



Memorandum of Discussion
Minutes of Unit 174 Board Meeting
June 2, 2008
Houston Bridge Studio

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. Present were Jolie Hess-President, Pat Levy-Vice President, Karen Nimmons, John Erickson, Paul Cuneo, Bob Dowlen, and Joyce Ryan. Also present were Jim Woodward-Treasurer, Eric Snow and Norm Gautier.

Guests

2009 NABC and District 16

Eric Snow

Eric reported the NABC 2009 committee met with the staff at the Hilton downtown. They toured the facilities and Eric reported the tournament will take up most of their space. He was unclear as to the parking arrangements and cost. There are some concerns about nearby restaurants for the evening diners. Eric mentioned the Hilton is connected to the George R Brown CC and the Discovery Green Park.

Eric also reminded the board that they need to nominate a member for the Jacoby Award. This award is for recognition for service both at the unit level and district level.

Attracting Social Bridge Players

Norm Gautier

Norm gave a report on the Social Bridge Committee's progress. The committee consists of Norm, Bert Onstott, Dianna Gittleman, Gary King, Pat Levy and Sally Knight.

The first function will be held Oct. 18, 2008 at the First Champion Forest Baptist Church, 15555 Stuebner Forest Blvd. This will be for social bridge players who want to cross over into duplicate bridge. There will be a \$20 to \$25 fee per participant, with no charge for volunteers. There will be a limit on the number of attendees due to the available space constraints.

Motion: Was made to approve up to four social bridge functions a year along with the budget.

It was seconded and approved.

Minutes of May board meeting

Bert Onstott

Bert was absent but the minutes were approved via the on-line poll.

Treasurer's report

Jim Woodward

Jim reported to the board that the unit continues to be in good financial standing. The board reviewed Jim's balance sheet.

Motion: Was made to approve the June financial report. It was seconded and approved.

There was also to be a report from the Financial Verifier, verifying Jim's accounting, but Norm Gautier, the Financial Verifier, reported to the board that it is too early to do any verifying, as it normally takes 2-3 months for all checks to be written and cleared. He will report on a quarterly basis.

Committee Reports

Awards/Flyers

Karen

Karen reported that six life master plaques were ordered and most have been given out. All flyers for the Bryan Tournament were sent out as per Barbara Nance's request.

Bridge in Schools

Jolie (for Carolyn Fox)

There was no report.

Communications Committee

Jolie (for Betty Freedman)

Jolie reported Betty is doing a great job contacting people.

Membership

Jolie (for Bert Onstott)

Jolie passed out Bert's report. It said membership is down 16, to 2238. There were 12 new members, 12 transfers out and 25 non- life masters changed to inactive.

Fund Raising

Bob Dowlen

Bob reported that our unit can no longer participate in the Kroger share plan. Randalls still has the plan available to us and unit members are encouraged to sign up for this Good Neighbor Program.

Goodwill

Pat Levy

Pat reported she sent out a few sympathy cards and one get-well card.

I/N, Education & Book Sales

Joyce Ryan

Joyce reported she sold 37 books. She would like to know how long the records need to be kept.

NAP/GNT

John Erickson

John reported that the finals were held in Richardson and our flight B team won the event. Since it was a 5 man team, 2 being from the Austin area, it was decided to

give each of the Houston players \$200.00 toward their expenses for their trip to the Nationals.

Motion: Was made to give each Houston player \$200.00 to help pay for their expenses in going to the Las Vegas National.

It was seconded and approved.

John also reported the NAP finals for flight B will be on Saturday, November 15 at the Bridge Club of Houston in Spring and for flights A&C on Sunday, November 16 at the Houston Bridge Studio. The NAP qualifications are going on now throughout the Unit at various clubs. Qualifiers will be able to compete the first weekend in January in Austin.

New Player Services

Paul Cuneo

Paul had no report at this time.

Pro-Am

Paul Cuneo

Paul was advised that a letter needs to be prepared and sent out to all the clubs in the unit.

STAC

Bob Dowlen

Bob had no report as it is still too early to send out the first letter.

Supplies

Jolie (for Lauri Laufman)

Jolie reported Lauri took inventory of the rolling bin basics and other assorted items. She feels there are several outdated or unnecessary items that need to be donated or disposed of that are taking up space in the warehouse.

Tournament Coordination

John/Pat

Pat reported she:

- Ordered the Regional sanctions from 2010 to 2015.
- Ordered the Club Championships for 15 games in 2009. There will be 12 games during the day and 3 at night.
- Ordered 5 charity sanctions for 2009. Two games will be held at night and three during the day.
- Ordered the Pro-Am sanction for 2009.
- Ordered three 299er sanctions for 2009; two for Houston Bridge Studio and one for the Bridge Club of Houston.
- Ordered a 0-100 sanction for Houston Bridge Studio for 2008
- Ordered the GNT and the NAP sanctions for the unit finals for 2009.
- Ordered sanctions for the 2 STAC games in 2009.
- Changed the date of the Club Championship to June 19 as the old date conflicted with the District STAC.
- Received the contract from the Humble Civic Center for our sectional in October. The rent increased to \$6,160 from \$2,875 last year.

- Received the approval from ACBL for the October Sectional Schedule.
- Arranged with the Super 8 Motel for rooms for the directors for the August Sectional and with the same hotel we used last year for the October Sectional for rooms for the directors. The directors for the August Sectional are Tom Whitesides, L. Snyder, Robert Craig, G. Poplawsky and John Smalley.

Old Business

June Sectional

Jolie (for Lauri)

Lauri reported that things are in order for the upcoming June Sectional. She had to order dot matrix paper and golf pencils from Office Max.

August Sectional

Bert/Pat

What's been done since last month:

- Sandy Bippert will be available to work as head caddy.
- A restaurant guide has been prepared.
- A paper version is complete except for the keyed map on the reverse side.
- Also, a map in Google Earth and Google Maps showing the tournament site, the host motel and a list of nearby restaurants has been prepared. I have asked Arlene to post it on the Unit web site.
- The Scorecard ad has been sent to Ira.
- Flyers have been printed. 100 were taken to Richardson. Quite a lot of them got picked up.
- Demeris has been contracted with for the Sunday meal.
- We're planning to have BBQ, iced tea and cookies.
- We're planning to feed 340 (last year we had 80 tables on Sunday morning), but as always we have the option to cut the number on Saturday by 1:00 pm if the table counts appear to be down.
- Bert tried to arrange to talk to the Stafford school group that will be doing the snack bar, but somehow that fell through the cracks. Bert reported he will follow up when he gets back.

October Sectional

John/Paul

John reported the Humble CC has increased their rates from \$2875 to \$6150. He changed the budget to reflect this new increase.

Motion: Was made to accept the contract from the Humble CC and to pay the new cost. It was seconded and approved.

Motion: Was made to accept the October Sectional budget. It was seconded and approved.

On-Line Partnership Desk

Bert

Bert reported he is working on it. He said he was advised to work with Charlie Price of the Dallas Unit and he will get in touch with him as soon as it's convenient.

Contract for Head Caddy

Jim Woodward

Jim passed around copies of a contract he wrote up. The board looked it over and discussed a few things.

Motion: Was made to accept the Contract of Services between our unit and the Head Caddy.

It was seconded and approved.

Programs for Clubs

Joyce

Joyce reviewed her proposals for the clubs and asked the board's opinion. Since they were approved at the last meeting, she was given the go ahead to proceed. A letter will be going out to all the clubs soon detailing everything.

Marriott Renewal Contracts

John/Paul/Bert

Paul Cuneo, John Erickson and Bert met with Gary Bernard, Director of Group Sales at the Westchase Marriott on Thursday, May 15th.

Reduction in Room night commitment for 2009

Bert reported they've arrived at a tentative agreement, subject to board approval, for item 1. Gary has agreed to lower the room night commitment to 647 from 908, with a cutoff date of three weeks prior to February 8, 2009.

Motion: to approve the 2009 contract addendum reducing the number of nights to 647.

It was seconded and approved.

He has also agreed to allow for 190 additional room nights, with a cutoff date of two weeks prior to February 8, at an additional \$10/night premium.

This allows us to avoid any potential financial liability for not meeting our room night commitment, but also allows us to have rooms available up to 837 room nights so that our players won't have to pay the rack rate if we need more than 647 room nights.

Contracts for 2011 and beyond

Bert states in his report that this is more difficult. Gary said that when the Convention and Visitor's Bureau sent out a notice of our wish to arrange a site for the tournament post 2010, they didn't even respond to it (neither did anyone else). The main problem appears to be that our February date is their most popular time. They would prefer that we move to either early January or to spring break in March. It's likely we'll get much more cooperation, translating into lower costs, if we are willing to move. Of course, that will be a controversial change. But they do appear to be willing to work with us.

Inquiry regarding how other Units/Districts in large cities handle their Regionals

Bert sent an e-mail to tournament chairs in several large cities, requesting information on how they handle their regionals. He received replies from Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia. The following summarizes their responses.

Los Angeles

This is from Jan Wickersham in LA:

We use the same site for our three Regionals a year. We get the rooms for playing, etc. for free. In exchange we guarantee 355 room nights for the week in accommodations, guarantee to spend \$15,000 for food and beverage. It works well for us. The first tournament we lost money, but the second we made \$5,000, and I'm planning on improving from there. It's a great site, and people love it.

And

We hold all three regionals at the Pacific Palms Resort. We used to be huge, and district 22, which is all around us is huge. We are working at becoming huge. Right now, we are at 1,000 tables for the week. This will be our third regional at this site, and the timing is good.

New York

This is a summary of a telephone conversation with Bill Rosebaum in New York, who has run their Regionals for 25 years, and also has run the Cavendish:

- They have two Regionals a year.
- They pay \$6,000/day for playing space in an old, barely adequate hotel.
- The public spaces are OK, the rooms are small.
- Their bridge room rate is \$350/night. They sell almost no room nights except to the directors.
- They are a commuter tournament and attract few out of town visitors.
- They have about 160 tables per session, or something over 1500 tables for a 5 day tournament, and something over 1800 tables for a 6 day tournament.
- They set up tables on 8 ½ foot centers (as do we).
- Their card fees are \$15/session, and will be increasing to \$18. This is cheaper than their local club fees, which run \$25/session with lunch.
- They provide no hospitality whatever.
- They make or lose a few thousand on each tournament. He said the most they'd made was about \$4,000, the most they'd lost was \$3,000.
- They depend on their sectionals to fund unit operations, and hope to operate the Regionals at break even.

Philadelphia

The following is a summary of a telephone conversation with Roni Atkins of Pittsburgh:

- They have one regional a year.
- They typically have about 1,300 tables for the week.
- They use an Expo mart next door to a Raddison as their playing space.
- They pay \$12,000 for the playing space.
- Their bridge room rate is \$89/night.
- They get two parlor suites and six sleeping rooms for free.
- They pay \$17.75/gallon for coffee (compared to \$75 at the Marriott!)
- They are not required to spend any amount on hospitality.
- Their entry fees are \$10/table.
- They don't depend on their regional to make money.
- They are not trying to get bigger.
- Their Regionals are run by the District.

Bert acknowledges there isn't much of a message here, but it's good to know what others are doing.

2009 Tournament Sites

John

John reported he investigated several possible tournament sites:

- United Way of Greater Houston Community Resource Center which is not available for rental on Sundays
- The Inter-Continental Houston Hotel which costs \$65,000 for Saturday alone
- The Communication Workers of America Center which is too small
- The Westin Galleria and Westin Oaks Hotels which had no availability for any of our 2009 Sectional dates
- The Ayva Center which is too small
- The Shriners which their new facility is an existing building, but a ball room is going to be added and the anticipated completion date is January 2009. This is a possibility as the location will be 10510 Harwin, just east of the Sam Houston Tollway.
- The Stafford Center is not available for the April 2009 Sectional but is available for the other three sectionals in 2009. He said there is a \$3150 deposit for each date.

Jolie recommended he call them and have them pencil in the dates for us.

New Business

Directory 2009/2010

Jolie for Bert

In Bert's report, he states he gets a report from the ACBL with everyone's address and phone number. Instead of collecting everyone's changes, he recommends the membership do their own changing directly with ACBL and recommends we give them detailed information on how to go about doing this. The board agreed this was an excellent idea.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Adjourn

Motion: Was made to adjourn the meeting.

It was seconded and approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Karen Nimmons, (filling in for Bert Onstott)