

## NATIONAL DIRECTORS REPORT FALL 2022

Larry Sealy, District 10 Director (my comments in Blue)

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The ACBL Board of Directors held its fall meetings face-to-face (F2F) Monday, November 21 through Wednesday, November 23, 2022 in Phoenix, AZ. The ACBL Board of Directors, committees and work groups continue to meet regularly through Zoom and conference calls.

The information presented in this report has been sourced from the ACBL Board Committee Chairs and the fall Management Report. Meeting minutes will be posted to the ACBL website early January 2023.

### FINANCE

As of September 30, 2022, the ACBL has 136,892 members and assets of \$16,884,757. The ACBL has an operating loss of \$715K for the first nine months of 2022. Although Providence was a successful NABC with 7,500 tables, the financial loss from the tournament was \$68K before the allocation of NABC overhead expenses. NABCs that are held in convention centers are typically more expensive to run than NABCs where the play is held within the hotel. It is expected that the Phoenix NABC will also incur a loss.

Management presented the 2023 budget to the Board at the meetings, predicting a loss of \$1M in 2023. The Board voted against the budget and tasked management with making substantial cuts in overhead to more closely align income and expenses.

I did not think we should approve Management's proposed budget. We all thought they should "go back to the drawing board" and come up with some cost cutting measures that would get us closer to break-even. We cannot sustain our organization losing close to \$1M/year.

### SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND CLUBS

The Board approved continued funding for Boost Face-to-Face Bridge, a pilot program of the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation, which launched in September of 2022. The program is aimed at building membership by providing support for F2F beginning bridge teachers and F2F bridge clubs. Selected teachers must offer guest memberships to students and have access to a F2F club where students can take lessons and advance to in-person supervised play.

The ACBL uses social media ad campaigns to identify individuals interested in learning bridge. Leads generated from these campaigns are then funneled to participating teachers. The ACBL is tracking program results and analyzing the data to ensure efficiencies in lead acquisition/cost.

In the summer of 2022, the Board approved an initial program investment of up to \$100,000. Of the \$100,000, only about \$17,200 was needed to generate 1,287 leads for 30 teachers. This translated to almost 100 new students for fall classes. In addition, over 145 individuals have expressed interest in attending future classes.

Social media ad campaigns have already begun for classes starting in early January. So far, approximately 50 beginning bridge teachers have been selected to participate.

If you are a teacher and would like to be considered for participation in the program, please contact Blakely Meyers, Education Program Manager, [Blakely.Meyers@acbl.org](mailto:Blakely.Meyers@acbl.org).

If you are a teacher who qualifies (or know one), would like to participate, and need help, please let me know.

## **APPEALS & CHARGES**

Appeals and Charges (A&C) held no hearings subsequent to those reported during the November 14 Special Board meeting. In Phoenix, A&C reported that a matter concerning a Negotiated Resolution (NR) was still pending. A&C rejected the NR but offered the parties a condition for acceptance by A&C. A&C will report further on this matter during its next report to the Board on hearings. Hearing reports are available at the Ethics & Discipline area of the ACBL website here: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>.

A&C has been working with bridge constituencies toward implementation of a computer-based cheating detection tool in ACBL's disciplinary regime. A&C has been in communication with the Advisory Council's Anti-Cheating Committee, ACBL's Online Ethical Oversight Committee, ACBL Recorder's Office, cheating detection tool developers and organizers of the Institute for Bridge Arbitration (IBA). Working with its developers, A&C has been coordinating the approach for determining the tool's fitness for purpose for the ACBL, including validation studies, independent review and a documenting report.

A&C has developed a draft Standing Order that will implement provisions for discipline based on use of a cheating detection tool, including those involving the IBA. The IBA will be an independent body affiliated with the American Arbitration Association. It is the body to which cases not eligible for more limited disciplinary action will be referred. It will also hear appeals of cases involving discipline imposed for first degree ethical violations. IBA's board is in place. It is identifying candidate arbitrators who have expertise in bridge and is developing a training program for its arbitrators.

I am on the A&C Committee and will be Vice-Chair in 2023. We are in a transition period with EDGAR and the IBA beginning to help in handling cheating cases. We are still drafting the rules delineating who does what and how. We expect to have things firmed up by the Spring NABC.

## **STRATEGIC COMMITTEE**

The Strategic Committee Chair reiterated that F2F clubs are key to building membership and are essential to bridge education and to maintaining community. The committee also reiterated the Board's commitment to a robust return to F2F bridge. The committee then put forth a proposal outlining a new fee structure, and pooling and volume rebates, for virtual clubs and in-person clubs who operate a VACB. The proposal was accepted by the Board and an action item was submitted to management for implementation in January 2023.

I was on the Strategic Committee in 2022. I worked to make sure the new fee structures

would not be a burden on our small-to-medium sized VACBs. While the new structure is complicated, I believe we accomplished that goal. In the Straw Poll, I voted in favor of this proposal.

## **COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE**

The Communications Task Force Chair reported the progress and completion of 11 initiatives put forth for 2022. This includes the creation of national board reports and the refinement of the ACBL Board page contained in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*.

## **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

The Governance Committee Chair reiterated the important work by the committee and the Board that will continue through 2023:

Understanding governance in the context of the ACBL is key to transitioning to a smaller Board of Directors—it is important to ensure that the Board, management, the Advisory Council, supporting committees and other stakeholders (the 13 Regions comprising the 25 Districts and 300+ Units, members, teachers, club owners, online partners) can work together with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and authorities.

Continuing work by the Governance Committee to streamline the Codification will help make governance understandable to all these groups. In response, to one recognized objective of good governance, "...holding the balance between economic [ACBL Budget] and social goals [Customer Satisfaction] and between individual [players in different Districts] and communal goals [what is best for most/on average]...", this objective is a primary consideration in our ongoing work.

Only one motion was on the Phoenix Governance Committee agenda: Motion Item 223-GV01 consolidates and clarifies the process and procedures pertaining to Board minutes, particularly as it relates to the Board page contained in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*.

Motion carried: 18-0-0

Effective: November 2022

There was nothing controversial about this motion.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

In July and August, IT operations underwent a review by a Board-appointed expert volunteer committee that identified areas of high risk and set priorities. A consultant has been engaged to help move these recommendations forward and the search for a new IT Director is being conducted. The modernization of applications that reside on the AS400 is a top priority.

We are still having serious issues with IT. Our expert volunteers continue to help guide us to a better solution. We need to hire a new IT Manager. Hopefully when that happens, things will improve.

## **BRIDGE COMMITTEE**

The Board considered a number of bridge-related motions during its fall meeting:

Motion (Item 223-BR01) increases the limited regional allocation to Districts from three to five, providing Districts with greater flexibility to incentivize I/Ns to return to F2F tournament play.

Motion carried: 15-0-1  
Effective: November 2022

I was the abstention on this motion. I was willing to increase to four but was worried that having five could impact Open Regional attendance. Since I was in favor of the concept of allowing more, I abstained rather than voting against.

The ACBL allocates to each District one week of sectional-rated F2F NABC fundraising games in each of the three years prior to an NABC held within a District. Motion (Item 223-BR02) provides Districts with an additional opportunity to raise funds for NABC hospitality through special Virtual Club (VACB) games. In addition, it allows the weeks to be counted on a 12-month calendar preceding the NABC, providing greater flexibility, especially for NABCs held on or before 2025.

Unanimous in committee and moved to the consent calendar.  
Effective: November 2022

I was the sponsor of this motion. This will allow us to have two online fundraising weeks for the 2023 Spring NABC in New Orleans and three for the 2025 Spring NABC in Memphis.

The Canadian Bridge Federation has the right to hold a regional to benefit its teams. Motion (Item 223-BR03) gives the Mexican Bridge Federation the same right, subject to the same regulations.

Motion carried: 17-0-1  
Effective: November 2022

I voted in favor of this motion, as I did not see any real negative.

Motion (Item 223-BR04) moves that management designate one week in each of the Special Games months for VACBs to hold special games for the designated charities -- Junior Fund, Educational Foundation, Grass Roots Fund, International Fund and ACBL Charity Foundation, a charity or charity fund. In April, VACB games held during the designated week will benefit the ACBL Charity Foundation.

Motion carried: 16-1-1  
Effective date: January 2023

After considerable thought, I voted in favor of this motion. I would have preferred fewer weeks, due to the potential impact on face-to-face games. However, I felt we need to support these important charities.

Motion (Item 223-BR05) provides Units the ability to reduce costs by permitting Tournament Assistants and club directors to run Local Sectionals and NLM Sectionals.

The ACBL will provide educational content for Tournament Assistants and club directors who wish to be eligible to run Local and/or NLM Sectionals or assist at larger

tournaments. The Tournament Assistants and club directors will be required to pass a test on directing skills once every two years to continue working at those tournaments.

- Local Sectionals, which are defined as Open Sectionals with an anticipated attendance of less than 25 tables per session, may be staffed by Tournament Assistants or club directors who have been certified for Local Sectional staffing.
- NLM Sectionals with an upper limit of 750 (raised from 500) masterpoints or fewer may be run by Tournament Assistants or club directors who have been certified for Local Sectional staffing.
- Championship Sectionals will be staffed by Tournament Directors who are ACBL employees. Championship Sectionals are defined as Open Sectionals with an anticipated attendance of 25 or more tables per session.
- Championship Sectionals are required to accept credit cards and online entries.

Motion carried: 15-2-0-1

Effective: January 2023

I voted in favor of this motion, as it will allow some small tournaments to be run without losing money or having to change to a "Downgraded Sectional."

Motion (Item 223-BR06) creates an Ace of Virtual Clubs race in addition to the Helen Shanbrom Ace of Clubs. All sanctioned games held at VACBs are to be counted in the Ace of Virtual Clubs races at the Unit, District and ACBL-wide levels. These VACB games are not to be counted in the Helen Shanbrom Ace of Clubs race which will be for F2F club play only.

An amendment to the motion was proposed stating that sanctioned games held at VACBs are not to be counted in the Mini-McKenney race. Because of the potential impact, this amendment will be reconsidered in an upcoming January Board meeting.

Motion carried: 18-0-0

Effective: January 2023

I was a co-sponsor of this motion. I did not know about the "friendly amendment" until the motion came up for voting. I voted in favor but after further reflection, I believe the elimination of VACB masterpoints from the Mini-McKenney races could (somewhat) negatively affect Virtual Club attendance. A number of people play in these games trying to pad their yearly masterpoint totals.

I have submitted a motion for reconsideration of this item. It will require 2/3 vote of the Board. Assuming we vote to reconsider, I have a new motion that adds the Ace of Virtual Clubs races (which are separate from the Helen Shanbrom Ace of Clubs) but does not remove VACB points from Mini-McKenney races.

Motion (Item 223-BR07) allows VACBs a virtual appreciation club of the week in October with increased masterpoint awards.

Motion failed: 6-11-1

I voted against this, as we had just authorized six weeks of special games to support charities and felt that was enough at this time.

## **ROYAL STACS CONTINUE!**

Two Royal STaCs have been allocated to each District beginning in 2023.

I was in favor of this, as it has been quite popular in most Districts.

## **ACBL ELECTIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS**

Joann Glasson, District 4, was elected by acclamation as ACBL President for a second one-year term, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

Margot Hennings, Region 4, was elected by acclamation to the newly formed position of ACBL Vice President for a one-year term, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

David Lodge, Region 11, was elected by acclamation as the ACBL Treasurer for a one-year term, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

The following individuals have been certified as having been duly elected to the ACBL Board of Directors for four-year terms, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2026:

Jeff Overby, Region 8; Cindy Shoemaker, Region 10 and Jackie Zayac, Region 12.

## **ACBL CHARITY FOUNDATION ELECTION**

The National Board elected Jennifer O'Neill, District 17, as a Trustee to the ACBL Charity Foundation for a four-year term, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2026.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Brian Platnick, District 13 and Franco Baseggio, District 24 were appointed as the Nadine Wood Volunteer Members of the Year.

Brian and Franco have done an unbelievable amount of work building EDGAR, our new automated cheating detection tool. This was very well deserved.

Morris Jones, District 23, was appointed the 2023 Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year.

Betty Starzec, District 16, was appointed as the 2023 ACBL Honorary Member of the Year.

David Lodge, Region 11, was appointed as the Western Zone Executive Committee member for a three-year term, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2025.

Cindy Shoemaker, Region 10, was appointed as the Western Zone Executive Committee member alternate for a three-year term, January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2025.

## **Other**

Management proposed several online Regionals next year. In our straw poll, I voted

against these. Even though they try to schedule during weeks where there is no face-to-face Regional, I think they adversely affect attendance at our Sectionals and VACB games. However, revenue for these Regionals was already factored into the budget, so most felt we needed them to avoid even more of a deficit for next year.

One Regional is schedule for March 23-26. Another will be held in the fall.

In addition, a six day North American Online Bridge Championship was approved for the week after the Summer NABC. No platinum points will be awarded and the events will be rated NABC (not NABC+), so do not offer Grand Life Master Qualification. There will be concurrent Regional events beginning in Day 3.