

Summer 2022 ACBL Board Meeting Report

The ACBL Board of Directors held its summer meetings face-to-face (F2F) July 11 through July 14, 2022 in Providence, RI. 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 ACBL Board Committee Chairs and the ACBL Summer Management Report. Please go to: <https://acbl.org/administration/#bod> to access meeting minutes.

FINANCE

As of June 30, 2022, the year-to-date revenue is \$6,905,370, which is \$414K less than budgeted. Total expenses for that same period are \$7,339,585, which is \$349K less than budget. The result is a loss from operations of \$434K for the first six months of 2022, \$64K higher than budgeted.

The initial budgeted loss from operations for 2022 was \$850,000K, but with current trends, the loss from operations will likely be closer to \$1M by year end. In addition, the unrealized loss in the market value of investments is \$994K as of June 30, 2022.

The board will request that management concentrate on reducing fixed overhead expenses in the 2023 budget to ensure expenses are better aligned with current revenues.

INCREASING MEMBERSHIP

The Board approved funding for a joint pilot program with the ACBL Educational Foundation aimed at increasing ACBL membership and providing support for face-to-face beginning bridge teachers and face-to-face bridge clubs.

A Task Force has been formed to develop the process, metrics and timeline.

Between 50 to 75 beginning bridge teachers are being selected to participate in the pilot program. Selected teachers must have access to a face-to-face club where students will take lessons and can advance to in-person supervised play and to 0-5 masterpoint and to 0-20 masterpoint games.

The ACBL Educational Foundation and the ACBL will partner, each handling key program components to drive success. The ACBL will use digital marketing channels to generate leads, i.e., individuals interested in learning bridge. Leads will be funneled to participating teachers. The ACBL Educational Foundation will track program results and analyze the data to ensure efficiencies in lead acquisition/cost.

The task force includes Robert Todd, President, ACBL Educational Foundation; Kristen Fredrick, Executive Director, ACBL Educational Foundation; Joel Kramer, Vice President, ACBL Educational Foundation; Joann Glasson, President, ACBL Board of Directors; Paul Cuneo, Region 9, ACBL National Board Member; Cindy Shoemaker,

District 17, ACBL National Board Member and Mary Stratton, ACBL Director of Marketing.

APPEALS & CHARGES

In Providence, under Item C222-AC01, the Appeals & Charges Committee reported the outcome of its most recent hearings.

Motion (Item 222-AC02) amends the Code of Disciplinary Regulations to include the forfeiture of masterpoints and titles for members found guilty of first-degree ethical violations that result in the expulsion or suspension of the offender for two or more years. Furthermore, those members would be permanently ineligible to be awarded the ACBL rank of Grand Life Master and permanently ineligible to be inducted into the ACBL Hall of Fame. Offenders who are Grand Life Masters and/or are members of the ACBL Hall of Fame would be stripped of these distinctions.

Motion carried: 17-3-0.

Effective date: July 15, 2022.

The Board continues to move toward a new disciplinary structure as part of a comprehensive transformation in the way cheating cases are handled by the ACBL.

This change was necessitated by the sudden explosion of online bridge play during the COVID era. Allegations of ethical violations, or “cheating,” against players have become commonplace. We don’t know the true extent of the problem, but all bridge organizations across the world have struggled to handle the transition from in-person to online and the associated dramatic increase in reported cheating.

High level (think “felony”) ethical charges arising entirely after February 1, 2022 (based on the earliest hand intended to be used as evidence) will now be referred to arbitration with the Institute for Bridge Arbitration (IBA), the new bridge division of the American Arbitration Association (AAA).

The IBA is independent from the ACBL, and its mission is to recruit expert bridge players who are willing to donate their time to serve as “arbitrators” in bridge cheating disputes. The IBA Steering Committee met in Providence and is preparing invitations to members of the Ethical Oversight Committee and the Online Ethical Oversight Committee, effectively “outsourcing” the current process to the AAA as a qualifying “arbitration” under federal law so that bridge experts are involved in the final decision. Other players are invited to apply to the panel -- expect an announcement around the end of August.

Less serious (think “misdemeanor”) ethical charges against players with limited masterpoints will be handled in a different way, using technology to accommodate the scale of the problem. One such tool is “EDGAR” (Electronic Data Gathering and Anti-cheating Radar), developed by chief architects Franco Baseggio and Brian Platnick. EDGAR will allow the ACBL to scan thousands of cases and look for telltale signs of cheating. The name pays homage to the great Edgar Kaplan, the father of modern bridge ethics. Think of EDGAR like a radar gun being used by law enforcement - if it

catches you, the ACBL will issue a "cheating ticket" and impose a small suspension (or take other minimal disciplinary action). Members who are ticketed will, of course, have the opportunity to defend themselves (through arbitration in front of the IBA), but we expect EDGAR will clean up the online game considerably.

The ACBL plans a phased process leading to a full deployment of EDGAR. During the latter part of 2022, EDGAR will be used to support "traditional" OEOC investigations as felony cheating cases begin to be referred to the IBA. Expect a complete rollout in early 2023.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Board has established key goals and objectives for the organization that include a robust return to face-to-face club and tournament play, building and retaining membership and improving technology. Management is developing action plans and implementation strategies for established goals and objectives.

The Strategic Committee is developing the long-range strategy or vision for the organization based on committee, board and management input and is establishing quantifiable targets.

BYLAWS

Motion (Item 222-BY01) proposes a change in the governance structure of the ACBL Board of Directors, amending the bylaws to replace the Chairman of the Board with Vice President.

The Chairman of the Board is defined in the current bylaws as the immediate Past President. The selection of the Chairman was not by election, nor was it always automatic. Provisions were made in the bylaws to select another board member in case the previous Past President was no longer on the Board. In recent years, this was often the case.

A Vice President will have most of the same duties as the Chairman but will always be elected by the full Board of Directors.

Motion Carried: 17-3-0.

Effective upon approval by the ACBL Advisory Council following the second reading of the ACBL Bylaws.

GOVERNANCE

Governance had a light agenda in Providence, with three motions and one non-agenda item.

Non-agenda item (NA222-01) is the most important motion the Governance Committee reviewed for Providence. It proposed revised Unit formation, transfer and dissolution regulations that will be updated in the Board Codification. In the process of developing

this complex motion, it was clear that substantial changes were needed not only to Chapter III—Administration of Operations, A. Units, Section 4, Changes to a Unit Charter, but also to Chapter I—Membership, A. Membership, Section 3, Unit Membership.

The resulting changes to both chapters clarify the responsibilities and entitlements of individual members, groups of members and Units. The intent of these changes was to make it easier for members to understand how to retain the benefits of belonging to a Unit in this current climate of declining membership together with the need of smaller Units to merge or to transfer members.

Motion (Item 222-GV01). See Communications Section of this report for details.

Motion (Item 222-GV02) updates and provides consistent procedures for Board-elected/appointed positions across the ACBL, the North American Bridge Federation and the World Bridge Federation.

Motion carried: 20-0-0.

Motion (Item 222-GV03) proposes that it is appropriate for the Vice President to assume the duties of the Chairman of the Board that are currently referenced in the Codification—as a member of the Board Oversight Committee, the Executive Committee and a Tournament Conflicts Committee (as needed). It aligns with the bylaw changes proposed in Item 222-BY01, included in the Bylaws Section of this report.

Motion carried: 20-0-0.

In addition to the motions it reviewed, the Governance Committee began work that will continue through the fall and into 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 fact, one recognized objective of “good governance” is: “...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.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Task Force puts forth initiatives to improve communication within the Board, between the Board and ACBL Management and the Board and ACBL membership. The Task Force Chair reported the progress of 11 initiatives, including the

revision and implementation of the ACBL Member Response Policy based on the ongoing need to improve customer service.

A review of the Codification as it relates to communication and communication protocols is complete.

This review resulted in a motion (Item 222-GV01) to remove Section 4 - Communications and Appendix 4-A3 contained in Part 1 - Governance and Policy, Chapter IV - Board Procedures, A. Administration of the Codification.

Communications policies and protocols put forth by the Communications Task Force and enacted in 2021 and 2022 eliminate the need to codify communications. Additional communications procedures will be consolidated and included in the revised Board Member Manual. Governance and the Communications Task Force are working on the revision of the Board Member Manual scheduled for completion in 2022.

Item 222-GV01 was assigned to the Governance Committee. Motion carried: 20-0-0.

BRIDGE

Motion (Item 222-BR-01) removes the six-year rotational requirement for NABC site locations from the Codification Part 2 - Bridge Operations, Chapter VIII - North American Bridge Championships, Section 2 and Appendix 8 - A North American Bridge Championships, D. Rotation and Frequency.

The six-year rotational requirement included Orlando, San Francisco, Toronto, Washington, DC, Reno and Las Vegas, and cities in the state of Texas.

These locations will still be evaluated for future NABCs. However, removing the rotational requirement will provide greater flexibility to select sites which may lead to better fiscal decisions.

Motion carried: 20-0-0.

ACBL ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Barbara Heller was certified as having been duly elected to the Board of Directors of the American Contract Bridge League to complete the remaining term for Region 6 Director, July 11, 2022 through December 31, 2024.

Online Ethical Oversight Committee

Cheri Bjerkan, Jordan Chodorow, Ira Chorush, Richard Popper and Rick Rowland were each appointed for a three-year term to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee from the end of the summer 2022 NABC through the end of the summer 2025 NABC.