

Delaware State Bridge association Board Meeting Minutes, July 21, 2021

Present: Mark Henderson, Ala Hamilton-Day, Bill Herdle, Kim Holm, Caroline Hughes, Sally Humphrey, Soley Kristjansdottir, Harold Jordan, Rohan Mandayam, Tom Tully, Eli Solomon, Brenda Vogel, Scott Freber

Absent:., Judy Cronin

Call to Order and Introductions

Caroline

Called to Order 7:15 PM July 21, 2021

Secretary's Report/Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

Bill H

Minutes of May and June meetings approved as on the website

Treasurer's Report

Sally

Current cash on hand is \$28721.02. Our income consists mainly of membership rebates from the ACBL, about \$2500 annually. That normally roughly covers our expenses, though we spent more this year because of the online bridge incentives in the first half. (Income statement appended as Attachment 4)

President's Report

Mark

(see the discussion of Mark's proposals under New Business)

Committee Reports

Publicity Committee

Ala

Ala has committed to two more Dummys. The next one needs to get out by the 30th so it can be incorporated into the District 4Spot. Ala plans to get it to Melody by the 25th.

We still will need a replacement for Ala.

Membership

Brenda

We have 4 new members in southern DE. Rohan is now a Regional Master.

Tournament Status

Caroline

A Wilmington Sectional is still scheduled for September 10-12 in the new Bridge Studio. The ACBL will probably be requiring facemasks.

Flighting is a potential problem if there are only a few players of low masterpoints. (We took a lot of flak about lumping everyone together last time.)

We expect to require vaccination, perhaps absent a medical statement saying a doctor recommends someone not be vaccinated. Scott believes nobody who's not vaccinated should be exposing others at a tournament, regardless of medical status. We will have to be careful with advertising to include a qualification statement saying we are subject to local and ACBL requirements. Things are changing and we will adhere to the stricter set of restrictions.

We could lose \$2-3K if it's a bust. With preregistration there is little risk, because hiring extra directors and buying extra food are the main downsides.

Kim wants to run a southern Sectional if the Wilmington one goes well.

Board

Mark Nehra, Trina Williams, Richard Popper and Rick Rowland have all volunteered. Kim and Sally are returning

Zoom annual meeting September 14, 7:15 (can't do on Wed the 15th conflict Yom Kippur) will allow nominations from the floor.

Online Bridge Camp

Rohan

The camp ran for nine days total. 3 students, all female, ages 15-17; if we do it again we need earlier start in advertising. Two students came to an informal in-person session at the Bridge Studio.

Rohan also taught a few sessions to 22 students at the Friends middle school summer camp.

Sally checked with the director of Sandberg (traditional summer camp), who was receptive to including bridge in their program. We'd need to contact them in early Spring; maybe February.

Regional

The regional has been approved by the District. Anne Taylor has joined the team.

Club Support Plans

Harold requested funding for the Bridge Studio's move, such as carpet cleaning, painting, etc. He estimates \$1200-1500. The expenditure was approved unanimously, with an upper limit of \$2500.

New Business

Mark's proposals 1 and 2 for helping the clubs' viability

See appended memo from Mark, Attachment 1.

Mark presented his proposal #1, vigorously evangelizing the need to try new things, and for the Unit to use its financial resources to make this possible at the club level by absorbing the financial risk.

Soley asks how this proposal differs from Kim's proposal from 2018.

Kim: The clubs didn't come up with a lot of ideas. Mark is proposing a full-court press to get back to FTF bridge quickly.

Soley proposes the board not delegate financial authority to a small committee. Instead let the committee create ideas and propose funding that is to be approved by the Board.

Mark is concerned about delays, and wants to authorize funding by a small group.

So how do we respond quickly? Caroline points out that email votes are not acceptable under our by-laws. [WBH Note: This restriction is not explicitly stated in the by-laws, though meetings may only be held in person or over media such as conference calls that let all members hear each other.]

Sally: The viability of the clubs is our primary concern.

Caroline: This is a public-private partnership.

Kim: We already have a plan, but it's limited to \$2500. Let's move that to \$10000, keeping in mind that clubs can use 2 years worth at a time. The clubs are each unique. There are 3 clubs in the south, one in Middletown, and one in Wilmington, 5 in total.

Eli: Why use the 2019 proposal? Shouldn't we give ourselves more flexibility and a more global view? There are recurring costs such as rent and the cleaning costs for the church where Dini runs her games. We need to be very careful about covering recurring costs. The fiduciary oversight should be much more stringent.

Caroline: In her first few years on the Board there was huge tension between North and South over fairness. The South perceived that the Bridge Studio was dominating everything. The Board can have discretion but should consider that perceived fairness is important.

After much discussion, this proposal is moved and carried:

Set up a committee to work with the clubs to share the ideas that the clubs propose to keep the clubs running. The existing program with \$2500 limit is increased to \$10K using the 2019 table counts (with the understanding that clubs can request two years' expenditure at once), and expenditures would require Board approval.

Kim has agreed to chair this committee and is responsible for assembling it. The composition will be adjusted when the new board comes aboard. Soley volunteers as a committee member.

In response to Mark's request for was DSBA can help the clubs, Caroline sent a long list of suggestions, attached as Attachment 2.

Mark's proposal 3, Member Liaison Committee

Kurt Engelman says he can provide a list of the few hundred people in Delaware who playing in the clubs before the pandemic.

We can find 10 people who are willing to contact some of those on the list and ask them directly if they could come back and play with masks, and so forth.

This will be better than a survey.

Motion is proposed and carried to establish this committee with Bill as chairman.

Other new business

Eli learned about a survey by District 6 to find out what it would take to get FTF bridge going again. He will try to get a copy of the results.

Rick Rowland's letter to the board was not discussed, but is appended below (Attachment 3) together with Mark's reply to Rick.

Caroline and Eli will be leaving the Board. We thank them.

Announcement of Future Meeting(s)

A board meeting is required by the bylaws within 2 weeks after the annual meeting.

Next meeting Tuesday September July 21 at 7:15 PM via ZOOM. We will elect the officers then.

Adjournment at 9:22 PM

Recorded by Bill Herdle, Secretary

Attachment 1: Memo from Mark Henderson

REVITALIZING BRIDGE CLUBS IN DELAWARE

We have a unique opportunity to be an incubator of ideas to revitalize face to face club duplicate bridge. The DSBA can and must take the lead, in partnership with the clubs to identify and implement recommendations.

Proposal 1: Establish and empower a committee to aid clubs in identifying, financing and implementing strategies to improve face-to-face bridge club attendance and participation. Need chairperson

- The committee will be empowered with spending authority of (\$1000? for individual proposals, \$5000? total, without requiring further board approval). The fund to draw from will be established under a separate proposal.
- Each committee member will be assigned a club owner to partner with in the process
- The committee is accountable for the following actions
 - Identifying club specific ideas and opportunities to increase participation and membership
 - Sourcing the equipment, technology, training, and expertise
 - Work hand in hand with club owners to implement, and follow up
 - Measure success

Proposal 2: Set aside (authorize or reauthorize) a fund for the purpose of supporting clubs in reopening and encouraging participation.

- The fund should be significant \$10,000 +, Committees and club owners won't have the constant hurdle, and wait for full board approval.
- One specific purpose of the fund is to mitigate the financial risks to clubs for implement new ideas that may not be successful. So while small amounts might be issued as grants, the larger expenditures might be issued as no interest loans with an option to default with no penalty if unsuccessful (thinking out loud as non-lawyer)

Proposal 3: Establish and empower a Member Liaison committee- Need Chairperson

- The committee will identify by name all members who reasonably might consider returning to face-to-face bridge at a club
- The committee will develop a common set of questions (think survey) to be presented in conversation
- The committee will identify liaisons who will contact members directly, using the questions in the course of a discussion about playing bridge in the future
- The committee will collate and analyze the data, and report to the Club Assist Committee, informing as to player interest and motivations
- The committee will be empowered with a spending authority to cover random expenses, necessary to get the job done in a timely fashion

Once the committees are approved, I suggest we identify a committee chairperson, and let them fill their committee. If any of that is going to be a difficult task then we shouldn't do it. This will take hard work by all of us, but if we do it right, we will know whether club bridge will return in Delaware and what it will take to make it happen.

MARK

Attachment 2: Ideas from Caroline Hughes:

Ideas for DSBA spending: Need to keep our DSBA Mission in mind:

The Delaware State Bridge Association (DSBA) is Unit 190 in District 4 of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL). The DSBA was incorporated in 1957, and its charter is to promote duplicate bridge and bridge competition within the State of Delaware. We provide unit level competitions and several annual sectional tournaments. In addition, District 4 Regional Tournaments are hosted periodically within our area. We welcome newcomers to the game of bridge through our sponsorship of beginner bridge lessons at local clubs, and encourage current players to enhance their capabilities, using our bridge lending library. We constantly look for ways to support the local clubs, bridge teachers and bridge players within our area.

Form a Public/Private partnership Committee to consider the Development/spending ideas to support the DSBA Mission:

- Committee to include members of DSBA Board and Club owners

Survey players about Bridge Interests:

- For Example: Identify the players who are playing face to face bridge- match these players to DSBA players who they know and who are not playing face to face- thus forming groups. The players who are not playing face to face will be contacted personally by the player they know who is playing face to face. The DSBA can create a small set of questions to guide the interviewer so that each groups answers can be compared. This will allow the interviewer to get a read on their interests and barriers to return. If the face-to-face player is not interested in contacting and talking with other DSBA members then assign the subset to a board member or interested volunteers. The info would be gathered in a database and used to inform the board and club owners.

Advertising:

- Include- dated discount entries for players to clip and save
- Advertising will be necessary- the Unit could help with prep and mailing expenses.

Enticements:

- DSBA supports first time state-wide opportunity to play to face to face bridge
- Announce grand re-opening for **all** DSBA Face to Face Clubs
- Offer special refreshments
- Consider Free play for every DSBA member in this Grand Re-opening **week**

Covid Concerns:

- Vaccines requirements?
- Masks required when other attendees request they be used, no explanation required. Have a flip paper on each table: "Mask On, Please"...or "Mask Off."

Acknowledge on-line bridge and equalize the field:

- Subsidize a reduced face to face entry fee to keep the fee closer to online charge.

Make Face to Face bridge exceptional:

- Offer 30 minute Freeby review of a couple hands following the game (Consider free entry for Reviewer).
- Support members Mentoring others players at all levels

- Discuss new rules: Alerts
- Mentor new to the game players at the table at point limited games

Lessons:

- Offer intermediate Lessons to get non-online players back in the game.
- Schedule Beginner 2/1 lessons for Sept/Oct and advertise in local newspaper.
- Other life-long learning opportunities

Support Sectionals:

- Attend
- Volunteer
- Refreshments

Attachment 3: Email letter from Rick Rowland and Mark Henderson Response

From: Henderson <henderson.mm@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, July 15, 2021 2:10 PM

To: Caroline Hughes <carolinehughes@gmail.com>; Soley Kristjansdottir <siggasoley@gmail.com>; Harold Jordan <harold@bridge-studio.org>; J Cronin <jac851@aol.com>; Brenda Vogel <bvogel955@comcast.net>; Bill Herdle <bill@herdle.com>; Tom Tully <tt43rr9@gmail.com>; Kim Holm <kimrholm13@gmail.com>; Ala Hamilton-Day <alabridge@gmail.com>; Scott Freber <scott.freber@comcast.net>; Eli Solomon <Eli.Solomon@verizon.net>; Rohan Mandayam <rohanmandayam@gmail.com>; sally humphrey <sally.humphrey@gmail.com>

Cc: rickrowland@verizon.net

Subject: Fwd: Letter to the editor-Time to think big

I recently received this letter from Rick Rowland, that he requested be shared with the board, and hopefully the entire unit. That is up for the board to decide, but I vote to publish in the dummy.

Ricks letter calls on the board (both collectively and individually) to do more to support clubs reopening.

And I find myself agreeing with much he has to say.

He addresses two issues. The first is that the unit is sitting on a ever growing pile of cash (not a new issue) when clubs may need financial help to reopen.

We have addressed this issue by establishing a fund for this purpose and responding favorably to requests. But it's not nearly enough. We need to get creative....think big...and be willing to assume the risk the clubs can't bear...I have some ideas 😊.

Secondly Rick suggests some board members are not doing enough personally to support clubs reopening. While I respect his point of view, I don't want any board member, including myself, or any member to feel guilty for not attending a face to face club game. There simply are other, more appealing options available for many bridge players for a myriad of reasons.

Players will come back when their experience at the club is more enjoyable for the individual and their partner than doing something else. Only one of the factors is the size of the game. Playing the loyalty card might work in the short term but is not sustainable.

At the same time, there are many ways clubs are supported other than attendance at scheduled games. People volunteering their time, and resources in many ways, some visible, some not so.

Finally Rick mentions that were there no face to face clubs there would be not reason for the board to exist. The Online State games would not have happened without board leadership. But the underlying point is valid. The board should be willing to invest most of their assets in strategies and materials that are likely to make the club playing experience more attractive.

Thanks Rick for sharing!

Mark

Begin forwarded message:

From: Rick Rowland <rickrowland@verizon.net>

Date: July 10, 2021 at 9:50:53 AM EDT

To: Ala Hamilton-Day <alabridge@gmail.com>

Cc: Joann Glasson <joannglasson@msn.com>, Jeanne Gehret <jeannegehret@comcast.net>, Mark Henderson <oldguyandmimi@gmail.com>

Subject: Letter to the editor

Please consider this for publication in The Dummy. If you don't think that's the right course of action, feel free to share with the board of directors.

For over a year, face to face (FTF) bridge was out of business. The ACBL quickly moved to a online model which provided financial relief to the clubs and the opportunity for players to get their bridge “fix” in their pajamas.

Clubs are now coming back to live bridge and finding attendance to only be a fraction of what it was pre-pandemic. Attendance is so bad that clubs are running with reduced schedules, and even then are cancelling sessions when too few pairs register to even have a game.

What can the DSBA, District 4 and the ACBL do to help? Each organization has substantial financial resources. In fact, the DSBA has for years been trying to spend down it’s \$20,000+ surplus. Now would be the perfect time to offer grants to clubs. Those grants could be used to subsidize teaching programs, enhanced hospitality or providing free entries to returning players. I leave it to those more creative than I to come up with other ideas.

What can the DSBA board members do? Support the local clubs. Lead by example. Invite players that you might not ordinarily play with. Every additional pair helps.

I fear that if we let our clubs go, the units and sectionals would be the next to go. Then there’s no reason for a DSBA. It’s time for the DSBA and it’s board members to step up to the plate and support local bridge.

Rick

Attachment 4: Treasurer's Income Statement

DSBA Income Statement - June 2021					
			YTD 2021	2020	2019
Income					
Membership Rebates			2258.14	2508.33	2571.76
District Rebates			-343.67	343.67	
Sectionals					
North 1				-457.98	-3.52
North 2					435.60
South 1					-155.83
499er/299er North				364.27	291.60
Int Novice South					-146.54
State Games					
DSBA Games			-1573.00		
Pairs North					-98.00
Pairs South					56.34
Total Income			\$ 341.47	\$ 2,758.29	\$ 2,951.41
Expenses					
Charity			1296.00		
Club Initiatives			850.00		
Dummy					
Publicity					302.04
Website			59.23	51.43	52.62
Franchise Tax			25.00	25.00	25.00
Misc			45.00	522.50	220.90
Mentor Program					
Projects					196.00
Inventory					243.00
Membership					30.17
Awards			178.25	141.03	
Total Expenses			\$ 2,453.48	\$ 739.96	\$ 1,069.73
Net Income			\$ (2,112.01)	\$ 2,018.33	\$ 1,881.68
	Last Balance	Current Activity			
Cash On Hand					
Savings	\$23,985.49	\$0.84	\$23,986.33		
Checking	\$4,735.53	-\$1,224.40	\$3,511.13		
Total	\$28,721.02		\$27,497.46		