

## **WBL Board Minutes**

### **June 11, 2024**

Board members present: Ron Zucker, Clyde Kruskal, Bob Bell, Bob Ives, Hadi Abushakra, Carole Banks, Alex Gretsinger, Kim Gandy, Daniel Aldrich. Linda Marshall (Communications) and Lloyd Rawley (Club Manager) also attended. Board members absent: Alex Stille, Melanie Manfield.

**President's Report:** Ron noted that this is the first in person Board meeting since 2020, and there was general interest in having at least some future board meetings in person. Melanie Manfield is resigning from the Board and a replacement must be found. Linda Marshall was nominated and appointed with no one opposed or abstaining.

**Growing the Game:** Ron reported that the Educational Foundation lessons for the summer are now full, and a second session for the fall is being contemplated. Rebecca Allen would be happy to have the students enrolled in these lessons play in her monthly novice 0-20 masterpoint game at Ohr Kodesh. The ACBL Educational Fund will fund free plays at the Ohr Kodesh game and at the Rockville DBC for students who complete the lesson course. An additional eight-week course covering slightly more advanced topics to build on the current eight-week course that assumes no prior knowledge of bridge is also being planned.

Carole suggested and others agreed that the best way for the Board to make progress on Growing the Game matters is to focus its members' time and attention on only a couple of initiatives.

The Board considered two ideas for attracting more players to WBL duplicate bridge games.

The first is trying to achieve bigger numbers for the Thursday night unit game, which used to be thriving. It was noted that the worst impact of COVID on the unit game was the collapse of the BCD game, as BCD players represent 91% of our membership. Additionally, questions were raised about the continuing viability of night time bridge, given the average age of our membership.

The second idea was to institute a monthly team game, possibly at the Promenade. Lloyd said he would be available most of the time to direct such a game.

Bob Bell noted that there were two different strategies under discussion for growing the game: first, build big games to build the WBL community; second, offer different options for games to cater to different preferences, and that he favored the first strategy. Additionally, the question was raised as to who would attend a monthly Sunday team game who is not already playing regularly on weekends at the Rockville DBC.

The Board agreed to focus our efforts on a concerted effort for drawing a large crowd to the unit game. Ron has had informal discussions with Jim Geist about this, and the

suggestion was made to have a unit game in the fall celebrating the 90th anniversary of the WBL's founding.

The importance of rebuilding a sense of community among DC area bridge players was stressed. There was a suggestion to hold a Sunday open play event at Board and Brews in College Park.

The Board discussed how to attract high school and college students to duplicate bridge. It was suggested that we could reach out to Patty Tucker, a prominent U.S. bridge teacher, regarding high school bridge programs, and to Raphael Hallerman, a local DC player who helps out with the Georgetown University bridge club. For establishing high school bridge programs, it is important to line up a faculty sponsor for each participating school. There was also a suggestion to host a regular after school bridge session at Labyrinth, a board game store in Eastern Market.

**Treasurer's Report:** Bob Ives reported that the May Sectional lost about \$1700, compared with a \$1500 loss on the January Sectional, but in line with the loss on last year's summer Sectional. Bob I. said that we are losing approximately \$1000 per month on the unit game and \$1500 per sectional, and that we will probably lose about \$10,000 this year. Our assets are \$52-\$53,000. The most important strategy for offsetting and reversing these losses is gaining new members.

Bob I. noted that the only variable cost the WBL incurs is for refreshments, which currently have cost net around \$3000 on the year (\$4000 offset by about \$1000 in lunch tickets sold). Kim suggested adopting the NVBA's approach of requiring players at sectionals to place sandwich orders in advance so that the tournament organizers can submit a bulk order to a local sandwich place. The goal would be to save money by reducing over-purchasing.

Ron stated that the Board's goal with respect to reducing losses should be incremental progress, and that the most important aspect of non-profit budgeting is identifying priorities--for the Board, recruiting new members and growing the unit game. The WBL can sustain a loss of \$1000/month for some time, but that means it is imperative to focus now on how best to grow the player base.

**Sectional Report:** Carole discussed the recent Summer Sectional, which ran smoothly thanks to the hard work of the organizers and volunteers. Carole noted that Friday attendance was very low for unknown reasons. Various suggestions were made regarding improving Friday sectional attendance, including having the Rockville DBC host the Friday sessions and offering a lunch or dinner post-session review on Fridays. The Board also discussed various suggestions for improving sectional attendance more broadly, including offering free pizza, ice cream, or baked goods for players who stay for the afternoon session.

It was noted that the WBL Eynon trophy, currently at Ohr Kodesh, must be dealt with.

Carole suggested and the Board agreed that, while we should continue to discuss ways to improve attendance at Sectionals, we should not make any location changes for our upcoming October and January Sectionals at the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center.

The Board is still resolving the accidental double-charge by the Schweinhaut center for the May Sectional.

**Committee Membership:** Hadi, the outgoing WBL President, noted that the Tournament and C&E committees are the most important, and that for C&E it is helpful to have someone who is good at organizing convene but not serve on a given C&E panel so as to avoid any appearance of prejudice.

Dick Wegman, Peter van Zijl, and Barbara Devaney appear willing to continue to serve on the C&E committee.

Carole Banks, Linda Marshall, Barbara Devaney, Clyde Kruskal, Lloyd Rawley, and Alex Stille appear willing to continue to serve on the Tournament Committee, and Brad Theurer will serve for at least one more year.

Dan Aldrich will join the Growing the Game committee.

**WBL Archives/Historian:** A scheduled review of the WBL archives at the home of Peter Boyd, outgoing WBL historian, will be postponed to a later date.

**Other Business:** The Board discussed finding a replacement location for the Unit Game for the 3-4 Thursdays in October, including October 17, the Thursday of the Fall Sectional, when Ohr Kodesh is not available. The Promenade is available for free on October 17. There are various logistics that must be worked out for holding the Thursday sectional sessions at the Promenade, including transportation of equipment.

The Board agreed to prepare flyers for upcoming Sectionals and other events. Ron will reach out to Georgette Weiss about this.

Ron, Bob Ives, and Dan will go to the bank together to transfer signature authority over the WBL bank account.

The Board discussed the problem of future District Six regionals. No regionals are scheduled beyond 2024. It was suggested that the model of having the regional at a host hotel and committing to fill a certain number of rooms, with a financial penalty for failure, is outdated, and alternative locations were suggested, including the Fairfax Elks Lodge, vacant hotel ball rooms, the MGM National Harbor, and Maryland Live Casino in Arundel Mills, MD.

**Future meetings:** The Board agreed to meet quarterly in person, and otherwise on Zoom. The next Board meeting was set for July 15, with no meeting in August.