

Unit 141 Meeting – July 31, 2023

Attendees: April Apfelbaum, Jay Apfelbaum, Mark Cohen, John Dickenson, Joan Goldstein (by phone), John Nothdurft, Andy Rosenberg, Cathy Strauss

Regrets: Ellen Berkowitz, Randee Braslow, Becky Levinson

John Dickenson called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm at the Apfelbaum residence, and the board addressed the following topics:

Financial Report

Ellen Berkowitz will file Tax Form 990 as she has done previously. Ellen reports that the unit has almost \$80,000 in our savings account and more than \$6,000 in our checking account. The recent I/N two-day tournament had a profit of \$722 and the unit received \$309 from the last STAC.

October Cherry Hill Sectional Promotion

Ellen Berkowitz will do email outreach to Unit 141 members at one cent per email address. John Dickenson has volunteered to shuttle players who travel via PATCO to the club. The PATCO times and shuttle offer should be included in the player outreach efforts.

Dates for Future Sectionals

After discussing the “legality” of a split sectional with the ACBL board, no obvious objections were raised. We will apply for a sanction to do our first split sectional hosting Open Pairs events at King of Prussia Bridge Club and I/N pairs at North Penn. The Sunday team event will be held at King of Prussia as this event may not be “split”. The spouse of a North Penn member has volunteered his graphic arts talent to help with publicity for this novel tournament. We are looking at an event at Bala Golf Club. Potential dates are March 5-7 (latest date for closed kitchen allowing us to self-cater) or April 12-14 if there are no other events planned there. We will add the President’s Room to our contract to provide more playing space. The April dates conflict with the scheduled NABC fundraiser, but we should be able to resolve that conflict if necessary.

Youth Bridge Camp / Pax Unplugged

PAX Unplugged is a tabletop gaming-focused event specifically tailored to lovers of board games, RPGs, miniatures, cards, and more. The event targets gamers between the ages of 20 and 40. This year’s event takes place December 1-3 at the Philadelphia Convention Center. Two ballrooms are devoted to “plastic card work”. We plan to host an even on Saturday, December 1, for four or six hours, to attract young players to bridge. Vinnie Emilianowicz will coordinate the event. We are encouraged by the more than 30 young people who showed up for the introduction to bridge event at the recent Philadelphia Regional, taught by a high school junior.

Annual Meeting in Cherry Hill

This year the annual meeting and board election will be held during the Cherry Hill Sectional at Game Friendly in October. We will look to design something grander in the future like a dinner meeting and game at Bala. This year's election was open to all unit members and conducted electronically. Thirteen percent of unit players participated. Jay Apfelbaum will draft a change to the unit bylaws stating that the election must be open to all, but not necessarily held electronically, and not at all if no extra candidates volunteer beyond the three seats that will be open.

Newcomer program

Joan reports that Center City Bridge Club hosts a lesson and supervised play on Tuesdays from 5-6 at the Kennedy House. All levels are welcomed. This hour would be a good landing spot for anyone who comes to Pax Unplugged and would like to continue to learn.

Welcoming Committee

Assignments have been made to have committee members reach out by phone to new players. Pam Scalandre has helped with this task as well. April Apfelbaum has offered to play with newcomers to help them acclimate to clubs in the unit. Cathy Strauss suggested that we have financial incentives for new members to play (free or for a discount). She also suggested the addition of more newcomer games.

Website/Electronic Communications

John Dickenson will reach out to Todd Thorsen to gauge his interest in cloning his design for the District 4 website for the unit to use. One great advantage to the design is that the website is linked to the ACBL website which updates tournament schedules on a daily basis. We would need to have the ability to customize content and manage updates for the unit.

Metrics to Measure Board Success

Data has shown that if a player reaches the level of Junior Master, then he or she is "hooked" on the game. John reviewed past and current unit data on newly minted Junior Masters. We averaged 12 per month in 2017 and 2018. The figure dropped to 4.25 per month in the pandemic year of 2021. We are now trending upward with 13 new Junior Masters in August, and will target 20 going forward.

We would like access to data across District 4 database for a deeper dive on relevant data and more comparisons.

Player Retention Committee

Board members discussed John Dickenson's suggestion to create a hybrid of the Club Mentoring Program proposal from Elaine Weintraub, Ellen Berkowitz and Joan Goldstein along with the 2020 Delaware State Bridge Association (DSBA) Mentoring Program. We will target players in the 300-500 master point range to help get them past their reluctance to play in open

sectionals after they become ineligible for the Intermediate/Newcomer (I/N) tournaments. The group discussed potential sites for a pilot program and then agreed on South Jersey Bridge Club at Game Friendly. Subsequently to the board meeting, John spoke with Bernadette Hennessy May, and she agreed to run the pilot at her site and suggested January of 2024 for the roll out. Bernadette would like to be on the committee which develops parameters and promotion for the program. Elaine, Ellen and Joan all agreed to be on the committee. John will schedule Zoom meetings in the near future. Jay Apfelbaum suggested that we include coaching lessons for mentors.

Update from ACBL

The new executive director of the ACBL, Bronia Jenkins, is receiving enthusiastic reviews. She is developing strategies to reengage lapsed members and dropout players such as “Four is Enough”, which employs a rating system of 1-4 to balance players’ masterpoint levels for pair games. She has announced an initiative to encourage lapsed members to return to clubs with a \$20 postcard coupon to redeem for face-to-face play, good until June 30, 2024. The player must renew his/her ACBL membership by Labor Day (September 4) in order to use the postcard coupon.

Subsequently to the meeting, John Dickenson circulated an email from District 4 to the unit presidents in conjunction with the \$20 initiative, asking for an outreach plan for their lapsed members (who are included in an excel file). After sorting the file by locale, John will handle communication with the club managers. Lapsed members comprise 17% of District 4 membership.

New Business

John Dickenson requested and received board approval to open a commercial Zoom account, approximately \$150 annually, to conduct future board meetings.

April Apfelbaum will send Joan Goldstein the sanction numbers for future STACS.

The board voted to authorize Jay Apfelbaum to sign the next Bala Golf Club contract on the same terms as the last contract. If any terms differ, Jay will present the changes for board approval.

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 12, via Zoom

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.