

NVBA Board Meeting
November 5, 2023

Attendees:

Jay Simon, Vice President
Ann Atcheson, Treasurer
Eric Poskanzer, Secretary
Jason Carter, Board Member
Joe Hertz, Board Member
Jamie Dahlberg, Board Member
Kevin O'Brien, Board Member
Howard Stevens, Education Committee
Jim Gerding, Unit Game Chief Director
Ron Kral, Webmaster
Lucy McCoy, Newsletter Editor

Unable to Attend:

Georgette Weiss, President
Marty Bley, Prior President
John Wertman, Board Member
Margot Hennings, ACBL Board Member

Meeting Called to Order at 9:33am

Prior Minutes

- Motion to approve – Jaime, Seconded – Kevin: Minutes were approved.

Financials (Ann Acheson):

- October '23 draft financials were distributed.
- October Sectional results were a profit of just under \$600 with table count down by 10.
- Break even point analysis submitted and is 20 tables at \$10 or 9 tables at \$24; Ann thinks we should pause the unit game for the 'winter,' resuming in April.
- Ron suggested setting an attendance target (a table target by a certain date) basing it on the historical attendance (someone would need to analyze the data out on the web); someone suggested to Ron that we alternate unit games with the WBL – there may be issues with players being able to make the drive to the other unit.
- Eric brought up the large number of free plays and the associated cost (20% of total income to free plays) – need to control expenses in addition to increasing income (higher attendance).
- Eric mentioned that if we stopped the unit game, we may not get the people back once we restart; Joe questioned that if we pause the unit game, will the unit lose its rights to Thursday night to run a game (can a director swoop in and run a game in that time slot).
- Jaime suggested going to an online game exclusively on Thursday, especially if we stop the face-to-face game; noting that there are already a significant number of large online games.
- Kevin believes that some people depend on the unit game for a significant part of their income – shown not to be accurate and should be remove from consideration.
- Jason raised anecdotal information that people prefer face-to-face games; however, people have raised concerns about 'mean people' at the unit game – Jaime has cited personal experiences (The director should be called if this occurs). Jason and Ann are not aware of any significant problems. As an aside, he also noted that very few board members attend the unit game.
- Jay also believes that if we pause the unit game will hurt attendance even more once we start it back up.
- Kevin brought up changing the game's location to save money.

- Joe brought up the lack of a 199er game and this may be the biggest opportunity to increase attendance; make a concerted effort to restart this.
- Cannot approve the financial report until it's finalized.

199er Game

- In the weekly Unit Game/RSVP email, show that a separate 199er unit game exists.
- Kevin believes that using RSVP will speed up the start of the game.
- In one game, the offer for 0-49ers to play for free only produced 2 people and they are regular attendees at the unit game, so we actually lost money.
- Jason brought up calling people to invite them to the unit game and maybe finding out why they don't attend. Eric mentioned that we can do surveys through iContact. Recommendation to include Susan Miskura in developing a survey; Jason is willing and will start to make phone calls – Jaime will assist and has requested a set of talking points. Discussion ensued on where to get a list and to start with members with 0-49 points.
- Kevin brought up the ACBL initiative and its materials through its Return to the Fold program and reintroduced the ACBL Community games on Tuesday night – he believes that this will entice people to then come to the unit game. Strategy is to get new players to play here and then to get them to move up to the unit game.
- Ron brought up a misconception that most players want to get better; they seemingly want just to have a good time – need to address what people want and why they want to play bridge.
- Jason will talk with a pair of new players on what ideas they might have to get other new and younger members.
- In summary, a survey, phone calls, and the Return to the Fold program – help us assess what the problems are and what we need to do to accomplish this. Jaime suggested announcing a 499er game in the weekly RSVP email. RSVP maintains master points but the most complete data is what is maintained by Eric.
- Jim cannot target the 499ers with a RSVP email but can include the 499er game into the one email.
- Jay moved that we set a goal of average of 20 tables by a June 30th and if we do not reach this we will shut down the game. We will set up plans for a survey, phone calls, and the Return to the Fold programs with task leaders. If we don't reach the numbers by the target date, we cancel the unit game as of July 31st. If we see significant progress, we can discuss it again in the May-June timeframe. Jason will organize the phone calls, Eric to provide more accurate data. Jay will come up to speed on the Return to the Fold video and come up with a strategy. Kevin will undertake the survey task. Eric seconded. Kevin wanted to amend to July 31 but rejected since it is just to consider closing the meeting. Approved.

Constitution, By-laws, and Policy and Procedures (Kevin)

- Not getting much feedback from board members, each board member has specific responsibilities.
- Also, there is a need for volunteers and we don't really know who would do specific tasks.⁴
- Kevin claims that there is ACBL money available for education that we may be missing out on because no one is completing the responsibility.
- Per Jay, we have a constitution and by-laws and we meet mostly every month to deal with the details. The constitution does not set our agenda; it provides guidance where it is needed. If we needed to make amendments, it is difficult to change it.
- Jay encourages everyone to read their position descriptions to be sure they are aware of what they are to do. Discussion closed.

Volunteers

- Kevin will make a list of all the areas for which we need volunteers and submit it to the board for review. Once approved, he will work with Ron and Joe to put it on the website and he will include it in the weekly newsletters,

Free Plays

- Kevin believes that we need to make changes – e.g., David Lindley did not get free plays for the weekly emails but now they do
- Allegedly, people are complaining that they are not getting rewarded for assisting the Unit.
- Eric will look at the number of authorized free plays and for whom and why they get them. He will present his findings of the review.
- Prior changes to free plays, such as board members not taking free plays during the pandemic, were not updated in the free play table in Policy and Procedures.
- If we reinstitute the guaranteed partner program, Kevin wants our free plays to include the security fee.

Holiday Party

- Jay tried to find out who is running the holiday party
- Lucy informed Georgette what awards (Dave Murray, Leo Cardillo Volunteer, Kral I/N, and Sara Goodwin) we hand out and we need to solicit recipients.
- If we cannot get the online attendance data, should we consider not giving out these awards?
- Per Kevin, he has volunteered to get the awards engraved and first we need to identify who is going to get the awards.
- We'll need Ron to get the data needed for the awards – Kevin volunteered for this and to work with Georgette to get engraving done – Marty had been doing this in the recent past.
- Absent Georgette, we need her input to discuss anything (e.g., decorations, LM cake, awards, eggnog and booze, poinsettias, fees). We also need to know all that needs to be done. Decisions need to be made – there are 6 weeks to go. Jay will reach out to Georgette about the plans.

ACBL Reports

- ACBLReports@nvba.org is our official email for ACBL to send us our reports.
- Georgette has the responsibility to work with ACBL to get this implemented,

Carolina Online Game

- This is Georgette's issue – bring this up at our next meeting.
- Kevin believes that Rockville Bridge Club will get our share of the revenue from this game.
- Real question – are we interested in joining and determine how they divvy up the money.

New Business

- Scheduling Meeting – Lucy brought up holding a scheduling meeting for next year's WBL and NVBA weekly meetings; WBL is considering if they will continue their weekly unit games; NVBA schedule – if no WBL, Jim will just make recommendations – will contact Ted first.
- Braille cards – we only have one deck of backward Braille cards; do we want to pimp-out Eddie as a local celebrity – definite no; still need the feedback on whether the Braille cards will work; can implement almost immediately once we have 35 decks made; then need to determine how to implement at a sectional.
- Speed Partnering for newer players (Kevin) – wants unit to start a section in the game for new players to play each round with a different partner each round – Kevin needs to create a write-up to discuss at next month's meeting.
- November 30th game – Bridge as invented 98 years prior; should we have a cake to celebrate this event; concurrent with Atlanta tournament; Jay will discuss with Georgette.

Next Meeting

- December 3rd at 9:30am.

Meeting ended at 11:42am.

Action Items – 11/5/23 Meeting

1. Finalize the October '23 financial report – Ann
2. Be aware of violators of the Zero Tolerance policy at the Unit Game and take appropriate action – Jim and entire board
3. Organize and call members to invite them to the Unit game and better understand why they do not attend – Jason will organize (based on data supplied by Eric)
4. Review and devise a strategy to implement the ACBL's Return to the Fold program – Jay
5. Develop and implement a membership survey to better understand why members do not play at the Unit game – Kevin (with input from Susan Miskura)
6. Review and update board position descriptions in the Constitution and By-laws and Policy and Procedures and return to Kevin – all board members (some are done)
7. Identify activities for which we can use additional volunteers and post it to the website – Kevin
8. Review the number of free plays authorized to support the Unit and recommend changes as needed – Eric
9. Review with Georgette the status and plans for this year's holiday party – Jay
10. Schedule a meeting with WBL, if they are still having a weekly unit game, to set next year's schedule for sectionals and special games – Jim (If no WBL Unit game, Jim will make recommendations solely for our unit)
11. Make 35 decks with Braille cards – can implement almost immediately once we have 35 decks made - Joe
12. Develop a write-up explaining Speed Partnering for newer players and present to board for review and input – Kevin
13. Discuss with Georgette the possibility of having a cake to celebrate bridge's 98th birthday at the November 30th game – Jay

Action Items – 10/8/23 Meeting

- Policy and Procedures – complete review of your position description
- Awards – think about who should receive each
- Provide Kevin with feedback on tomorrow's weekly email
- Recontact ACBL on reports distribution list – Georgette

Action Items (Uncompleted) – 8/20/23 Meeting

1. Have ACBL change the report distribution list to new distribution set up by Joe (omits Margot and Marty) - Georgette – Doesn't appear to be done – Georgette to recontact ACBL (Joe to send Georgette the correct email list)
2. Identify how to auto-enroll pairs into a specific game – not assigned
3. Jim to contact Keith on how he increased RSVP use at his club by the players – Jim
4. Work with ACBL to raise the issue of blind players and Braille cards with dealing machines – Joe (in progress but there is a workaround)
5. Update position descriptions and forward to Kevin – All board members (in progress)