

ACBL Unit 143 Board Meeting Minutes, Monday, September 9, 2024

Location: The meeting was conducted on-line using ZOOM.

Attendees: Dennis Abeln, Mark Boswell, Dian Brazier, Terry D'Amato, Steve Russell, Jay Shah, John Welte, Mark Zellmer, and Janet Vontz

Absent: Don Chase, Sandy Bigg, and Tod Moses

Call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05

President's Report

Kudos to Dennis for a good job, well done regarding the 2024 Regional games.

Approval of the Minutes

A motion was moved and seconded to approve the minutes from the August 5 Unit Board meeting.

Approval of the Treasurer's Report

A motion was made and seconded to approve the treasurer's report.

Regional Games Tournament

Several topics were discussed by the board members regarding the Regional games.

The parking entrance & exit gates were difficult for some players to see and operate. Last September, the hotel management told Mark B and Dennis that the gates would not be locked open under any circumstances and that the tournament attendees would have to accommodate the system. A hotel employee attempted to assist; On Monday morning, Dennis taped instructions on the entry box and Mark B attempted to assist; A hotel employee attempted to assist on Tuesday morning. An unknown player was rude to the hotel employee so the hotel finally raised the barrier locked the gates open for the remainder of the tournament. and traffic was unencumbered by any barriers. Next year may include a different parking relationship with the Unit. An unknown player was rude to the hotel employee. It was pointed out that other events at the hotel experience parking lot problems and the hotel should address this deficiency. Dennis and Mark B will follow up with the hotel.

The hotel cameras captured an unfortunate incident involving an out of town bridge player who had a diarrhea accident in the hallways and elevator. Due to the nature of the accident, the cleanup process included an outside service which cost \$250. The player was requested to apologize to the hotel and offer to pay for the cleaning. When approached later, the player said

that he "took care of it," but no one at the hotel was a party to his apology. Not all employees were available to query, so it is unknown if the apology was made to someone who did not work later in the week. Mark B has filed a player memo filed a complaint with the ACBL and banned the offending player from future participation in St. Louis Regionals. The ACBL is following up and collecting information from the various parties involved with this situation. The board moved and approved a motion to reimburse the hotel \$250.

The Board is concerned about the relationship with the hotel. The hotel was appreciative of three items: The welcome letter to visiting bridge players, the tips paid to the employees and the reimbursement of \$250 for the cleaning.

Prior to the board meeting, Dennis shared the comments from players who participated in last month's Regional which were submitted in response to Bridge Finesse's post-tournament survey. Dennis summarized the comments and offered suggestions which were discussed in the board meeting. A participation survey completed by players revealed their perceived weak points in the Regional games:

Peter Wilke was brusque and seemed harried at the beginning of the games. It was suggested two check in desks be available to reduce the burden on the directors. Players may need a gentle reminder that directors are under stress at the beginning of any game and please be patient and tolerant. Dennis will work with Peter to streamline procedures.

Some players want more boards per session. We currently limit the boards to 24 per session and have 3.5 hours between session starts. ACBL recently issued a policy stating that more than 24 boards requires more than 3.5 hours. Playing more boards will increase time between starts and make the evening games run too late.

Some players want a longer or shorter lunch break. The break is timed to accommodate director duties and will stay the same.

It was suggested the start time be later. The start time will stay at 10:00.

Some players want a web movement instead of a regular Mitchell movement. The movement is determined by the director. A web movement requires more boards to be dealt by the dealing machine, incurring more cost and more time by the director (who makes the boards). The web movement, however, reduces the number of boards that are not played by all players, which is the reason for the request. Peter Wilke knows and uses web movements elsewhere but hasn't in St Louis so as to minimize the cost of making boards and to have the flexibility to accommodate tardy players. Dennis will work with Peter to adopt web movements for future St Louis tournaments.

The mini-Soloways are not popular and should be dropped. 2-session Swiss teams should be used instead. If there are too few players registered for the 2 session Swiss, the event should be converted to a bracketed Swiss. Attendance at the tournaments affects the type of games that are selected by the directors. KO's require more teams to be viable. Mark Zellmer reported a form

of knockouts encountered in Canadian tournaments and agreed to look for details. Dennis will research compact KO's.

A discussion of games awarding gold points included rare single session games that award a small gold award to the top winner. It was pointed out that no game can award gold unless it has a strat limit of 750 MPs or higher. The Gold Rush strat limits are 300 500 750 with the caveat that the director will adjust strats so the number of players in each strat is balanced, but only the top strat pays gold.

The 299 games attracted 15 tables over three days. Daily 299 games were scheduled, but four were cancelled due to lack of player participation. A comment that the NLM sectionals were implemented to provide a stepping stone to a higher pointed game. A social game without the pressure of accomplished players may be attractive to players who just want to play bridge and are not motivated by Masterpoints.

Evening games do not attract enough players. A suggestion that side game strategy may attract more players. Working players are only available for evening games. The evening games pay their way because TA's are used instead of ACBL directors. Dennis will analyze the types of pair games to play in the evening.

There was a request for hot water for tea or hot chocolate and more beverages besides coffee. There is a soda machine in the lobby for those desiring a soft drink. We will check with the hotel for the viability of hot water.

It was suggested to provide a social event after the afternoon session that included food. These types of events are expensive. In addition, players are preparing for supper at a restaurant or at their homes, so the offering of food would be unnecessary.

The player suggestion to provide alcohol was rejected.

High prices at the hotel lunch bar were an issue. A half sandwich may be a cost savings for smaller appetites and/or pocketbooks. This will be investigated.

We cannot be compared to KC Regional as the restrictions by the hotel are more lenient in KC. The organizers are allowed to bring in their own food. The timing of the KC event coincides with an annual holiday slow down in the hotel industry making the financial aspects more friendly to the consumer.

The lighting is not equal throughout the room. Director David Cotterman arranged the tables to maximize available light. Dennis took pictures of the arrangement to guide the hotel in placement of tables for future Regionals. Dennis mentioned the type of reflective light bulb affects the amount of light and we should request that type of bulb that provides the most light.

The temperature was raised by 2 degrees on Tuesday. It was noticeably more comfortable. Players should be prepared with a sweater.

A suggestion to engage the divider in the ballroom to create two separate game areas was offered for discussion. It was determined that the directors may have trouble responding to director calls if the game areas are divided. Dennis will approach the directors for their feedback.

A suggestion was made to move the lessons to the lunch break. It will be implemented as a trial.

A suggestion was made for side tables or clamp on drink caddies. Side tables cost \$27 each and two are needed for each table totaling more than \$6,000. Clamp on caddies would cost more than \$1,600 for all tables and would require installation and removal each tournament. To be addressed later.

There were complaints about the lack of restaurants. A restaurant list should be more readily available. The unit has an on-line restaurant list. Paper copies will be made available next year.

Dennis has looked for alternative venues for Regional games. He has not found any hotel big enough to accommodate our numbers.

Entry fees were discussed. Collinsville is charging \$17. It was mentioned that entry fees of \$15, \$16 or \$17 were a non issue with some of the board members. To be addressed later.

Sandy & Mark prepared a thank you note for the hotel and staff.

A suggestion was made for Monday to have a 2 session play through event that includes a meal. Dennis pointed out that it will cost \$20 per person for the Sunday meal. The dinner could attract more participation. The start time could be moved to noon for an earlier finish time. To be addressed later.

We will advertise in the Bridge Bulletin in July to maximize our advertising dollar.

We made a small profit from the Regional despite several one-time costs, specifically, the PA system, up to \$1,000 for tips to hotel workers, and \$250 for special cleanup. Dennis' goal is to break even on our tournaments since we have a monetary cushion in the bank.

It was suggested that the board members make an effort to "talk up" the tournaments. A visit and chat with the limited MP players at the St. Louis Bridge Center could include a suggestion they pick a friendly pair of players and form a team. The team events could be populated by teams composed of the two pairs currently seated at each table.

Mark Z and John agreed to make a five minute appearance at the upcoming 499er tournament to encourage the players to attend the October NLM Regional/Sectional. They would again suggest forming a team with the players who are seated at each table and give teams a try.

The annual meeting will be Friday morning at 9:30 during the upcoming Sectional.

Old Business

A motion was made and approved to accept Mark B's correction of the terms of various board members.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the election of Steve Russell, Jay Shah, Terry D'Amato and Ken Eiger to serve on the Unit Board of Directors starting 2026.

Mark B and Debbie Romero approached Mike Carmen to chair the 2026 NABC. Mike said he would consider it. Mark Z agreed to be his assistant if he becomes the chairman. Mark Z mentioned he would be calling on members of the Board to help him.

The next meeting is October 14 It may be cancelled due to lack of business to discuss.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44.