

ACBL Unit 143 Board Meeting Minutes, Wednesday September 13, 2023

Location: The meeting was conducted on-line using ZOOM.

Attendees: Dennis Abeln, Sandy Bigg, Mark Boswell, Terry D'Amato, Diane Deutch (arrived at 7:20), Steve Russell, and John Welte

Absent: Don Chase, Ken Obrecht, Jay Shah, and Mark Zellmer

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 and met quorum requirements.

### **Approval of the Minutes**

The Board unanimously approved meeting minutes from June 14, 2023 and July 12, 2023. (There was no meeting in August.)

### **Treasurer's Report**

Steve reported that our balance was \$88,000 but will be around \$77,000 after outstanding bills are paid. Dennis explained that we will owe money to the District for the Regional, who will not send us a bill; Steve needs to initiate payment of that, and Dennis will send him a note about it.

Mark B said that for the annual meeting at the Oct. tournament we need to provide a financial statement that people can see. He asked Steve to provide several printed copies of our latest financial report for people to look over, and Steve will do that.

### **Tournaments:**

#### Regional

The Board discussed cards missing from our bidding boxes but agreed that we don't need to purchase replacements since we have more than enough complete sets.

Dennis reported that we own 40 tables that are in marginal shape and proposed donating them to the ABA. He said that he had mentioned this possibility to Cheryl Ward, of the ABA, who said they'd be interested but couldn't make that happen at the time of the Regional. The ABA would be responsible for any costs and transportation involved to transfer the tables but that the tables themselves would be free. The Board unanimously approved donating the tables to the ABA. Dennis will follow up.

Dennis reported that he is waiting to hear back from Peter Wilke before he finalizes the financial report. Dennis expects that the unit will make around \$2100 in profit from the Regional.

The table count was up 22% over last year's event but still only at 63% of pre-COVID numbers. It was noted that the pair and team games brought out more people on Monday; last year, only

teams were offered on Monday. Things flattened out on Thursday and Friday and daily numbers at the end of the week were on a par with 2022. However, the table counts came back up again on Sunday, likely due to the free lunch. Dennis wondered if people were tired due to the late Monday night/Tuesday morning game structure. He wondered about changing to single sessions (no-gold) events for Monday and then running two KO's instead of three. If we shifted to a 6-day tournament, we could have morning and afternoon sessions on the first day of the tournament, but there are fixed costs that would not change, and we would definitely lose money if we dropped a day. Sandy brought up a New England tournament schedule that offers single-session events on Monday but then runs three KO's, with the Saturday KO finishing on Sunday. No decisions were made at this time.

Dennis pointed out that our Bracketed Swiss team events didn't really have enough teams to form multiple brackets, and that this meant that teams with lower masterpoint averages were up against teams with much greater masterpoint averages, and the lower MP teams didn't stand a chance. He wondered about shifting to a stratified open Swiss team event, instead, so that lower players could still earn points in their bracket. No decisions were made at this time.

The Board discussed that the I/N table counts were far below what they were in 2022. Dennis would like to restructure the I/N events, which will be a conversation for the future. Mark said he and Don Chase had gone to the I/N club games to talk up the tournament, and people had seemed enthusiastic. We need to continue to try to help support I/N players and encourage their participation. Mark B mentioned that the library at the St. Louis Bridge Center lost some of its better books in a purge. We need to continue to work on bringing new players into the game.

Dennis would like to do 3 or 4 surveys, at \$99 for a month subscription to Survey Monkey, targeting different masterpoint groups as well as those who came to the tournament and those who didn't to see if he can get input to help in understanding what players want for our Regional tournament. The Board unanimously approved a motion giving Dennis permission to spend the money on these surveys.

The Renaissance Hotel management met with Mark B and Dennis on September 11 and reported that our guests had been rude to the staff. Hotel employees were in tears; guests were impatient and disrespectful. The rudeness problem is not new and has been going on for some time, but it became a real problem this year because the hotel has had trouble hiring and retaining staff. For example, some of our hotel guests complained about long waits to check out at the front desk. Some of our players complained about how long the food line took (despite the fact that the line moved along pretty well), and a number of our players were using a shortcut to the bathrooms down the back hallway of the ballroom even though there are signs clearly indicating that this is for staff only. Guests continued using the shortcut even after they were asked to stop. The Renaissance management said that if our behavior did not improve in 2024, they would ask to be relieved of their 2025 contract. They are also unwilling to enter into a 2026 contract at this time.

The Board discussed ways to communicate to our players that we need to improve. Ideas included sending a letter (Mark B and Sandy could work on drafting this) to say we've had this relationship for a quarter of a century... having a front deck check in, reminder signs... The approach would be to say "we need everyone to help..." Make it a positive message.

The parking gate was a problem. The hotel says that it cannot leave the gate open all the time. It can only do it for a limited time span; they said 15 minutes, though Dennis thinks we may be able to stretch that to a half hour, but no more. We need to work on this parking problem; we may need to have people standing by the gate to help as people come in during the first few days.

#### September 499r Tournament

John reported that the table count was down: 29.5 tables compared to 38 last year. This represented 77.6% of last year's turnout. We lost \$724.43. on the event.

People are not showing up... Our hope is that the free I/N Regional will help draw people and get them interested. The Board favors continuing to offer I/N tournaments, even if they are losing money.

#### October Sectional/NLM Regional

Dennis reported that it is all organized. He will send out another Pianola blast 3-4 weeks in advance and will include that we'll be voting on the by-laws. He will inform people that they can find the new by-laws on our website.

We also need to put out word on our website about how to order food for Sunday lunch.

#### January Sectional/NLM Regional

Dennis plans to offer the same schedule as October's event. He would like to offer a \$5 entry fee for NLM Regional if people pre-pay using the Express. Otherwise, the fee will be \$10 if they show up at the door. The Board unanimously approved these fees.

### **Committees**

#### Trophies

Mark B proposed getting generic trophies and then having plates to attach for the event (flight A, B, C); it would make it much easier. Trophies are about \$7 each. The Board unanimously approved. The Board favored keeping the trophies for 499r and NLM Regional events.

#### Website

Terry would like Milt to document what he does—computer backup, Player of the Year, Ace of Clubs, tracking people of different masterpoint levels, software for website, and more.

Terry asked for a \$10 per month Dreamweaver membership, which will help with her work on the website. The Board unanimously approved this expenditure.

### Resignation of Diane Deutch

Mark B announced Diane's resignation. Board members were sad to see her go and expressed appreciation for her hard work. She will still work through the October Sectional.

Her replacement as Hospitality Chair will be Dian Brazier. She will be nominated and voted on in November. Per the new by-laws, her term will be three years from when she joins.

### New Business

Mark B mentioned that someone needs to replace him as President. He is willing to continue for now.

Election of Officers to the Board will take place in November.

**The meeting adjourned at 8:17.**

**Next Meeting: October 11, 2023**