

ACBL Unit 161 MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING Saturday Nov 14, 2020

Meeting Site: On-line meeting via Zoom software

<u>Attending</u>	<u>Attending</u>	<u>Not Attending</u>
Deb Christian	Ned Irving	Skip Henry
Greg Frank	Jay Lucas	Teri LaBove
Dan Graham	Pat Rice	Blake Sanders
Dick Heil	Fran Sublette	Kaye Stanley
Rich Higgins		

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was started about 10 a.m. by Rich Higgins. A minimal quorum of 7 voting members was present. Minutes from the Nov 2, 2019 board meeting were approved.

Attendance was taken, and the previous three board meetings attendance was noted. No members were required to be removed from the board

NEW BUSINESS

Item 1: Vacancy on the board

The expected replacement of board member Tony Gunn (resignation) was delayed when the spring board meeting that typically coincides with the Spring Fling sectional did not take place. After some early uncertainty, face to face tournaments for 2020 ended up being canceled from about mid-March through the end of the year due to the virus pandemic.

Tony Gunn’s efforts to serve as a Unit 161 Board director and Education Liaison are much appreciated. Tony will continue to serve as manager of the Unit storage facility for card tables.

Fran Sublette from Hot Springs expressed an interest to fill Tony’s seat and was recommended by Tim Kauffman (Bridge House of Hot Springs President). Fran was introduced. Her prior efforts to support bridge, such as hospitality packages for the 2019 fall sectional and leading the Hot Springs club’s Alzheimer charity efforts are notable.

The board approved Fran Sublette to fill the vacancy on the unit board for Hot Springs.

Item 2: 2020 Unit Board Elections

Due to the pandemic, there was no fall tournament for the annual membership meeting on Sunday, thus there was no opportunity for in person election voting.

Dan Graham served as nominating committee chair. All odd-numbered board positions were up for election. The incumbents accepted Dan's nominations to run for re-election (Jay, Teri, Greg, Blake, Rich, Kaye).

Deb Christian served as election commissioner to receive info provided by the clubs. No new candidates expressed desire to run. An e-mail vote during October at the clubs via club managers resulted in all candidates being re-elected.

Item 3: Allow separation of the treasurer and secretary positions on the unit board

Per request from Kaye Stanley, a proposal was made to allow splitting the roles of treasurer and secretary. The board approved the change. The by-laws will be updated, such that it is not required for one person to fill both roles.

Kaye Stanley will continue as Unit 161 treasurer.

As an aside, the by-laws update will also remove language about unit conduct & ethics committee (ACBL modified policy, no longer done by units).

Item 4: Unit 161 Financial Audit

The 2019 audit by Mike Popkin was delayed due to health issues. Mike is ready to proceed and will do both 2019 and 2020 audits.

REPORTS

TREASURER REPORT (Kaye)

The 2019 report and first 9 months of 2020, as provided by Kaye were reviewed and approved.

UNIT 161, ACBL, & D10 INFO SHARE

Unit 161 membership per Sept 30. 2020 QUIP report shows a 12 month decline of 5.18% in Unit 161 membership. This compares with D10 drop of 4.97% and ACBL drop of 2.88%. Some of this is related to non-renewals of membership due to all clubs closed per the pandemic.

Unit 161 average age of 74.17 compares with D10 73.31 and ACBL 73.09.

Unit 161 In/Out report was shown. Although this info is sent to clubs, unit board members would like to see this routinely. Rich will distribute these, after removing address and contact info for privacy reasons.

Unit 161 Website: \$40/month payment to Extra Awesome was stopped in July by Rich. There was not enough activity to continue with the fee. This can be resumed in the future, when activity warrants it.

Awards for players (Mini-McKenney, Ace of Clubs, Unit 161 tourney masterpoints) have been on hold, pending resumption of face to face tournaments. It was agreed that public recognition is a key facet of these awards, so these will be held until the next tournament opportunity.

Ned provided info on activities within D10 and ACBL. The spring National is under discussion. In general, tournaments have risks with contract penalties, if cancellation is not due to government health guidance or if attendance is poor due to virus concerns. The number of regionals in ACBL is being studied – expectations are that the number of regionals will be less in the future. When face to face bridge resumes, it will be emphasized, but on-line bridge as an alternate venue will stay.

CLUB ACTIVITIES

Russ Jones has moved to Russellville to take over dean of business school at Arkansas Tech University. Unfortunately, the Jonesboro club has stopped activity – good news update post meeting – Greg contacted Steve Mitchell at Jonesboro who said the club plans to re-open when conditions permit. Unrelated to this, the Jacksonville club has folded.

Board members discussed activities to keep club members engaged, while clubs are closed and on-line bridge via BBO is the current method for playing to earn masterpoints. The examples from Unit 232 in north Alabama from the D10 meeting offer ideas for the clubs to help member engagement.

Little Rock

225/441 club members are active playing on-line via BBO. On-line table counts are comparable with face to face club play.

Dick Heil conducts free bridge education Zoom sessions on Wednesdays for 0-100 players and on Fridays for 0-50 players. These typically have about 12-15 people in attendance. Players from other clubs are welcome to attend, an e-mail asking to get on Dick Heil's distribution list is all that is required.

Dick Chapman goes over BBO hands for intermediate players on Thursdays at 6 pm. Attendance typically ranges somewhere between 20-30.

Dick Heil will attend training sessions in December for use of SHARK bridge to do on-line teaching. This is a program endorsed by the ACBL. There is a fee to SHARK of \$1/student/hour. SHARK bridge allows the student to play a hand under supervision.

Kathy Gates & Dan Graham have contacted some regular club players to explore why they are not playing on BBO. Direct contact is felt to be important to get more players playing on BBO. Perhaps going to someone's home or doing a session on Zoom to show people exactly how to get started is one method.

Jay Lucas said a Zoom meeting, while playing free on BBO would be a good way to help people get comfortable with on-line play.

As an aside, Jay recommends people check frequently that they have the latest update for Zoom, as new features are regularly being introduced. Jay says 1 on 1 Zoom meetings can be done without a license and

also without a time limit. Free Zoom meetings are limited to 40 minutes duration. Deb says the basic Zoom license allows unlimited time for meetings up to 100 people.

Hot Springs Village

Deb Christian has conducted free Zoom sessions on bridge education topics (conventions, declarer play, etc.). Attendance has been about 15. Zoom helps people see each other and talk to stay in touch, an important aspect with club closed. The sessions are paused now, as club is implementing for fee education.

Deb & Wally & Ned have partnered some lower level mp players in BBO games, as a way to help grow their bridge games.

A new item Deb is exploring is post-BBO game Zoom sessions to go over hands. This can help people stay engaged, while helping improve bridge skills.

Ken & Michelle Frankenberger have called members not playing on BBO to offer help with them getting familiar with the concept.

The club's board is exploring communication with members to increase engagement. Rich sent a proposed example document, awarding weekly best bid/best declared/best defended hands for the limited games.

Rich conducted an e-mail contest for 20 intermediate/advanced hands, where participants sent in answers how to handle problems posed for the hands. Participants were from both HSV and HS clubs, total 'attendance' was in the low 70s.

Hot Springs

Fran and Teri are discussing ideas to increase member engagement during these times.

Periodic votes are held about re-opening the club for face to face bridge: typical vote is 90% against re-opening the club at this time.

EDUCATION

No report: Tony resigned from this position. A replacement will be explored.

TOURNAMENTS

Dick covered the January 0-500 sectional at Little Rock. Attendance down 1.5 tables from 2019, the slight drop was due to lower participation in the Sunday Swiss.

Greg presented his tournament and special games report. Special games and tourneys for 2021 are uncertain, likely dependent on a vaccine for Covid-19. Greg suggested perhaps unit championship games can be done via club virtual games on BBO – to be explored.

The contracts for the hotel and convention center contracts for the May 2021 Hot Springs regional have been canceled, as per prior board vote due to uncertainties. The contracts had to be canceled by early November to minimize penalties. The convention center will refund the \$3022 deposit – no penalty for this if we canceled early November. Hotel Hot Springs waived the cancel penalty. Embassy Suites is a Hilton property managed by Atrium Hospitality – Atrium assessed a penalty fee of \$1084, but if in early March, there is still a safety reason to not have the regional, they will waive that fee.

The regional has not been officially canceled for ACBL purposes yet. Jay inquired if the LR summer sectional could be converted to a regional. Ned says the D10 tournament oversight committee controls regionals. As more is learned about next year's prospects, this issue can be revisited.

Dan asked Greg if the August Silver Lode sectional (I/N) in Hot Springs Village could be modified to include Open sections also, as the Spring Fling sectional has a high probability of cancellation. Greg said that was the plan for the 2020 August tourney, if it had not been canceled, so that is something that will likely be done, if the 2021 tourney will be held.

The brainstorm list sent out regarding adding interest via add-on features for tourneys is on hold. Rich got some good replies on this list.

Unit 161 has the Pianola account ready to go for future tourney advertising & possibly post-tourney recaps. Greg explained that the free e-mail service MailChimp for up to 500 e-mails cannot do targeted advertising via geographic radius, such as can be done via Pianola. So, the good news is that the money invested into the Unit 161 Pianola account can be used when face to face tourneys resume.

OLD BUSINESS: Both items remain on hold during the pandemic

UALR agreed to sponsor a bridge team through the Athletic Department. ACBL will provide books at no charge. Jay will follow up with them and see who we may get to approach UCA and Hendrix about sponsoring teams & creating Collegiate Bridge Bowl.

Jay, Deborah, and Kaye: possibility of Unit Pair Championship much like our Unit Team Championship.

NEXT MEETING

A meeting will be held within a few months or so; possible triggers would be:

- if clubs are re-opening
- to discuss learnings about SHARK bridge from Dick Heil's training in December
- review how clubs are doing with member engagement