

## **NATIONAL DIRECTORS REPORT FALL 2021**

The ACBL Board of Directors held its fall meetings face-to-face (F2F) November 22 through 24 in Austin, TX. It was the first F2F ACBL Board meeting since fall of 2019. During these unprecedented times, the ACBL Board of Directors, committees and work groups continue to meet regularly through Zoom, conference calls and GoToMeeting.

The information presented in this report has been sourced from the following:

- Fall Management Report.
- ACBL Board and staff members.
- Meeting Motions and Discussion Items:

<https://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/November-2021-Motions.pdf>

<https://www.acbl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/November-2021-Discussion-Items.pdf>

### **FINANCE**

The Board approved the 2022 Capital and Operating budget (Item 213-FN02) by a vote of 24/1/0. Budgeted revenues for 2022 total approximately \$15.8M while estimated operating and administrative expenses total approximately \$16.7M; an estimated loss of \$900K. This loss reflects a commitment by ACBL Management and the Board to invest in Information Technology to replace outdated systems and to accomplish prioritized projects.

Prior to 2021, the ACBL budget for the upcoming year was approved during the spring NABC, almost three months after the beginning of the fiscal year. This year, the Board voted to change the budget cycle. The budget now will be approved before the beginning of the calendar year.

The election cycle for the ACBL Treasurer will change to coincide with the budget approval process. This requires a change in the ACBL Codification and in the ACBL Bylaws, requiring two motions to carry.

A Special Board meeting will be held in January to begin the process. District 4 Director, Joann Glasson, is the current ACBL Treasurer.

The Finance Committee brought forth a motion (Item 213-FN01) proposing a process for Districts and/or Units to request, and the Board to review and consider for approval, reimbursement for significant losses incurred due to the ACBL's decision not to staff a tournament after having approved it to be held under COVID restrictions. This would apply to tournament(s) scheduled to be held on or after August 1, 2021. Motion carried: 24/0/1.

The Finance Committee also brought forth two motions dealing with NABCs. The first (Item 213-FN03) moved to increase the NABC Intermediate/Newcomer (I/N) welcome gift subsidy from \$3 to \$5 inclusive of tax and shipping to Horn Lake. The subsidy had

not been increased in over a decade and the increase would give local authorities better ability to provide gifts of greater quality and perceived value. Cost increase: Approximately \$6,000 over three NABCs. Motion carried: 20/5/0.

The second, non-agenda Item NA213-FN02, moved to provide NABC sponsoring Districts the ability to determine the time of day hospitality dollars are spent based on attendance. Motion failed: 6/19/0.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

In 2022, the ACBL will invest heavily in Information Technology. The IT team will rely on third-party vendors and staff to accomplish the following:

- Make architectural changes to the website.
- Complete migration of the AS/400.
- Update and finalize masterpoint calculation engine.
- Complete tournament event pre-registration system.
- Move Trax application to cloud-based application.
- Move ACBLScore to a web-based application.

The IT team is preparing its specific deliverables for the year which will be presented to the Board in the spring. Management will work with the Board liaison to communicate progress and challenges.

The monthly “In and Out” Report (membership gains and losses) has been moved from the AS/400. It is now being reproduced inside of the Data Warehouse and will be delivered monthly from that new platform to each Unit. The daily reporting of each club’s Include List and Visitor List is in progress and has been migrated to Bridge Operations.

IT continues to develop the registration application to allow members to pre-register for F2F tournaments and to support sponsors’ planning. A tournament administration portal is planned. Phase one is scheduled for release in January 2022.

The application used by clubs to upload game results has been rewritten and is in use.

IT has fully implemented Microsoft Teams and One Drive into the ACBL backend processes. The majority of ACBL data was moved into One Drive and SharePoint (with hooks into Microsoft Teams for departmentally referenced data). Microsoft Teams (with Telephony) is now the main platform for the ACBL’s internal communications.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

While ACBL membership continues to decline slightly each month, the pace has begun to slow. Total membership is down 9.4 percent compared to the prior year. As of November 1, 2021, the ACBL has approximately 144,306 total members. See the attached Membership chart.

## **OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL RECORDER**

The Office of the National Recorder, headed by Robb Gordon, includes Lead Advocate Scott Humphrey and Compliance Coordinator Sabrina Goley. Currently, 15 volunteers serve as Player Memo Case Investigators, four others as Charging Party Advocates, and two as Advisors to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee (OEOC) in support of its hearings. TD Jesse Laird, District 9, is managing Player Memo files and OEOC data compilation. Rob Maier, District 4, helps prepare evidence for OEOC hearings. To assist in working the disciplinary case backlog, the position of Assistant National Recorder has been established and applicants are being interviewed.

Support to the National Disciplinary Committees and officials involved in the disciplinary process continues. District Disciplinary Committees will become more active as F2F play resumes.

An issue that has arisen is BBO's adoption of a policy to archive hand records for more than eight months is making accessibility difficult. The Recorder's Office is addressing this with BBO.

A substantial number of Player Memos involving unethical behavior continue to be generated from online play. Year-to-date as of month-end September 2021, 732 Player Memos were received. Recently, there have been five Resignations to Avoid Discipline.

Whether playing online or F2F, the message from Robb Gordon remains clear: "If you 'see' something, 'say' something. Do not state it in public or accuse someone. Fill out a Player Memo. I guarantee we will investigate."

## **APPEALS AND CHARGES COMMITTEE**

During Special Board meetings on August 20, August 25 and September 9, the Board's Appeals and Charges Committee (A&C) reported to the full Board on hearings it conducted in the interim since the 2021 Summer (July) Board meeting.

At the Austin 2021 Fall (November) Board meeting, under Item 213-AC01, A&C reported on its two most recent hearings.

A&C Review Explained, Online Disciplinary Disposition Chart, F2F Disciplinary Disposition Chart, Negotiated Resolution Disciplinary Disposition Chart, Hearing Reports of OEOC and A&C and Under Discipline List can be found on the ACBL website. Click the link to read more: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>

An Anti-cheating Committee of the ACBL Advisory Council was formed. A report and recommendations by the Committee, particularly regarding cheating online, were presented to the Board by the Advisory Council Chair. The report (DI213-BD01) was favorably received by the Board.

## **BYLAWS COMMITTEE**

In a second reading, under Item 213-BY01: Amend Bylaws to address omissions, the Bylaws Committee brought forward a motion correcting omission of provisions, in the ACBL Bylaws, Article IX, Board of Governors, for replacement of vacancies in the Board of Governors, now Advisory Council, other than by resignation or deemed resignation. The amendments also simplify provisions specifying who the members of the Advisory Council are as it transitions to a smaller size. Motion carried: 24/0/1.

## **STRATEGIC COMMITTEE**

The Board's Strategic Committee partners with ACBL Management to define major organizational goals and objectives. Building and retaining membership is a top priority. Additional objectives include providing players with places to play while supporting a robust return to F2F bridge. Both prove challenging as the US faces surges in the Delta and Omicron variants.

Building partnerships with other organizations facing similar issues represents an additional opportunity to grow bridge. A 2019 initiative to develop a social bridge division to include both duplicate and non-duplicate games was reintroduced. This arm of the ACBL would be membership driven and may include a website, publication, basic scoring tools and guides to running duplicate games.

A collaborative effort among the ACBL, the ACBL Educational Foundation and the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) to identify and promote bridge among organizations most likely to offer bridge games and classes was also reported. Organizations include Jewish Cultural Centers, country club associations and retirement community developers/operators.

Currently, the American Bridge Association (ABA) and the ACBL are collaborating to build and retain membership. Both are discussing options such discussions include the sharing of best practices and training, holding joint tournaments, issuing either ACBL or ABA masterpoints for tournaments and the ACBL handling member services for both organizations.

An online pathway to life master was also discussed given some non-life masters are gravitating to online versus F2F club play. Online pigmented point opportunities to date have been well received, particularly among players who cannot travel due to health restrictions. Online pigmented point games will continue in 2022 but will be limited to reduce competition with F2F clubs, sectionals and regionals. Click this link to view the 2022 ACBL Online Events Calendar: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/2022-online/>

The Strategic Committee will convene in January to discuss progress and recommendations on initiatives for continuing to build membership.

## **MARKETING**

ACBL Marketing develops and implements initiatives to increase membership and member value.

### The Guest Membership Program

The Program has produced more than 2,500 guest members since its inception in February 2021. Over 857 have been converted to full memberships, an approximate 34 percent conversion rate. Click this link to read more: <https://www.acbl.org/membership/>

### Intro to Bridge Classes

Over 880 students have attended Intro to Bridge classes; exceeding the original goal of 500 students. This interactive online course is comprised of 10 weekly lessons for a cost of \$50. After the course ends, students may practice on the Shark Bridge App free for 90 days and should feel ready to play in a restricted masterpoint game. Classes will continue monthly.

Instructors guide students to the Find a Teacher search tool located on the ACBL website to encourage students to seek local F2F or online instruction.

In the future, the ACBL will move to a marketplace model where players can filter teacher searches by class, type, times, cost, etc. and provide input regarding their teacher experiences. The goal is to connect prospects, members and bridge players with the appropriate resources and games.

### Recruiter Incentives

ACBL's Recruiter Incentives Program rewards teachers and club managers for bringing in new members. Teacher incentives through the third quarter of 2021 produced 1,830 members.

Recruiters receive \$10 when someone joins and \$10 each year when they renew their membership during years two and three. The ACBL has distributed over \$15,400 in recruiter bonuses to club managers and teachers and anticipate issuing another \$7,000 in third quarter bonuses.

### Commitment to Member Retention

An ACBL Member Retention Work Group has been formed. The Work Group has identified member retention issues. It will develop applicable metrics to gauge access, member data dashboards, a retention program and training and pilot initiatives.

### Increasing Member Value

ACBL has refreshed its website, streamlining content and improving functionality. It has also refreshed the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* and rolled out new logos and a tag line: Dealing Infinite Possibilities.

The ACBL held its first Member Appreciation Event in October with more than 160 prizes awarded. The event produced strong engagement through ACBL social media channels improving the ability to identify, target and attract bridge playing audiences.

### Online Teacher Certification Program

Since the program launched in August 2020, over 205 teachers have completed the workshop and 125 have earned the certification.

This highly interactive online workshop introduces teachers to apps/websites that offer unique teaching capabilities and uses each to demonstrate creative lesson dynamics. It is supplemented by a monthly Teacher Roundtable. Click this link to read more: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/online-teacher-certification/>

### Launching a Successful Social Media Campaign

The ACBL offered a free webinar on the fundamentals of running a successful social media campaign. On November 15, attendees learned how to set up an ad for a class or event, create audiences that fit target demographics and evaluate campaign success. This webinar will be repeated in 2022.

### Supporting Alzheimer's Research

The ACBL has raised \$7.8 million for Alzheimer's patient care and research through participation in The Alzheimer's Association's The Longest Day fundraising event. During 2021, about 300 Units and Clubs raised \$917,000. All Virtual Club Games held the weekend of June 19 and 20 were designated Alzheimer's Association games, and the ACBL sanction fees were donated to the Alzheimer's Association. Clubs that had returned to F2F play were able to choose a day during the week of June 20-27 to hold their events and offer upgraded games.

## **GOVERNANCE BOARD OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

Governance had a full agenda leading up to the Austin meetings. The key topics were addressed in multiple virtual committee meetings as well as by the full Board in Austin.

A number of the motions addressed changes to the Codification in anticipation of the downsizing of the Board that will begin in January 2022, now that the first round of Regional Director elections has occurred.

The first (213-GV01) concerned the composition of the Executive Committee (EC), due to the combining of District 1 from the Eastern Zone with District 2 from the Central Zone to create Region 1. There were no other changes proposed at this time to either the composition or the role of the EC. The placement of Region 1 into the Central Zone solely for the purposes of EC composition was approved. The number of Regions included in the Eastern, Central and Western Zones beginning in 2022 will be five, four and four, respectively. Motion carried: 24/1/0.

Two additional motions (213-GV02 and 213-GV03) had to do with the few remaining instances where changes in the Codification (primarily in Part 2—Bridge Operations, Chapter III – Administration, B. Districts) to the role/responsibility from what has traditionally been done by a District Director remained to be made. In some cases, the change was to the District President and in others, the change was simply from the District Director to the new title of the person filling that position—the Regional Director. In addition, these motions included basic “cleanup” to bring the Codification into alignment with current practice and to change the name of the Board of Governors to the new name “Advisory Council.” Motions carried: 24/0/1.

A fourth motion (213-GV04) was fairly complicated and had to do with the formation, transfer and dissolution of units. The proposed changes were based on recent experience when Units requested administrative actions from Headquarters and the Codification proved to be incomplete in addressing resolution of the requests. The addition of a regulation on how to deal with very small units was quite controversial and the Board voted to table this motion until the spring or summer of next year, allowing more time to discuss the most appropriate way to address the administrative challenges of and for small units. Motion tabled: 23/1/1.

The final motion (213-GV05) was also quite complicated, but by the time all changes were voted on and approved, it resulted in substantial changes being made to the election process for the ACBL Board of Directors and Advisory Council members (Codification Part 1 - Governance and Policy, Chapter III – Administration, D. Elections). Key changes in the approved regulation 1) ensured that the description of Unit voting power is consistent with our Bylaws; 2) clarified and streamlined the administrative process (e.g., stating actual dates by which actions would occur instead of the number of business days between one action and another, updating statements regarding mail-in ballot requirements that were no longer in effect and emphasizing email communications and online voting); 3) updated and clarified candidate rights to address Unit Boards during the election process, either in person or by some electronic means, e.g., Zoom, phone; 4) clarified the run-off election process; 5) modified the notification method and content of Board election results; and 6) significantly reorganized the entire chapter to eliminate duplication, remove contradictory information and simplify instructions and administrative actions. Motion carried: 23/1/1.

A discussion item (DI213-GV01) about the roles, responsibilities and requirements of Units (Codification, Part 2 - Bridge Operations, Chapter III - Administration, A. Units) was presented. Although much of the content was very different from what was proposed by 213-GV05, the discussion that ensued will be valuable in updating many aspects of Unit requirements and expectations.

A second discussion item (DI213-GV02) dealt with Board operations and communications and how the Board could and/or should change how it operates and communicates in 2022 based on its somewhat smaller size and continuing the transition of many of its functions to Advisory Council and other committees as well as to Management and the advisory groups that will be available to lend expertise when needed. Over the past two years, the Board has become increasingly adept at using virtual meetings to conduct in-depth committee discussions so that F2F meeting time can be spent on the strategic concerns and fiscal status of the organization. The

ongoing challenges of how best to integrate online and F2F play will require focused conversations and coordinated communication among the Board, Management and Stakeholders to help ensure an organization that is able to meet all members' needs.

A final discussion item (DI213-GV03) proposed an improved process for developing and submitting motions and discussion items. It outlined what actions were accomplished internally and what actions are needed by motion-makers. This process will be implemented beginning in 2022.

### Moving to a Smaller Board

As the Board reduces in size from 25 to 13 members, non-core related functions of the Board will continue to transition to Management and to outside committees, ensuring a smaller Board can maximize its ability to focus on core strategic and financial objectives.

As part of this transition, The Competitions and Conventions Committee brought forth non-agenda Item 213-01 providing the Committee significant discretion to make changes to alert procedures, conditions of contest, convention charts and other documents without the formality of a Board motion. The Board would receive a notice of change(s) 30 days before the change(s) would go into effect. During that time, the Board could determine that changes be reconsidered. Major considerations, such as changing the format of an NABC event or significant structural changes to convention charts, would still be vetted in advance to the Board. Motion carried: 25/0/0.

Similarly, discussion item (DI213-BR02) dealt with streamlining the Masterpoint Committee and/or the Competitions and Conventions Committee process and proposed moving unanimous committee decisions considered minor in nature directly to Management. The Board concurred.

### **BRIDGE COMMITTEE**

The Board's Bridge Committee brought forth a motion (Item 213-BR01) to approve the 2021-2022 Grand National Teams (GNT) Special Conditions of Contest, including seeding for the knockout phase of the GNT final. Motion carried: 24/1/0.

The Committee also brought forth a cleanup motion (Item 213-BR02) for Flight C NAP District Finals session masterpoint awards. Motion carried: 25/0/0.

A discussion item (DI213-BR01) was brought forth by the Committee concerning use of robots in BBO virtual club games. Concern was expressed about use of robots solely for the purpose of increasing masterpoint awards. Primary intent is for use of robots to enable smaller clubs to fill out tables in order to hold viable games. Unlimited use of robots is not currently possible due to system constraints. No action was warranted.

## New Convention Card Debuts Mid-2022

Danny Sprung, Chair, Competition and Conventions Committee, presented the new convention card to the Board. The new card will become official in mid-2022. Until that time, either card will be acceptable.

While the new card will look familiar, the following changes were made:

- Seldom-used conventions were removed & commonly-used conventions were added.
- Recent changes in alerts and announcements are reflected.
- The One Club and One Diamond open bid sections were expanded, providing more room to address different minor suit openings.
- The right side of the card was reorganized with bids shown in ascending order of strain.

Articles explaining the changes and the proper way to complete the card will appear in the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*. Additional information will be posted to the ACBL website and to other bridge-related forums.

The new convention card is attached.

## Management Approves Experimental STaC

The Royal STaC, a week-long STaC for F2F clubs, has been approved by Management on an experimental basis. The Royal STaC will award 25 percent gold, silver, red and black points and can be held by any District(s) before April 30, 2022. All games, no matter how small, will be combined for overalls. Districts 3, 4 and 24 will run its STaC January 24-30, 2022.

## **NABC SERVICES**

ACBL Management reduced, by over \$5.4M, financial exposure from hotel contracts for canceled 2020-21 NABCs.

Terms and conditions of hotel and convention center contracts for future NABCs have been renegotiated, resulting in approximately \$1.7M reduction in financial risk.

Strategies were used to adjust contracted room blocks to reflect historical pick up and to match anticipated future needs of the ACBL.

## 2021 Fall NABC Austin

Management proactively renegotiated contracts with the JW Marriott and the Marriott Downtown. NABC Austin proceeded with no attrition risk and significantly reduced food and beverage minimum risk. Financials will be available shortly.

## Future NABC Locations

During a Special meeting in September, the Board authorized ACBL Management to move forward with contract negotiations for the 2025 Spring NABC in Memphis and the 2026 Fall NABC in San Diego.

This winter, the NABC Site Selection Committee will develop recommendations to bring to the Board to fill the gaps in the schedule of future NABCs. The goal is to move toward an annual rhythm of approvals for an entire year at a time, five to six years in advance. The ACBL currently does not have NABC locations for summer 2026, all of 2027, the summer and fall of 2028 and 2029 and spring and fall of 2030.

## **ACBL BOARD ELECTIONS**

Joann Glasson, District 4, was elected as ACBL President for a one-year term, January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

The Board confirmed the elections of Jonathan Steinberg, Region 1; Mike Kovacich, Region 6; Paul Cuneo, Region 9 and Tim White, Region 13 to the ACBL Board of Directors to serve three-year terms January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024.

The Board confirmed the elections of Mark Aquino, Region 2; Margot Hennings, Region 4; Dennis Carman, Region 5 and David Lodge, Region 11 to the ACBL Board of Directors to serve four-year terms, January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2025.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Jeff Overby, District 9, was appointed as an Eastern Zone Executive Committee member for a three-year term effective January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024.

Carlos Munoz, District 3, was appointed as an Eastern Zone Executive Committee alternate for a three-year term effective January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024.

Julie Smith, District 19, a former ACBL Board member, was appointed to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee to serve the remainder of the term of Harold Bickham, District 11, through the 2024 Summer NABC.

George Jacobs, District 13, was named the 2022 ACBL Honorary Member of the Year.

Anne Romeo and Al Bender, District 19, were named 2022 Nadine Wood Volunteer Members of the Year.

Roger Smith, District 21, former ACBL Board member and a former ACBL Board President, was appointed the Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Committee Chairperson, replacing Sandy DeMartino following her many years of outstanding service. Smith will serve a three-year term, January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024.

