

WBL Board Minutes

May 16, 2023

Board members attending: Hadi Abushakra, Lloyd Rawley, Herb Schulken, Bob Bell, Alex Gretsinger, Clyde Kruskal, Carole Banks, Kathy Kopnisky, and Kim Gandy. Board member absent: Alex Stille. Ted Ying (Club Manager), Linda Marshall (Communications Chair), Brad Theurer (Tournament Chair), David Solomon, and Rochelle Cohen also attended.

Minutes: The Board approved the minutes of the April meeting.

Unit Game: Ted reported that face-to-face (f2f) unit game attendance had plateaued at about 10 tables, with slightly higher attendance for Grand National Team qualifiers and sectional games. He added that he had heard from some players that they would soon be ready to resume playing at the game. Linda said that the NVBA would not be holding online games in June, which might increase attendance at our f2f unit game. Ted noted that he would be unavailable to direct the June 22 game and that Hank Meyer would be filling in for him.

The Board agreed to stop accepting cash payments for unit game entries. This is consistent with ACBL tournament policy and with the practice at the NVBA unit game. To handle cashless payments, the WBL will need to purchase an additional Square processor to ensure that it can handle payments after Ted stops directing the unit game.

Treasurer's Report: Herb said that the unit was up \$900 for April thanks to funds from the ACBL and despite losses from the f2f (\$270) and online (\$20) unit games. He reported that the unit had thus far lost \$1100 on the f2f and online unit games in 2023.

New Players: The Board discussed the problem of encouraging new players to begin and continue to play duplicate bridge.

Rochelle Cohen, an experienced bridge teacher who offers a free minilesson before the f2f unit game, recalled that the minilesson had attracted more than ten players before the pandemic, which encouraged attendees to stay for the game and return in the following weeks. She said that supervised play in a dedicated novice game, where people could ask the director bridge questions and weren't competing against experienced players, made new players much more comfortable and encouraged people to return in succeeding weeks. She stressed that many new players she had spoken with said they were afraid of duplicate and recounted "horror stories" about their experiences; Kim agreed with this. In addition, Rochelle said that experienced social bridge players were typically unfamiliar with modern duplicate conventions and found them a forbidding barrier to participation.

Ted stated that before the pandemic the unit game had had 0-20 and 99er games that attracted about 3-8 tables. He said that we no longer have players for these games and that we have few tables (usually about three) for the 0-2500 game. For novices and 99ers, he stressed the importance of continuity between the lessons and the game and the value of having a consistent teacher and director.

Carole asked whether we had a contact list of players who used to participate in novice and 99er games before the pandemic and wondered if this could be used for sending email messages about available games. She also suggested that games might be publicized via community centers and retirement communities.

The Board agreed that a weekend or daytime game might be more suitable than the Thursday f2f game for attracting novices, that a game with fewer than 24 boards might work better for this group, and that there were advantages to a game attached to an existing club game

The Board decided to form a committee to develop and implement a plan to broaden participation in duplicate bridge by newer and less experienced players. The committee was charged with developing a plan that involves relevant stakeholders (e.g., bridge teachers, club owners) and is not limited to activities associated with the f2f unit game. Committee members are Kathy, Kim, Alex G., and Alex S.

Supplies in Storage: David Solomon is currently storing various supplies owned by the WBL and used in the past for sectionals and unit games. None of these supplies were used or needed at the last sectional. The Board decided to trash supplies that no longer could be useful, to bring unwanted items to the sectional that players might wish to take, and to donate supplies to charity that remained after the sectional and that charities might find useful. David said he would reserve a few items that he expected to be useful for the WBL in the future.

June Sectional: The Tournament Committee decided to have an extended lunch break on Saturday, during which the celebration for Dick Wegman becoming a Grand Life Master will occur. The Board thanked Kim and Kathy for organizing the Wegman celebration. The Tournament Committee decided that administrative problems made it undesirable to offer BCD players a financial incentive to play both sessions on Friday and Saturday of the sectional. The Committee said it would consider doing this for the August sectional if these problems could be overcome.

Carole reviewed the cost implications of various administrative changes. She said the hospitality cost is budgeted at \$1200, which is lower than in the past because we are supplying less food. However, subsidized Sunday lunches, though convenient, are costly. She expects to save \$600 on caddies. She and Herb agreed that we expect to lose money on the sectional.

Carole emphasized that it is very valuable for players to stay after the game is over to help with the clean up.

The sectional will have a "self service" partnership desk. Linda will assist with this on Friday, and Barb Doran will help out on Saturday and Sunday.

The Board discussed possibly arranging to recruit a food truck to sell Saturday lunches. Thanks to Kim and Kathy, it succeeded in arranging this. If this works well, the Board plans to make it a regular feature of future sectionals. Linda observed that one or more food trucks would be very useful at the August sectional, since their presence would enable players to buy lunch and stay on site for the WBL annual meeting.

Director's fees: The Board decided to pay directors who are not ACBL employees (TAs) \$125 per session to work at our sectionals. If we send them home early due to lower than expected attendance, we will pay them a \$25 set up fee.

Next meeting: The next Board meeting will be Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Bell