

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LINKS BRIDGE CLUB
HELD ON SATURDAY 9th DECEMBER 2023 AT 12h00.**

1. Attendance:-,

Deirdre Ingersent, Rob Stephens, Lex Van Vught, Val Bloom, Joan Van Vught, Bernard Donde, Lotte Sorensen, Helen Kruger, Duncan Craggs, Di Rosslee, Neville Eber, Tas Nestorides, Craig Gower, Peta Feinstein.

Apologies: James Grant,

2. Welcome

Peta welcomed everyone.

3. Minutes 2022

The minutes from 2022 were read and accepted.

4. Chairman's report

At our last AGM in September 2022 we were deliberating as to how we were going to get face to face bridge back on track, and keep both The Links Club and the bridge community at large, alive.

We started the year with great hopes but I believe it has exceeded our expectations.

To this end we believe The Links has had a very exciting year!

Saturday Afternoons:

We ended 2022 hosting just a single section on Saturdays. But immediately after the club reopened in January, players finally seemed keen to rejoin the club and start playing face-to-face. We had two solid sections for the first few months, before finally breaking into a third section in May. Since then, it's been anywhere between 25-30 tables, with a record 33 tables just a few weeks ago. With a few more tables and we'll be running four sections!

Before Covid, we were averaging 60 tables with five sections.

We have really tried to make this environment friendly and sociable, and I think everyone who comes really enjoys the ambiance.

Our two successful Springbok days were well received and supported, with everyone wearing green and gold, and some very innovative outfits.

We also hosted some very successful Sunday events in conjunction with the GBU, as well as a GBU pairs and teams event.

To Deirdre and her team, thank you for all the support and assistance in elevating face to face bridge.

Thursday Morning Supervised:

This is our biggest success story to date, and for me personally think, I think nationally.

At the last AGM I asked Neville and Bernard if they couldn't assist us in getting people back to the club by offering supervised bridge.

They, together with a handful of superstars, agreed, and we've not looked back.

We started the supervised sessions towards the end of 2022, with around 4-6 tables.

Once word started spreading about the invaluable information imparted to players, the attendance ballooned, and we quickly began hosting between ten to twenty tables.

We've hit a peak of around 24 tables, but average around 20 on a typical morning. The players who attend have really good things to say about the value and knowledge they're acquiring from our supervisors'

expertise. I know some players plan their entire week around making sure they keep Thursdays open for supervised bridge.

We intend to continue in the new year, as well as expand the experience with a “gentle” tournament on another day, hoping to ease these players into the competitive environment.

To Neville, Bernard, Rob, Val, Tas, Lotte, Diana, Hennie and anyone I may have omitted, thank you for giving so freely of your time and expertise!

Neville summed it up as saying “It is a labour of love, and very satisfying to be giving back to the community”.

We say, we are forever indebted for what you do.

Wednesday Afternoons:

Helen Kruger reopened her Wednesday afternoons earlier in the year, and has a loyal base of players who average around 7-11 tables each week. There is a mixed level of expertise, but generally in a very friendly and warm atmosphere.

The Links has also been utilized for other bridge events that have taken place nationally and some charity events.

The Links Online (BBO):

Although online attendances have dropped off significantly since the peak of Covid, The Links’ online tournaments continue to be a major revenue stream for the club, helping to subsidize to some degree the activities at the club. Some sessions are busier than others, and some have been forced to close completely due to a lack of interest. As long as players continue to support the club through these tournaments, we’ll carry on hosting them as frequently as possible.

Looking ahead to 2024:

As mentioned above, a gentle tournament will be initiated on another weekday morning. Any social and currently non-competitive players will be targeted to play in these sessions. A lot of interest was shown by players currently attending the supervised sessions.

We are also looking to start a Friday morning session. Rob has some different ideas for this format, so watch this space.

We are also contemplating a teams event.

There will be some additions to our online tournaments. More information will be available shortly.

The Links will continue to host several all day face-to-face Sunday tournaments, as well as other bigger tournaments throughout the year.

All of the above as well as other exciting initiatives will be published on The Links’ website here:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/links/>

We are very proud of our club and continue to maintain the premises. We have done a lot of work this year to make improvements, much of which is probably unseen to the players.

This is an ongoing project which we will continue to do as and when we can.

Nothing can be done without assistance, and so I must give thanks to so many people.

- Firstly, my co committee members, Lex van Vught, Val Bloom and Rob Stephens. Committees can sometimes be rather intricate. We are so fortunate to have a group of people who get along well and work hard and amicably in the interests of the club.
- Our Thursday Bridge supervisors – you are an enormous asset to the club.
- To Joan, Richard and Johannes who do so much in the background.
- Thanks to Nicky Stephens for assisting with scoring on a Saturday and doing a whole lot more when called upon to do so.
- The Links and splendid teas are synonymous. For that we need to thank Joan for preparing the sandwiches, and Lotte who always presents a wonderful array of sweet treats. This too is a labour of love for which we are most grateful.
- Once again, a big thank you to Rob for his tremendous efforts, not only with the online bridge, but also as the General Manager of the club. Not everyone realizes what it takes to keep this club running at a high standard, and just how much Rob does, to ensure that. Behind the scenes Lex and I work very closely with Rob and are very aware of all he does at all hours of day and night. I can only say thank you. Nothing is too much trouble for you. You go above and beyond and somehow always seem to take it in your stride.

Our goal for next year is still, to:-

- Keep The Links financially viable.
- Keep bridge alive.
- Ensure the continued maintenance of the premises and that we are able to extend our lease.
- Keep the club legally compliant with all administration up to date.

We have many exciting things planned which we hope will extend our upward trend into the new year.

With thanks
Peta Feinstein
Chairman

5. Treasurer's report – Lex Van Vught

BSA/The Links AGM – 9 Dec 2023

Treasurer's Report

I have pleasure in reporting back to the members as follows:

Your club recorded an operating loss for the 11 months to November of R140k. This operating loss was to some extent offset by interest earned on our cash reserves of R65k.

Operating revenue from playing fees increased by 5% to R1,25m from the prior year, with a significant increase in F2F and Supervised Bridge more than compensating for a 13% decrease in BBO Income. BBO Income accounted for 73% of total playing fees. Note that in 2022 BBO Income made up as much as 88% of total playing fees.

Whereas income as mentioned rose by 5%, expenditure increased by 17% or R200k to R1,4m. We did however incur some large costs which can be deemed of a non-recurring nature, such as a new dishwasher

and a new gate motor to a total of R45k. Cleaning, consumables and municipal charges all went up at rates well above inflation.

The balance sheet remains healthy, with the Club Fund standing at R977k, down by the year's negative cash flow of R75k from the 1st of January balance of R1,05m.

LCvV

6. Election of Office Bearers

The Executive Committee agreed to stand for another year.

And will be operating under one umbrella – The Links.

Peta Feinstein

Val Bloom

Robert Stephens

Lex Van Vught

Sub committees will be organized where needed.

7. General

- The new Links Constitution was presented and accepted.
It has been placed on the news board at the club, as well as on The Links webpage
- Some suggestions have been made for our online tournaments:-
 - We will play 24 boards, at 6 minutes per board.
 - We will create separate Honours Boards for both North/ South and East/West
 - We are looking at starting an Online Mixed Teams Event, as well as some Speedball tournaments.
- Submission of names to be put forward for the new GBU Committee.
These will be finalized and submitted to James Grant.
The Links is allowed to submit 3 people's names for the GBU Committee.
- Fees for the new Year:-
 - SABF SUBS will R250.00
 - GBU SUBS will be R50.00
 - Links Subscription will be R150.00
 - Table fees will be increased to R80.00 The amount we were paying pre Covid.
 - Online fees will also be increased.
 - Supervised Bridge will increase to R70.00 with a review scheduled for mid year.
 - Rentals to private clubs will also be increased.
 - Although the economic climate is tough, it is also difficult to maintain the premises and costs of running the club, without increasing the fees.
 - For those who will battle with this increase, the GBU has a "Friendship Fund" to which we can apply.
If you find you cannot afford to pay table fees, please inform Robert Stephens and the committee will do everything possible to get assistance for those in need.

There were no further matters.

The meeting ended at 13h00.