

ACBL Board of Directors' Meetings New York City by Chuck Wilkinson, District 10 Representative July 21, 2004

The ACBL Board of Directors met in New York City, July 5-8, 2004. I have listed below the items that may be of interest to you. This list is not abbreviated as much as previous reports because it will impart some insight to the scope and the number of topics typically covered in ACBL Board of Directors' meeting.

Highlights of ACBL CEO's Report to the Board:

1. The upward trend in membership is continuing. Through June, total membership is 167,973 versus 166,661 (+1,312) at the end of June last year.
2. The new ACBL website has included a number of improvements in content, technology, internal management, and site operating techniques. Additional programming projects are in progress with scheduled completion dates as far out as September 2006.
3. A new ADP payroll system is in place and being utilized.
4. Table counts through June:

Regionals	+7.8%
Sectionals	-1.0
STaCs	-8.1
Clubs	+7.9
5. ACBL now has four sites offering masterpoint games online: Bridgebase, Swan Games, E-Bridge, and MSN. Total table count now exceeds 10,000 each month.
6. Employees continue to attend Customer Service classes. Over 50 attended in May. The first phase of the Mystery Shopper program showed good results, but pointed to some areas that need improvement.
7. Marketing survey results:
 - a. Member satisfaction with service of headquarters staff.
 - i. 2004: 93% either Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied.
 - ii. 2003: 91% either Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied.
 - b. ACBL.org website:
 - i. 2004: 91% either Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied.
 - ii. 2003: 88% either Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied.
8. Management is looking for a known national insurance company that will provide a policy for those clubs that wish to purchase one.
9. Management has implemented a program of volume discount sanction fees for those clubs that generate more than 5000 tables per month.
10. Management and interested members of the ACBL Board will meet early in Orlando prior to the fall BOD meetings to formulate a proposed five-year business plan.
11. Management conducted a survey of regular tournament players who do not frequently attend NABCs to learn why. Cost was the major factor, but there were a number of other reasons. Proposed changes may be coming as a result of this survey.

Highlights of the CFO's Report to the Board

1. Through April 30, 2004, excess revenues over expenses are \$187,000 vs. \$96,000 for the same period last year. Total expenses are up, but revenues are up more.
2. The Spring NABC in Reno is the major reason that revenues compare favorably with last year.
3. Marketing and Public Relations are the primary reasons for the rise in expenses from last year.
4. Through April 30, 2004, excess revenues over expenses are \$187,000 vs. \$139,000 budgeted.

Item 042-176: Election of ACBL President

Chuck Wilkinson is elected as ACBL President for a one-year term beginning January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005.

Item 042-02: Recorder Regulations and Procedures

The attached changes to Recorder Regulations and Procedures are approved as amended.
Carried unanimously.

Comment: The attachment is too large to be included with this report. The major changes are:

1. *The recorder may no longer be the charging party.*
2. *All recorders send copies of player memos that are being recorded to Memphis only.*
3. *Recorders will keep copies of player memos that are being recorded for 10 years.*

Item 042-03: Changes in the Code of Disciplinary Regulations

The attached amendments to the Code of Disciplinary Regulations are approved.
Carried unanimously.

Comment: The attachment is too large to be included with this report. Mostly, these are minor changes to bring the code into compliance with the new changes to the Recorder Regulations. (See Item 042-02)

Item 042-11: Videotaping

Moved that:

- A. Item 972-11 is rescinded.
- B. The ACBL Recorder may videotape in conjunction with an investigation with the concurrence of the ACBL CEO.
- C. Recorder Regulations are amended as follows:
 - B. Additional ACBL Recorder Duties
 - a. Advise Unit and District recorders as necessary.
 - b. Conduct seminars for recorders at NABCs as appropriate.
 - c. Supervise the National Office of Recorder as necessary concerning files.
 - d. Determine whether to videotape in conjunction with an investigation with the concurrence of the ACBL CEO.

Motion was carried 22 to 3.

Comment: I voted against the item because I think that a duly elected official of the membership, i.e. a member of the ACBL Board of Directors (either the President or the Director of Appeals), not a member of management (CEO), should be the authorizing party to videotape any ACBL member.

Item 042-30: Preliminary Budget assumptions for 2005

The Finance Committee's 2005 preliminary budget assumptions are approved.
Motion passed 15-9-1.

Comment: Given that the ACBL balance sheet currently meets all of the board's required minimum financial guidelines; we are planning to budget for modest loss in 2005. Tournament sanction fees, NABC entry fees, club fees should all remain unchanged, but rising costs will require an increase in membership dues. (See Item 042-31) Since the ACBL is still charging less for tournament directors than it is receiving from the sponsoring organizations, Tournament Director session fees will also increase.

Item 042-31: Membership dues increase

Membership dues and service fees increase for all categories by \$3.00, excluding Patron membership dues (see Item 042-143:Patron Member) and Youth, which remain at \$5.00 and Junior, which increase from \$12.75 to \$14.00.

Motion carried 14-11.

Comment: See comment under Item 042-30.

Item 042-45: ACBL President Term

No person shall be elected to more than one term as President of the ACBL.

Not carried 9-16.

Item 042-47: Goodwill Member of the Year

The ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year shall receive reimbursement for roundtrip air travel from their home to the Fall NABC at a supersaver rate, 2 room nights at the host hotel, 1 day of free plays, and 3 days per diem. The reimbursement will come from the Norman Kay Fund, which will be supplemented by the ACBL general fund as needed.

Motion passed 24-1.

Comment: I co-sponsored this agenda item with Sue Himel, District 14 Representative. It sprung from a request from Aileen Osofsky, Chairperson of the National Goodwill Committee. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization, especially those that are selected as our Goodwill Member of the Year. We should do whatever we can to properly honor those individuals.

Item 042-49: President's Volunteer Member of the Year

New awards be created and named the President's Volunteer of the Year. The ACBL President shall select them, and it will be given to one or two members who have exhibited the long-time service and dedication that makes the ACBL volunteers the best in the world. Management will design and mint medals that commemorate these awards and they will be presented at the following Spring Goodwill Meeting.

The recipient(s) will be invited to attend and their airfare at super saver rates and two nights hotel will be provided. A suitable story will be carried in the Bridge Bulletin with regard to the recipients.

Carried 18-4-3.

Comment: While I approved of this motion, I abstained from the vote since I am the 2005 ACBL President-elect.

Item 042-50: Presidential election

The presidential election be held during the Fall meeting of the ACBL Board of Directors.

Motion failed 10-16.

Comment: I voted in favor of this motion for obvious reasons. In my opinion, the ACBL President must be a voting member of the ACBL Board to lead effectively. All district elections should be completed before the election for ACBL President, so no candidate is placed in the position in which I find myself at the moment.

Items 042-51: Real Estate

A committee be formed between management and the board to review our office situation and other real estate needs presently and for the foreseeable future. This committee shall report at the Fall 2004 meeting and a final report will be issued in the Spring 2005 meeting.

These reports will include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Analysis of present space and present needs.
2. Analysis of future space needs.
3. Present location and alternatives in the Memphis market.
4. Economic impact of relocation and any assistance that the local government can provide.
5. Other alternatives the committee should choose to examine.

Carried unanimously.

Comment: It is true that the location of the ACBL Headquarters building is in an area of Memphis that is not the best. Our headquarters building is too large for our needs, requiring that we lease out the remaining space. This study is certainly due, and it should be done. However, there are some members of the ACBL Board who have already predetermined that the ACBL Headquarters should be in another city other than Memphis. They think that being in Memphis inhibits the ACBL from attracting highly qualified employees, and they may use this study as a Trojan horse to get that vote before the board. I find that opinion both offensive and prejudicial. Be assured that I shall strongly oppose such a move.

Item 042-52: Election Procedures

This section of Election procedures concerning Declaration of Candidacy be amended as follows:

1. DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY

Each member of the ACBL in good standing, and at least eighteen years of age, desiring to be a candidate for District Director, First Alternate Director, Second Alternate Director, or Board of Governors Representative must file a written Declaration of Candidacy with the Director of Elections prior to June 1 of the year of the election. The declaration must be received by the Director of Elections no later than 5:00 PM CT on May 31 (postmarked prior to June 1, but received after May 31 will not be considered as received on time). Delivery may be by mail, fax, hand-delivery, or e-mail.

Carried 21-4.

Comment: This motion came as a result of an election protest from the recent filing date. There was some confusion cause by the fact that May 31st fell on a holiday. This clarifies the language so that the Director of Elections must receive all Declarations of Candidacy by 5:00 PM on May 31st, regardless of whether that day falls on a weekend or a holiday.

Items 042-65: Zone II Regulations is amended as follows: (Specific regulations not included here.)

Carried 23-2.

Comment: This motion rescinded many old regulations that were in conflict with current practice on international competition decisions that have been delegated to the Canadian Bridge Federation ("CBF") and the United States Bridge Federation ("USBF"). I voted against this motion on philosophical grounds. Current regulations do not treat the USBF and the CBF equally. Either both organizations should be given equal latitude by the ACBL, or the ACBL should resume control over all international competition matters for the zone.

Item 042-82: Rescind Items

The following Board of Directors regulations be rescinded: 881-105, 872-98, 873-89, 872-122, 902-46, 903-53, 953-94, 762.103, 763-53, 821-102, 852-94, 863-66, 901-111, 993-85, 901-113, 943-69, 771-105, 782-85, 711.75, 781-96, 871-109, 943-65, 943-69, 962-175, 971-140, 963-167, 971-115, 022-90, 032-88, 032-92, 831-62, 872-129, 873-114, 881-71, 883-72, 003-83, 032-102, 951-55, 962-105, and 972-211.

Carried unanimously.

Comment: This motion replaces many old regulations dealing with bridge events that have been superceded by current conditions of contest, were never implemented, or are not needed.

Item 042-83: ACBL Standard Yellow Card System

Item 882-94 is amended as follows:

With the advice of the Competitions and Conventions Committee, Management may modify the ACBL Standard Yellow Card System, convention card and booklet as Management deems necessary and appropriate.

Carried unanimously.

Comment: The ACBL Standard Yellow Card System ("SAYC") is widely used in online play, for individuals such as the Prize Money Tour, and for the Bridge Bulletin "It's Your Call" column. Management intends to remove the options that are presently extended concerning carding and leads. There are some additional tweaks that are being considered. Management is in the process of having a book written by its Editorial Department, which is projected to be available by 2006.

Item 042-84: ACBL Convention Chart Amendments

- A. The General Convention Chart be amended to permit jump responses to an opening bid of one in a suit with a minimum of five cards and one other known suit with a minimum of four cards.
- B. The Mid-Chart be amended so that a pair may only use a method permitted by the Mid-Chart but not by the General Convention Chart when the approved defense is rated as approved for the length of the segments being played in the Mid-Chart event. Defenses are rated by stating a minimum number of boards played per segment/round. The defense (and therefore the method) may be used only in events that play at least that many boards per segment/round. The minimum number of boards is 12, 6, or 2. If an approved defense is not required as stated below, the method may be played in any event authorized by the Mid-Chart.

When using a method permitted by the Mid-Chart, but not by the General Chart a pair is required to:

1. Pre-Alert the method(s)
2. Have a written description of the method(s) available for the opponents.
3. Except for those methods authorized by sections below with an asterisk (numbers 2, 3 and 9 under ALLOWED), have a copy of the approved suggested defense available for opponents. Approved defenses are available in the ACBL defense database at www.acbl.org.

Both pairs may refer to a defense to a method that requires the above pre-Alert during the auction.

Carried 16-9.

Comment: This merely divides Mid-Chart conventions that require a written defense at the table into three categories, depending on the difficulty of the approved defenses. Some conventions will be permitted for pair games, some additional ones for swiss events, and all of them for KO events.

Item 042-91: NAP Flight B and C

The Finals of Flight B and C NAP qualify closer to 50% of the field as is our custom with other NABC events.

Carried 14-11.

Comment: In the Finals of Flight A, the directors try to reduce the field to a perfect size, so that the event is as fair as it can be. This usually requires that only about 40% of the field qualify for the Final. The question above was to decide if it was better for the B & C fields to have more qualify so that they can say they made it to the Finals, or to make it as fair an event as possible. I thought the latter argument was

more important to the players, but I would be interested in hearing from our Flight B and Flight C players on this subject.

Item 042-92: Amendments to Conditions of Contest

A. The ACBL screen conditions (Appendix G) are amended as follows:

During the auction period, after an opponent has acted quickly, it is proper to adjust the tempo back to normal by either delaying one's own call (place the bidding card faced in front of, but not on, the tray) or by waiting before passing the tray.

Carried unanimously.

B. The 0-5000 Spingold Conditions of Contest be changed to conduct the event under the authority of the ACBL Mid-Chart. Note: A survey of the participants in the 0-1500 Spingold will be taken to determine their preference on convention chart.

Carried 18-7.

Comment: Since most events with players over 2000 masterpoints allow Mid-Chart conventions, it seems reasonable to allow them in the 0-5000 Spingold. Mid-Chart conventions are probably not appropriate for the 0-1500 Spingold, but the eligible players for that event should have a chance to express their opinion before we make that decision.

Item 042-122: Tournament Assistant Policy

There is no geographic restriction on the use of Tournament Assistants.

Carried 21-3-1

Comment: The Tournament Department at ACBL Headquarters still has to approve all requests for Tournament Assistants. The above motion allows Tournament Assistants to cross unit/district borders to help at neighboring tournaments if little or no travel expense is involved.

Item 042-123: Nationally Rated Events at NABCs

A. The IMP pairs at the Summer NABC on the second Thursday and Friday be moved to the Spring NABC on the second Thursday and Friday, and the Open Pairs II on the second Thursday and Friday at the Spring NABC be moved to Tuesday and Wednesday of the Summer NABC.

B. The Senior Swiss on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Summer NABC be moved to Monday and Tuesday of the Summer NABC.

C. The Mixed BAM Teams and the Fast Open Pairs on the second Saturday and Sunday at the Summer NABC be moved to the second Thursday and Friday of the Summer NABC.

D. A four-session (two qualifying sessions and two final sessions) North American Swiss Team event with Conditions of Contest that same as the Spring Open Swiss be held on the second Saturday and Sunday at the Summer NABC.

E. A four-session Mini (for players with a Blue Ribbon qualification with no more than 5000 masterpoints) Blue Ribbon (two qualifying sessions and two final sessions) be added to the Fall NABC to run concurrent with the first two days (Tuesday and Wednesday) of the Blue Ribbon Pairs.

Carried unanimously.

Comment: The primary purpose of these changes is to strengthen the schedule at the end of the Summer NABC, where we have had a significant fall off in table count in recent years. It also beefs up the mid-week schedule of the Summer NABC. In addition, it adds another Mini event in the Fall. These types of events have been well attended since they have been added to the schedule.

Item 042-125: NABC Committee

The ACBL Board of Directors establish a committee to investigate the procedures and policies for hotel rates at NABCs. This committee shall include members of the Board of Governors. The committee shall report to both the ACBL Board of Directors and Board of Governors.
Motion failed 5-20.

Comment: This agenda item came from the Board of Governors. For a number of years management has had a committee called the NABC Advisory Committee. Representatives from both management and the Board of Directors serve on this committee. It would be redundant and counterproductive to have another such committee. As President next year, I would encourage management to allow the Chairman of the Board of Governors to be a member of the NABC Advisory Committee.

Item 042-138: Life Master Categories

- A. Item 863-51A, current Masterpoint Program is rescinded.
- B. Item 853-51D, ACBL Masterpoint Plan is amended as follows:

A new category, Emerald Life Master, is added between Diamond Life Master and Grand Life Master. This category will require 7500 masterpoints.

<u>Designation</u>	<u>Requirement</u>
Bronze Life Master	500 Masterpoints
Silver Life Master	1,000 Masterpoints
Gold Life Master	2,500 Masterpoints
Diamond Life Master	5,000 Masterpoints
Emerald Life Master	7,500 Masterpoints
Platinum Life Master	10,000 Masterpoints
Grand Life Master	10,000 Masterpoints – Win a North American Bridge Championship with no upper masterpoint restriction or its equivalent or any of the following WBF events: Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup, Rosenblum Cup; McConnell Cup, Open Pairs, Women's Pairs, Olympiad, Women's Team Olympiad, Senior Pairs, World Swiss Teams, World Mixed Teams and Senior Teams. Effective immediately and retroactively.

- C. Requirements for Category of Grand Life Master also include the World Mixed Pair Event.
Carried 20-4-1.

Comment: The change here is to add the designations of Emerald Life Master and Platinum Life Master between the Diamond and Grand Life Master. The rank of Life Master remains as it is.

Item 042-38: Special Games at Clubs Committee

The Special Games at Clubs Committee report is approved.
Effective January 1, 2005.
Carried 15-10.

Comment: This committee did an excellent job in my opinion. Here is a summary of the changes:

- 1. The masterpoint ratings of some of the special games were changed to match those of other similar special games.*
- 2. February will remain Junior Fund Month. Except for the months of April and September, any and all ACBL sanctioned sessions may be held as a Junior Fund game.*

3. April will now be designated as Charity Month. Except for the months of February and September, any and all ACBL sanctioned sessions may be held as a Charity game.
4. September will now be designated as International Fund Month. Except for the months of February and April, any and all ACBL sanctioned sessions may be held as an International Fund game.
5. Sanction fees will now be collected on many of the special games in which it was not charged previously, but the fees will be deducted from the amount going to the game beneficiary (Junior Fund, Charity Foundation, International Fund). Thus, the club will not incur any additional fees.

The minutes will show that I voted against this item, but that is not the case. Since this was a change in the masterpoint structure, the ACBL Board has a standing rule that the motion requires a second reading at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board. There was a motion to suspend that rule so that this motion could get a second reading immediately. I voted against that motion because the standing rule allows us to get feedback from the membership before we institute significant changes to the masterpoint structure. That is the vote that will show up in the minutes. For the record, I am very much in favor of the changes proposed by the committee.

Item 042-141: 50th Anniversary of the Goodwill Committee

All Goodwill Committee Members of the Year are invited to the meeting that is in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Goodwill Committee in the Spring of 2005.

The ACBL will pay for transportation at super saver rates and two nights' accommodations at the host hotel. The Bridge Bulletin will feature the recipients and the event.
Carried unanimously.

Comment: See my comments on Item 042-47.

Item 042-142: Renewal Fees

When members pay their renewal fees within 90 days of their expiration date, the term for which they are paid up will begin from the date that their membership originally expired. Effective Date: January 1, 2005.
Carried unanimously.

Comment: The current practice is to extend memberships from the date of renewal, not their original expiration date. Apparently, some of our members were taking unfair advantage of this practice, getting 15 month's worth of membership for the 12-month fee.

Item 042-143: Patron Member

- A. The following items are rescinded: 941-54, 951-131, 973-67, 003-22
- B. Patron Membership Status
 1. Dues (in US dollars)
 - a. Individual = \$250
 - b. Household = \$350
 2. Benefits as below: however, management may from time to time eliminate or add benefits as it determines appropriate.
 - a. Advance hotel reservations at host hotel at NABCs.
 - b. Daily Bulletin delivered to the member's room at the NABC host hotel.
 - c. A complimentary set of Daily Bulletins from all three NABCs.
 - d. Express entry for Patron Members only at NABCs.
 - e. A \$50 merchandise credit each year for individuals, \$75 for household. The credit may be used to purchase merchandise at the NABC ACBL Product Store or from the ACBL Sales Department.
 - f. A complimentary subscription to the World Bridge News.

- g. A special ACBL membership badge that identifies one as a Patron Member.
- h. A special drawing for ACBL Patron Members only to win an opportunity to play with a top bridge star at a Foundation game during each NABC.
- i. Fifty percent (50%) discount off the price of a ticket (household 50% off of two tickets) to the Hall of Fame dinner.
- j. Patron Member cocktail party in the President's suite at NABCs.
- k. Free membership in Hertz Corporation's #1 CLUB Gold.
- l. Names published annually in the Bridge Bulletin.

Carried 20-4-1.

Comment: At the current dues and benefits, the ACBL is losing money on Patron Members. This motion reduces some of the benefits and increases the dues. Patron members generally choose that membership option because they want to support the ACBL, not because of the benefits offered or the exact cost of the membership.

Item 042-150: WBF Junior Age Change Recommendation

Our board express to our representatives that the WBF age for play in junior competition be changed to allow only those to participate, who have not attained the age of 22 on January first of the year in which the competition is held.

Not Carried 5-19-1.

Comment: Juniors, as currently defined, (under age 26) comprise less than 1% of ACBL's membership. Most of those between ages 22 and 26 are either still in school or have entry level jobs. I see lots of reasons to encourage those of that age group to become ACBL members; I see very little downside to giving that group special membership/entry fee discounts. That goes double for those members under the age of 22.

Item 042-151: ACBL Junior Entry Fee Player Policy

A. At all NABCs, the entry fee for all players who have not yet reached their 16th birthday shall be \$1 per session, except NABC surcharged events. Effective date: Fall 2004 NABC.

Carried 18-7.

B. At all NABCs, the entry fee for paid up ACBL members in good who have not reached their 26th birthday shall be no more than 50% of the regional-rated event entry fee. Effective date: Fall 2004 NABC.

Carried 23-2.

C. The ACBL encourages all districts, units and bridge clubs to consider similar policies for its regional and sectional tournaments and club games. Effective date: Immediately.

Carried 23-2.

Comment: See comments for Item 042-150.

Please call if you have any questions or comments concerning this report.

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