

## **NATIONAL BOARD REPORT SUMMER 2023**

ACBL Board of Directors held its summer meetings face-to-face (F2F) Monday, July 10 through Thursday, July 13 in Chicago. The Board and its work groups, task forces and committees continue to meet regularly through Zoom.

### **FINANCE**

The change in ACBL net assets from January 1, 2023 to May 31, 2023 was \$627K. \$364K of this amount resulted from income from operations, largely due to increased NABC income, and \$263K reflects the change in the market value of investments. These results are \$209K better than that budgeted year-to-date 2023 and \$624K better than the same time period in 2022.

Continued investment in information technology was capitalized in the first five months of 2023: \$147K for development of the new Masterpoint Engine and \$139K for AS400 server modernization.

Management proposed fee increases in all areas that will go into effect January 1, 2024. Member dues, club sanction fees, special game fees and tournament fees will increase along with cruise and land cruise sanction fees and NABC entry fees. Many of these fees have not been increased in several years. Communications will follow.

Planning is underway for tiered regular and social memberships. The new social membership will have an annual cost of \$29 yearly or \$2.99 monthly and will allow players eligibility while accumulating up to 100 masterpoints.

Management also proposed a plan for tiered patron memberships that will range from patron to silver and gold memberships with varying benefits associated with each level.

Item 232-FN01 moved to clarify the language and specific procedures and tools used by ACBL as referenced in the Codification, Appendix 2-A Accounts Payable and Check Cashing Policies: Chapter II - Business Management, A. Finance.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One board member was absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

As of June 2023, ACBL membership totaled 132,247. New member recruitment is up 32.9% from 2022. Guest memberships continue to increase. To date, 2,576 guest members have converted to regular memberships. As of June 30, there were 1,897 active guest members.

### **MEMBERSHIP BUILDING TASK FORCE**

The Membership Building Task Force is actively reviewing ACBL Codification provisions relating to membership building and retention to determine synergies and whether improvements to processes, and redistribution of funding, are warranted.

Additional initiatives for consideration by management include the implementation of a Member Referral Program, an initiative to expand ACBL's presence digitally as well as F2F within organizations, and associations with organizations that appeal to youth and to the 50 to 65 age demographic.

The Task Force brought forth the motion and discussion item below on utilization of the 11% of member dues and life master service fees that flow back to the Units.

Item 232-ME01 moved to redefine the requirements for the Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP) reimbursements. This includes providing ACBL with program plans and evaluations and offering guest memberships to program participants. ACBL will garner best practices to support future planning efforts.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: January 1, 2024.

A discussion item (DI232-ME01) regarding the utilization of the 11% of membership dues and life master service fees provided to units was addressed within the Finance Committee and in Full Board.

In March 2022, the Board unanimously passed Item 221-GV02 which eliminated the requirement for Units to hold at least one sectional every two years, and clarified that the return to Units of 11% of membership dues and life master service fees paid by their members is intended to supplement Unit funds for activities related to membership building and retention. Based on this clarification, discussions focused on building awareness of the intended use of funds, the need for development of flexible criteria for qualifying expenditures, determining how Units are using the funds, and providing Units with collaborative materials including best practices. Management and the Board agreed that a reporting component should be added to ensure compliance with the intended purpose of funds usage.

The Task Force will compile feedback provided by the Board, management and stakeholders, collaborate with management to communicate with Units and provide fund distribution and usage scenarios for presentation in fall 2023.

## **BOOST F2F BRIDGE**

Boost F2F Bridge, a joint pilot initiative with ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation, is aimed at building membership by providing support for F2F beginners bridge teachers and F2F bridge clubs. ACBL uses social media ad campaigns to identify individuals interested in learning bridge. Leads generated from these

campaigns are funneled to participating teachers. Selected teachers must offer ACBL guest memberships to students and have access to F2F clubs where students can take lessons and advance to in-person supervised play.

In the summer 2023 program cycle, 21 campaigns generated 1,406 leads and 131 students. An additional 166 individuals expressed interest in taking classes in the near future. ACBL is accepting submissions from teachers interested in participating in the program in the third quarter. Currently, over 22 campaigns are scheduled.

## **BYLAWS**

The second reading (Item 231-BY01) to amend Bylaws Article III, Section 3.5 to include an expanded list of who is subject to binding arbitration, and to add Article XII detailing how arbitration will work, passed the Board by the required two-thirds majority vote. The first reading was passed by the Board in March 2023.

Effective: Immediately upon ratification by the Advisory Council – which occurred during its July 25 meeting.

## **GOVERNANCE**

In keeping with the fast pace of our new Executive Director and thinking ahead to Board operations with a downsized Board of thirteen in 2024, the Governance Committee developed and presented streamlined procedures. These “Interim Guidelines” meet the requirements of our ACBL bylaws, but provide a more flexible way of doing business in advance of and during “Regular” and “Special” meetings. Included is a less formal approach wherein topics are more commonly taken up via discussion items (rather than formal motions), affording greater real time discussion, consideration, adaptation and interaction with management. These Interim Guidelines will be in effect on a trial basis through the Board’s fall meeting in Atlanta and adapted for subsequent meetings. Ultimately, the procedures the Board adopts will drive a new version of its regulations (the Codification) that will facilitate better communication, cooperation and coordination among work groups, task forces, committees, management, the Advisory Council, other volunteer groups and the Board in addressing bridge administration functions critical to ACBL.

In addition to development of the Interim Guidelines based on Discussion Item DI232-GV01, the Governance Committee reviewed and presented five motions:

The first (Item 232-GV01) was submitted through a Regional Director representing a District concerned with expanding the criteria that would define a Member Not in Good Standing to include not serving “in any club administrative capacity.” Currently, a Member Not in Good Standing is not permitted to serve as a club manager or club director (among other non-allowed positions and responsibilities as detailed in the Codification, Chapter I – Membership, Section 2 – Definitions and Rights of ACBL Membership, 2.3.2, a. through j.). This motion was debated in Committee and brought

to the Full Board with a narrow margin in favor in Committee. After considerable discussion by all Board members, the motion failed by a vote of 6-12-0-0. A concern was that as much as the Board wanted to honor the District's objective for integrity at the Unit and club level, the ability for a club to make its own rules in this regard already exists. Also, codifying and enforcing this across all clubs could be difficult, given ambiguity with how "administrative capacity" would be defined and difficulty with ACBL managing and tracking a database of those who serve in other such capacities in clubs.

Item 232-GV02 was unanimously supported in Committee and submitted to the Board as part of the Consent Calendar. The motion deleted many of the administrative requirements for the monthly *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* as had been listed in the Codification, Chapter II - Business Management - D. ACBL Bulletin. *Bulletin* functions and content should be the responsibility of the Editor and editorial staff as part of the editorial decision-making process and not be specified in the Codification. The changes to this section of the Codification reflect this and are effective immediately. There are several additional references to *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* throughout other sections of the Codification, and the Governance Committee will be reviewing these to ensure they are deleted or changed to be consistent with the policy approved at this meeting.

Item 232-GV03 revised procedures dealing with requirements for the individuals the ACBL Board recommends to the United States Bridge Federation (USBF) to represent the ACBL on the World Bridge Federation (WBF) Executive Council and on the North American Bridge Federation Board; and clarified how and for what purpose the ACBL makes payments to the National Bridge Organizations (NBOs)—in the case of the WBF Zone 2, this includes the USBF and the Canadian and Mexican national bridge organizations. These procedures are detailed in the Codification, Chapter VII - International Bridge A. Zone 2 National Bridge Organizations (NBOs), Chapter VII – International Bridge B. WBF Representatives and NABF Board Members, Chapter VII – International Bridge C. International Fund and to Chapter VII – International Funds D. World Junior Championships.

Carried: 15-0-1-2. Two board members were absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

At the spring Board meeting in New Orleans, three motions were tabled, all having to do with ACBL Hall of Fame (HOF) Operating Procedures—ensuring that nominees are appropriately vetted for their "ethics, deportment and sportsmanship" by the ACBL disciplinary bodies responsible for conducting such investigations; proposing consistency across the number of years before deceased individuals could be nominated for both the von Zedtwitz and Blackwood Awards; and other minor cleanup changes to the procedures. The semantic and procedural differences in the changes proposed by these three motions were subsequently discussed at length among the HOF Chair, the Board Liaison to the HOF, the Governance Chair and the motion makers. There was no disagreement that it is a privilege to be nominated for any ACBL honorary award, that the standards for nomination must be high and that proposed candidates should be vetted by ACBL—how to accomplish these goals was the issue to

be resolved. This was done in Item 232-GV04, which proposes the ACBL Executive Director as the appropriate person to make this determination, with the confidentiality of players maintained. Vetting includes candidates not only for the HOF, including the Von Zedtwitz, Blackwood and Sydney Lazard, Jr. Sportsmanship Awards, but also the ACBL Honorary Member of the Year, the Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year and the Nadine Wood Honorary Member of the Year.

These changes to the Codification, Chapter I - Membership Operating Guidelines F. Discipline and the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations, Section 3 – Disciplinary Administrative Policies were approved.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One board member was absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

Item 232-GV05 reflects these approved requirements that the HOF Committee will follow per its revised Operating Procedures before publishing the nomination of its candidates.

Carried: 17-0-0-1. One board member was absent at the time the vote was taken.  
Effective: Immediate.

## **APPEALS & CHARGES**

The Appeals & Charges Committee reported on hearings it held since its last report to the Board: One Automatic Review of an Online Ethical Oversight Committee matter and two reviews of Negotiated Resolutions. Hearing reports are available at the Ethics & Discipline area of the ACBL website: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>

Item 232-AC03 moved to delete references to American Arbitration Association (AAA) from the CDR, bringing the CDR into alignment with the Institute for Bridge Arbitration's (IBA) actual implementation.

Carried: 18-0-0.  
Effective: Immediate.

Item 232-AC04 moved that CDR 403(C)(3) Suspension, maximum of six months be revised to maximum of twenty-four months.

Carried: 18-0-0.  
Effective: Immediate.

## **BRIDGE**

The Board engaged in several bridge-related discussions and considered the following motions:

Item 232-BR01 clarifies and provides consistency to the information presented in the Codification, Chapter X: Sectionals, and introduces bridge camps, a special instance of a local sectional, where a residential program of bridge instruction incorporates games similar to tournaments-at-sea where silver points are awarded.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: September 1, 2023.

Item 232-BR02 moved to approve the 2023-2024 GNT Conditions of Contest and to change the official to be contacted for members seeking exceptions to residency requirements as found in the Codification, Chapter XI - Special Events, A. Residency Requirements, Section 1 - Grand National Teams and North American Pairs.

Substantive changes to the GNT Conditions of Contest are: Flight C to use the Basic+ Convention Chart instead of the Basic Chart and to permit un-proctored online play for district finals. Most COVID-specific provisions were removed.

Carried: 18-0-0.

Effective: September 1, 2023.

ACBL maintains a list of top lifetime masterpoint holders which is published annually in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. A discussion item (DI232-BR01) led to the decision to review current criteria established for inclusion or removal from the list, ensuring consistency and transparency moving forward. This review, to be conducted by management and the Bridge Committee, may result in policy and/or modifications to the Codification.

In 2021, a strength of field motion (Item 202-21 first reading and 20S6-03 second reading) was unanimously passed by the Board. Discussion item (DI232-BR02) focused on concerns over the cost, the timeframe for implementation and how the implementation ranks in terms of organizational priorities. Rather than relying on an outside vendor, the IT team, headed by Jay Whipple, identified a simplified, cost effective solution for implementation to occur before year-end.

A discussion item (DI232-BR04) centered on whether a change to the grass roots funding structure will invigorate these prestigious events. This resulted in an action item to management to review financials as well as past motions/regulations affecting Grass Roots. Management will work with the Bridge Committee to propose a potential solution that will be considered at the fall meeting.

A discussion item (DI232-BR05) resulted in approval for virtual clubs to run a week of Club Appreciation games in October 2023 and a week of Charity games in November and December 2023 with funds allocated to the ACBL Charity Foundation. [Note: upon further investigation, management determined it is unable to implement the extra charity games in 2023 due to additional programming requirements.]

## **NABC SITE SELECTION**

The NABC Site Selection Committee recommended Seattle, WA as the location for the fall 2027 NABC. The site visit to the Summit Convention Center and Hyatt Regency (host hotel) was conducted on June 21-22, 2023. The committee reported the financial projection and the benefits of the space, e.g., many nearby restaurants, bars and attractions, a high walkability rating and an affordable room rate of \$189.

The Board unanimously supported Seattle, WA for the fall 2027 NABC.

## **ACBL CHARITY FOUNDATION UPDATE**

The dual challenges of declining membership and the effects of the pandemic have prompted the ACBL Charity Foundation Trustees to propose a revised giving strategy that was communicated to the Board by Foundation President Jackie Zayac. It includes resuming the grant rotation to Districts on a two-year rather than a four-year rotation, awarding each District \$10,000. The rotation will begin in 2023 with Districts within Regions 2-6 and in 2024 with Districts within Regions 7-13. Region 1 (Districts 1 and 2) receive charity funds from the Canadian Bridge Federation and are not included in the rotation. Region 13 (Districts 18 and 19) share one grant because its membership is split between Canada and the U.S.

The Foundation will continue grants in the amount of \$5,000 to a qualified local 501(c)3 organization at each NABC, but will suspend individual grants. The Foundation also proposed the establishment of a catastrophic relief fund, maintaining a minimum balance of \$50,000.

An election to fill two Trustee positions will occur at the Foundation Membership Meeting in November. Declarations are due by October 15, 2023. For details, contact ACBL Election Secretary: [elections@acbl.org](mailto:elections@acbl.org).

## **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

Jon Brissman, Jan Martel, Karen Allison and Marjorie Michelin were each appointed to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee for a three-year term from the end of the Summer 2023 NABC through the end of the Summer 2026 NABC.