Selection Committee briefing.

I participated in the site visit to Chicago. We looked at several different possible venues, narrowing down to Sheraton Chicago (site of 2023 Summer NABC). The site is well situated but the room rates are high (\$250+/night). A site visit to Las Vegas was held a few weeks later (I could not attend). At that point, two other potential venues were identified as available (The Rio Hotel & Casino and The Westgate). The team visited Caesar's Forum/Harrah's Hotel & Casino and the Rio (The Westgate is the site of the Fall 2024 NABC, so is well known). The Rio was identified as the preferred site. It is preferable to Sheraton Chicago due primarily to the room rate (~\$100/night cheaper). We are in the final stages of negotiating a contract.

APPOINTMENTS

Lamya Agelidis was appointed by the ACBL Board President to serve as Chair of the ACBL Goodwill Committee through December 31, 2024.

Effective: March 25, 2024.
Carried: Unanimous.

Danny Sprung was appointed to the Competition and Conventions Committee (C&C) for a three-year term from the end of the Spring 2024 NABC through the end of the Spring 2027 NABC.

[Dennis Carman and I are the two BOD members who serve on C&C.](#)

Effective: March 25, 2024.

Carried: Unanimous.

Lynn Baker, Josh Donn and Paul Lewis were appointed to the Hall of Fame Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2024 NABC through the end of the Spring 2027 NABC.

Effective: March 25, 2024.

Carried: Unanimous.

Bart Bramley, Lesley Davis, Craig Kavin, Alex Kolesnik and Karen Walker were appointed to the Ethical Oversight Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2024 NABC through the end of the Spring 2027 NABC.

Effective: March 25, 2024.

Carried: Unanimous.

Craig Allen, Dana Berkowitz, Mitch Dunitz, and Howard Engle were appointed to the ACBL Disciplinary Committee for three-year terms from the end of the Spring 2024 NABC through the end of the Spring 2027 NABC.

Effective: March 25, 2024.

Carried: Unanimous.

Robb Gordon, Oren Kriegel and Eric Rodwell were appointed to the Laws Commission for five-year terms from the end of the Spring 2024 NABC through the end of the Spring 2029 NABC.

Effective: March 25, 2024.

Carried: Unanimous.

Masterpoint Committee appointments: Dennis Carman, as Chair of Bridge, and Jeff Overby with terms ending March 2025; Rob Maier, David Metcalf and Sol Weinstein (nonvoting advisor) with terms ending March 2025. At-large appointments: Alex Hudson with term ending March 2027 and Bob Heller with term ending March 2026. Additional at-large appointments: Doug Couchman and Meyer Kotkin with terms ending March 2025.

Effective: March 25, 2024.

Carried: Unanimous.

[If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.](#)

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