

Greetings, Bridge Friends!

Your Board of Directors has made some decisions on important matters that we determined to be in the best interest of the club. Our club is experiencing a decline in the number of players who participate. In comparing monthly table counts between last year and this year for May alone, the difference is not only fairly significant (32-a record number!), but worrisome. There may be a number of reasons for decreased attendance, such as deceased members, illness, travel, or relocation. Regardless of the reason, declining membership and attendance are a concern. Occasionally, attendance is so low that the game fee income doesn't cover the cost to the club to hold the game. Remember, the cost to hold the game is not limited to the director fee; we have to factor in utilities, cleaning, ACBL payments per table, rent, and insurance. It takes 4 tables for the club to break even on single game days; other days the figure is 3.5 tables. We hope this will not lead to canceling low attendance games, something we don't want to do. It is important to fully realize that the decline in player count has an adverse effect on our budget. We operate on a budget that can be described as frugal. The Treasurer and Accountant agree that without some definitive action, this club will end the year with a \$5,000 shortfall. A major expense in our budget is our insurance premium, which this year is \$15,507.99, which is 15.5% of our budget! It is a fixed cost over which we have little control. ACBL gets a portion of the game play fee. These are some of the most significant of our expenses. Once in a while, we incur major repair costs.... roof, air conditioners, new parts for the air conditioning system, plumbing repairs, lighting, structural, etc. The most serious concern is our declining member count. As of this writing, we have 176 members. Some of those members do not attend regularly, so the membership count is not a direct indicator of game income. Our membership has been declining since the pandemic. I have been told that prior to the pandemic, we had 350 members! An additional factor that we watch closely is the cost of maintaining the building. Our building is 66 years old. It is not unreasonable to expect ongoing maintenance costs.

Please know that it is not my intent to proclaim that the sky is falling, but as a Board, we think you should be aware of the “back story” of our club’s finances. **These very real factors have led to decisions made by your Board: Effective July 1, 2026, the game play fee will be \$10; players with fewer than 25 points will pay \$5. Nonmembers will pay \$12. Additionally, members who are serving as mentors will no longer be eligible for free play. They will pay \$10, as well.** These fees are the best entertainment bargain in town! Just raising dues is a once a year revenue stream impact, and occasionally requires review and a dues increase, but the game fees are a better way to increase our income—based on frequency alone. Of course, the best way to sustain and even enrich our coffers is to bring in new members. The Ambassador initiative has helped, but is a very labor-intensive function that cannot be an ongoing strategy unless we have a sizable group of people who are willing to be ACTIVE Ambassadors. Each of us is, in fact, an ambassador for the club. Please do your part and recruit new members. Each of us, not just the Board, shares the responsibility to sustain and grow our club.

Your board is looking at other revenue options. Merely raising the game fees will not eradicate the anticipated \$5,000 deficit. As we flesh out ideas, we will share that information with you. If you have ideas, PLEASE contact me or any Board member and share your thoughts. We hope that each of you will take some ownership of this financial challenge and get involved with helping with solutions. I repeat: If you have suggestions or questions, please contact a Board member. We are working hard to solve this challenge, and we need your help. Won’t you please step up and be a part of the solution?

Best regards,

Beverly Grissom  
President