

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LINKS BRIDGE CLUB
HELD ON SATURDAY 7th DECEMBER 2024 AT 12h00.**

1. Attendance:-,

Present, Rob Stephens, Val Bloom, Bernard Donde, Lotte Sorensen, Helen Kruger, Neville Eber, Peta Feinstein.

Apologies: Lex van Vught

Welcome

Peta welcomed everyone.

2. Minutes 2023

The minutes from 2023 were read and accepted.

3. Chairman's report

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – LINKS AGM DECEMBER 2024

2024 has been a solid year for The Links.

Face to face attendance figures remain consistent, while BBO attendance continues to decline slowly. This could be a bit worrying in time, as we would hope players who play less online would be playing more at the club. But it seems that if F2F bridge is being played more, it is more likely to be happening in a private or social capacity.

It feels that more than ever, innovation will be required going forward, to entice more players to the club.

As a start, we are asking all members to update their contact details. This can be done on the GBU website, or we will have a hard copy placed on our notice board at The Links.

Our figures. Over 9000 tables have played at The Links so far in 2024, with over 6000 of them having been played on BBO.

Saturdays average around a steady 30 tables per week F2F, with a further 20 tables electing to remain online on BBO.

What is heartening is that our database has increased, and, if everyone who has played F2F at The Links, even once, arrived for a session we would have 5 sections.

Saturdays continue to be played in a generally amiable environment. The addition of our Joker draw has been well received. Although it's not made any new millionaires, it is another bit of fun we try to bring to F2F bridge.

Thursday's Supervised sessions continue to grow from strength to strength, averaging around 20 tables per week, and remain a fantastic success. Those who attend rave about the incredible value they derive from our experts.

To our regulars, Neville, Bernard, Rob, Val, Tas, Diana, Lotte, James and others who come to assist, we cannot thank you enough for giving up your time so willingly to impart your words of wisdom and bridge treasures to a very willing audience.

Our Tuesday Gentle Tournament has been well received, and although we don't yet have the numbers we would like, we are optimistic this will grow.

Wednesday afternoons continue steadily.

We seem to be battling to increase our Friday morning attendance, and may have to take a decision on whether to continue with this or not. Those who do come really enjoy this tournament in a very relaxed and friendly environment.

Although online attendances have dropped off The Links' online tournaments continue to be a major revenue stream for the club, helping to subsidize the activities at the club.

The introduction of the "BBO Master point race" has proved to be most exciting with Chris Bosenberg, Merle Modlin and Neville Eber vying for top position in the A bracket, and Delys Shepherd looking to take the B bracket.

The committee tries very hard to keep the club alive and busy. To this end we have hosted various tournaments, including SABF Trials (monitored online @ The Links), the SABF Fundraiser tournament, GBU Mini Congress & GBU Teams.

Looking to 2025

Upcoming initiatives for next year will include

- a monthly Sunday afternoon tournament, the first Sunday of every month, starting in February
- Pro/Am tournaments,
- growing the gentle tournament sessions (including extending them to Saturdays).
- We will also investigate the viability of a F2F team's event, and initiating some weekly lectures to encourage more F2F engagement.

We're excited to have confirmed The Links as the official venue for the SABF's National Congress next year in May, 18th – 24th and we will be making a big push for our local players to participate.

Cape Town has received a clear preference for congress over the last few years, in an effort to attract overseas players, but attendances have remained poor.

We hope to change this, which will involve a massive collective effort in encouraging our locals to play. There has already been some interest from overseas players, and we will shortly start advertising the tournament locally.

As always, we endeavour to maintain The Links property and keep it in good order.

Over and above the various initiatives already undertaken, we intend to implement various maintenance projects to improve the club.

These will include general maintenance, painting, replacing old or cracked windows, gutters, the garden and bathrooms.

You may also have noticed, especially over the last few weeks of excessive heat, that we have fixed our existing, and purchased new air-conditioning units.

Another expensive cost we recently incurred was purchasing new computers for the office and fiber to improve our networking capabilities.

Membership & Playing Fees for 2025:-

Membership will be unchanged from last year at R450.00 inclusive of SABF, GBU and Links membership. Playing fees will be increased to R100 per session, with voucher discounts available (10x = R900). Please watch out for notification of these specials.

ALL playing sessions will be the same rate next year, so vouchers can be used throughout the week. BBO Tournaments will go up slightly to \$2,99/session.

Although some will complain about the increase, let us remember that when we closed the club in 2020 due to the pandemic, our playing fees were R80.00 five years ago. We do have access to a friendship club to assist those who really need it.

The club will close on the 18th December, Wednesday the 18th being the last session.

We will reopen on the 11th January.

The Links Club is renowned worldwide, and we know that, post Covid, our club has been relatively successful in reviving F2F bridge. We have been more successful than many clubs internationally, that have just not managed to get it together. Although not in the numbers we would like, we are happy that we are up in the top echelon of post covid successes.

This success could not have been achieved without assistance and it is our hidden gems, or not so hidden, who must be acknowledged for this remarkable achievement.

- Firstly, thank you to the solid rocks who keep our club well anchored. My co committee members, Lex van Vught, Val Bloom and Rob Stephens.
We have a group of people who work very hard and very amicably in the interests of the club. I personally cannot thank you enough for your assistance to me during this past year.
- Our Thursday Bridge supervisors – your value is priceless and irreplaceable.
- To Joan, Richard and Johannes who do so much in the background.
- Thanks to Nicky and Grant for assisting with scoring on a Saturday and doing a whole lot more administrative tasks when called upon.
- To Lotte, our diamond in the dark. Another precious gem who also does more than just help us ladies increase our waste lines with her splendid baking. Her talents extend way beyond making cakes. Tournament directing, scoring, in fact, anything you need at any given time Lotte will be there without hesitation.
- And, once again, thanks to this club's biggest treasure, more valuable than the Crown jewels. Rob, there really are not enough words for you.
Your heart and your continued contributions and innovations, are just so much bigger than you. Knowing what you do behind the scenes as well as what we see, makes your accomplishments even more staggering.
Not everyone realizes what it takes to keep this club running at such a high standard, and just how much Rob does, to ensure that.
Nothing is too much trouble for you. You go above and beyond, never disappoint, and somehow always seem to take it in your stride.

Of course our club would not exist without people, and so to you, our loyal members, thank you for your continued, constant support.

I wish everyone a safe and blessed festive season with your loved ones, and look forward to seeing you all in 2025 for much happy bridge.

Our goal for 2025, as always is still, to:-

- Keep The Links financially viable.
- Keep bridge alive.
- Encourage our newer players to play more competitively.

- Ensure the continued maintenance of the premises and hope we are able to extend our lease.
- Keep the club legally compliant with all administration up to date.

We hope that next year will build on the success we have managed to achieve this year.

With thanks
Peta Feinstein
Chairman

4. Treasurer's report – Lex Van Vught

I have pleasure in reporting back to the members as follows:

Your club recorded an operating deficit for the 11 months to November of R63 000. The deficit for the prior year was R146 000.

This year's deficit was offset by interest earned on cash reserves of R75 000.

Operating revenue from playing fees increased by 30% to R1,55m from the prior year with, for the second successive year, a significant increase in F2F and Supervised Bridge more than compensating for a 5% decline in Online Income. BBO Income now accounts for a reduced 52% of total playing fees, compared to 88% at the peak time of Covid.

Expenditure for the year to date increased by 23% to R1,77m. This does include the commencement of a replacement and maintenance program which can be deemed of a non-recurring nature. Major items acquired and expensed are new air conditioners (R90 000) and computers (R50 000).

The club's balance sheet remains healthy, with the Club Fund standing at R915 000, effectively unchanged from the beginning of the year.

LCV

5. Election of Office Bearers

The Executive Committee agreed to stand for another year.

And will be operating under one umbrella – The Links.

Peta Feinstein

Val Bloom

Robert Stephens

Lex Van Vught

Sub committees will be organized where needed.

6. General

Bernard has requested we try to implement a team's event.

This matter will be taken under advisement from the committee. Do we undertake this as The Links or outsource it, and when would be the best time.

Helen asked for help regards increasing the Wednesday afternoon number. General consensus was to canvas. It is possible and Rob can assist in sending another poster by email, should he receive such. Helen has suggested we piggy back on the World Bridge Federation's quest to host international tournaments. We will endeavour to include this at our National Congress in May.

There were no further matters.

The meeting ended at 13h00.