

Minutes

Special Meeting of the USA Fencing Board of Directors

November 17, 2011 via Teleconference

Present: Bradley Baker, David Blake, Aaron Clements, David Herr, Terry Kwan, Sunil Sabharwal, Jeff Salmon, Laurie Schiller, Jay Strass, Soren Thompson, Kalle Weeks, Alex Wood

Absent: Wes Glon, Paula Reed, Mario Rodriguez

Guests: Nancy Anderson, Peter Barton, Dan Berke, Greg Dilworth, Mary Griffith, Paul Murphy, John Springgate, Jenifer Yamin, Cathy Zagunis

I. General Information and Organizational Items

General announcements

Remarks – Kalle Weeks, President

It was announced that Aaron Clements will, as previously appointed, serve as parliamentarian.

Ms. Weeks noted that the meeting will have an extensive Executive Session. There is a desire to move efficiently through conversations this evening. Ms. Weeks pointed out that this is a time when we're undergoing a number of transitions and during the course of the meeting, we will be hearing about plans to manage those transitions. Over the next few days, Ms. Weeks will be asking the Board to think about potential members for the compensation committee. We are approaching the time for a performance review of Mr. Dilworth and she requested that members of the Board volunteer to assist in this activity. The Athlete Protection Group is meeting concurrently with this call, so will not present at this time. The Executive Director Search Planning Group has scheduled a meeting for the end of the month.

It was suggested that the Board should do exit interviews of departing staff. Ms. Weeks and Mr. Dilworth have spoken about doing this going forward.

II. Minutes of the October 13, 2011 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the minutes of the October 13, 2011 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Second: Dr. Schiller

The title of the document was edited to “Minutes” (replacing “Agenda”).

Motion to approve minutes, as corrected, passed.

III. Disciplinary Panel

Motion(Mr. Clements): To adopt and approve the report and recommendation of the disciplinary panel on Mr. Bassam Merza.

Second: Mr. Herr

Motion Passed.

Approved sanctions:

- 1) Mr. Merza is denied readmission to membership in the USFA for a period of one year from the date of the Board’s decision [November 17, 2011].
- 2) Mr. Merza is banned from attending all USFA-sanctioned fencing events for a period of one year from the date of the Board’s decision [November 17, 2011].

IV. Executive Director’s Report (Greg Dilworth)

An oral report was provided by Mr. Dilworth.

It has been an eventful month. Skipping over the finance section of report, membership for last two months is trending slightly lower than last year by about 800 or so at the end of September and by about 500 at the end of October. This has lead to some impact on the budget. There have been signs of catching up over the first couple of weeks of November and it is hoped that this trend will continue. We have 165 one-day memberships to date, which is lower than last year. The increased price has encouraged some folks to go for a full-year membership. Those who have purchased one-day memberships have been contacted and encouraged to transition to full-year memberships, with some success. To help with the backlog in membership and to free additional time to work with divisions/clubs, we have hired Kate Drummey, who started this past Monday on a part-time basis.

FencingTime has started the implementation process. We have engaged Joe Salisbury to work

on this task. 190 elements in the first milestone have been evaluated. We have essentially passed the first milestone. Software testing went extremely well. We are on track to transition by Summer Nationals 2012, which is on schedule.

FIE congress planning going very well and a fantastic event is expected. The Philadelphia Sports Congress has done wonderful job pulling everything together. Delegates will be very impressed with work Philadelphia has done, the sponsorship of the USOC, and the work USA Fencing has done organizing activities over the extended weekend.

Mr. Sabharwal provided the following update on planning for the FIE Congress:

The Congress is the annual general meeting of the FIE and we are hosting it for the first time in the FIE's 98-year history. This has been a collaborative effort with the USOC, Philadelphia Sports Congress, ourselves, and the FIE. A large majority of the costs are borne by the FIE. Our task is to put the show on. We've added two features not normally included: a symposium Friday afternoon and a USA vs. the World exhibition match (6-person relay). This meeting is expected to be highest attended Congress in history, with 115 countries and 200+ delegates.

For the Congress meeting, we have made a proposal to increase the size of the Arbitrage Commission from 10 to 15 members. This measure not widely supported, largely because we've also requested geographic distribution. We will be discussing the matter with international folks prior to the Congress.

The USA vs. the World match will take place at the National Constitution Center Sunday evening. The Chairman of Comcast will be the guest of honor. The exhibition will include participation from local cheerleaders, the Penn Band, and we will have 3 top female referees [Dakova, Jacobson, and Klinkov] officiate the match. This represents more female referees than were present at the World Championships in Catania. The gala dinner will follow the exhibition. The FIE has offered an appearance fee of 2000 euro to each participating fencer. The exhibition match will be filmed to allow others to see action after the fact.

One of our desires is to use Congress to promote our candidates for future commissions. Attendance at the Congress proper is limited to two attendees per country plus existing commission members.

The USOC has been very helpful with acquisition of visas for delegates.

Mr. Dilworth continued with his report.

World Cup:

After soliciting bids and information for 2012 locations, it came down to two. The first option was to return to NYAC, with an excellent offer to assist with logistical and decoration issues. The second option was the Chicago Navy Pier with the Chicago Olympic group providing huge amount of support. Having weighed the two options, our intention is to move forward with Chicago, as long as we have a good chance of the FIE approving the move. The benefits from Chicago make it very attractive both for this year and on a go-forward basis through the 2012-2016 quadrennium.

Further discussion of potential considerations and advantages of each location took place between members of the Board and Mr. Dilworth.

The latest edition of American Fencing Magazine, utilizing our new printer, is coming out in next 30 days or so. It features a new look and feel. The new design gives the magazine a more modern look. Feedback on the redesign is welcomed.

Website:

The USOC was originally scheduled to roll out new websites in November. The current estimate is December, but we believe January is more likely. The redesign is significantly better, although it remains a bit busy. It's a preference thing whether one likes it or not. Before considering whether to move on to sign on with the USOC for the next 4 years, we need to consider how the redone website looks and serves our needs. Mr. Dilworth indicated that he would appreciate feedback once that rolls out. USA Fencing and the USOC have a meeting coming up to discuss parameters of a future media agreement.

Content and Licensing agreement:

We have to use USOC website. This provides exposure to the USOC as well as USA Fencing. The USOC also retains first refusal rights on any video we have and intend to broadcast. The agreement pays \$75,000 annually. It also provides the right for them to film and webcast 1 event per year. Last

year they selected the World Cup. In 2010, the USOC selected a day of Summer Nationals. The current contract ends with the end of calendar year 2012. Some NGBs (mostly larger) are not covered by the content agreement. The signing of a new agreement, if done, is expected next summer.

There was further discussion of website, marketing and communications between members of the Board and Mr. Dilworth.

High Performance

USA Fencing earned exactly the same number of medals at Senior World Championships in 2011 as in 2010. Mr. Dilworth expressed congratulations to Mariel Zagunis for her silver, Lee Kiefer for her bronze, and Women's Sabre Team for their bronze, which represent wonderful achievements. Results in Catania indicate excellent prospects for London. The USOC has fencing penciled in for 3-5 medals at the Olympic Games.

An excellent job was done by our athletes. There were significant logistical and organizational issues that negatively impacted athletes. These included organizational failures on behalf of both staff and cadre. The issues need to be fixed immediately to best support athletes for remainder of this year and on into London.

Two areas were particularly identified:

Logistics: Due to financial constraints, we did not stay at one of the host hotels. Hotels priced within our price range were deemed inadequate when we had someone conduct a site visit. Hotels that were adequate, when booked through organizers, would have cost 80% more than budgeted for hotels and would have required dramatic cuts elsewhere later in the year. We found another hotel that was nice and modern, but did not quite have the same standards as a US hotel. Double rooms was translated to rooms with a king bed and a cot or rollaway. This was significantly less than adequate and not what we thought we were getting. The result was not good for our athletes. Based on surveys from our athletes, the single biggest logistical problems were related to transportation. There was no set schedule of transportation to the venue and the schedule, such as it was, was frequently changed. Information regarding taxis and payment for alternative transportation was inconsistent and not communicated well or consistently. The result was a huge amount of uncertainty and difficulty for athletes. Going forward we will strive to stay in host hotels at every possible opportunity. This eases issues around airport transfers and getting to and from training and competition sites.

In London this will be a non-issue. Our people will be housed either in the athlete village or USOC controlled housing. We're currently working to try to get information regarding Moscow hotels [2012 Cadet and Junior World Championships].

Organization: We did not have clear and well-understood roles and responsibilities. Who was responsible for what? Who was to do what, when? This resulted in a high degree of anxiety. We need to make sure we have clear understanding well before we're in-country of the roles and responsibilities of each and every member of staff and cadre going. Who should one speak to if there is a problem with each possible item? There needs to be no uncertainty. The Office is working with the NTOC to prepare a list of roles & responsibilities. We will use the experience of individuals on NTOC to build a comprehensive list. Once it has been defined what each role is, we can determine the most appropriate person to fill each role. We believe this was an obvious failing in Catania that has to be addressed going forward.

High Performance Director:

As previously announced, David Sach resigned last week. Fortunately, we're already well into the season and 2011-2012 planning, budget, and competitions are all set so not much additional adjustment needs to be done beyond typical tweaking. For the immediate term, Mr. Sach is assisting with day-to-day operations through the end of year. Jim Page and Greg Dilworth will work on any strategic decisions that do arise. To prepare for intermediate and long term requires that we begin a search process immediately. Mr. Dilworth outlined a proposal for the search process and requested that the Board name a search advisory committee as soon as possible.

In the Strategic Plan, we have agreed to do coach education and conduct a program for older youth fencers. Since the Board meeting in September, the Office has been working on that plan. USA Fencing has hired Michael Marx as a contractor to run those programs. A good meeting with USFCA leadership was conducted. We are starting down the road identifying cadre for the future stars program. We will be working with the USFCA for cadre in coaching education program. The budget for these programs has been finalized. The total budget (revenue and expenses) is in excess of \$250,000. The net will be less than \$10,000, which is well within boundaries established for Team Rio and Coaching Education. Mr. Dilworth will be sending out a report and the proposed budget for these two programs.

We are currently looking to sign contracts with Florida Institute of Technology and move

forward with plans to publicize the programs. We still need to define entry requirements and the cadre to start execution on the plans. Mr. Dilworth indicated a desire to get this done via mail vote.

Questions from the Board were asked and answered on the topics of the USOC allocation to international squad budgets and whether National Office staffing levels are adequate.

V. Finance and Budget (Sunil Sabharwal)

Financial Reports

Motion (Mr. Sabharwal): To receive the Budget Report as submitted to the Board.

Second: Dr. Schiller

The Board engaged in discussion and questions related to the financial reports.

Motion passed.

VI. Committee and Task Force Matters

An oral report from the Nominating Committee was provided by Ms. Kwan.

The Nominating Committee has developed their methodology and will utilize preference voting. A call for candidates has been published, although to date no applications have been received. Ms. Kwan responded to a question on preference voting by indicating that all members of the committee will rank order all candidates for each position.

An oral report from the Audit Committee was provided by Mr. Herr.

The audit is moving towards completion. It is a relatively clean report. Preparation of 990 forms is getting underway. A couple of concerns have been identified by the auditors. The management letter recommends changes in the handling of temporarily restricted funds. The audit committee will recommend making the suggested change. Our auditors have been complementary towards both our current position and improvements in bookkeeping, records, and cooperation.

Motion (Mr. Baker): To receive committee reports, as submitted to the Board.

Second: Mr. Blake

Motion passed.

VII. Executive Session

During executive session, the Board resolved to receive a report of the investigation by Sam Cheris into the activities of a club as they relate to a possible impermissible relationship with a coach who is currently under suspension of membership in USA Fencing.

The Board resolved to further investigate the actions of said coach. The investigatory panel is to be named by Ms. Weeks in consultation with Mr. Alperstein.

The Board resolved to send an admonitory letter to the family of a fencer who has been repeatedly violating USA Fencing policies related to age requirements to compete in senior events.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion (Mr. Baker): To adjourn the meeting.

Second: Mr. Herr

Motion passed.