



## **ACBL Unit 174 Board of Directors Meeting**

### **Unit 174 Board Planning Meeting**

**April 26, 2025**

**Betty Starzec residence**

#### **Call to Order**

**Betty Starzec**

President Betty Starzec (BTS) brought the meeting to order at 10 AM. Also present at the meeting were Hallie "Peaches" Eads, Karen Nussbaum, Brigitte Sandifer (BSA), Fred Gregory, Leslie Kellet, Gary Kerr, Judi Whaling, Cindy Schaefer, and Paddy Fiorino. Steve Gordon was absent from the meeting. Paul Cuneo was also present as moderator and to address the board.

#### **Welcome**

**Betty Starzec**

BTS welcomed all board members and thanked Paul Cuneo for agreeing to moderate the **2025 Unit 174 Board Planning Meeting**.

#### **Unit 174 Board Planning Session**

**Paul Cuneo**

Paul detailed the Ground Rules for all board members to follow:

1. Be "present" the whole time-- participate fully in all activities, turn off cell phones (or at least set to "vibrate"), avoid texting during meetings.
2. One conversation at a time; avoid side conversations.
3. Seek first to understand, then on being understood (Balance Inquiry & Advocacy).
4. Stay open, constructive, and non-defensive—Accept feedback as input, work



- towards an acceptable way forward.
5. Be on time and help move forward.

## Updates and Event Naming

Betty Starzec

BTS updated the BOD on updates since the last meeting. She attended her first monthly Unit President's meeting which was hosted by Bronia Jenkins and has since e-mailed all board members a copy of the meeting highlights. BTS itemized a list of recurring other costs reported by the Treasurer which includes storage for two units that are \$340.50 and \$222.50 monthly; holiday club reimbursement which is about \$800; support for the Bridge Club of Houston mentor mentee games approximately \$100/month; and property taxes of \$300-\$400 annually. There is also cost for the Life Master plaques and mailing cost if they are not delivered in person. BTS also stated that the board will need to decide on the financial support level of the FLM program. BTS reported that Sarah Springer will replace Jack LaVigne as the Unit 174 Reporter. BTS stated that Cindy Cox will attend the next board meeting to update FLM and assist our soon to-be-assigned I/N chair. Betty Westbrook has FLM expenses that are still awaiting reimbursement. The board approved this expenditure and the Treasurer will be advised. BTS stated the bank records changes needed after the Election Sectional position changes are complete. The Baron Barclay account for future tournament needs has been set up with BTS, GK, and SG as the only authorized purchasers on the account. GK is addressing storage facility and delivery costs. BTS stated she had discussions with Patty Tucker regarding a copy service called DocuCopies (docucopies.com) which offers colored copies as low as 5 cents each depending on the paper quality. Shipping is through UPS and takes 1 ½ to 2 weeks, which should be sufficient for mass printing events (like flyers) once the appropriate time lines are followed. BTS has spoken with Charles Collins who confirmed his commitment to name the 2026 LSR for his wife Barbara Phillips. BTS presented to the board an initial schedule of events for the 2026 LSR. A Soloway Knockout event for all brackets is planned. KN inquired about a Bracketed Round Robin pairs event. The board discussed these options and will further discuss the event schedule at the next scheduled board meeting. BSA has volunteered to reserve the Tracy Gee Library for board meetings every month. The board has decided to schedule the June meeting for Monday June 2. Jay Evert has agreed to coordinate the LSR Bulletin and do the PowerPoint presentation at the 2026 Election Sectional. BTS stressed the importance of getting signed contracts for all tournaments to avoid unexpected added charges. Marsha Bernstein has agreed to head up the Event Naming for the 2026 LSR. Charles Collins has agreed that all events can also be sold to help raise money for the Unit. Marsha has also agreed to sell "candy" sponsors as well as breakfast sponsors from individuals as well as businesses. BTS stated that senior living centers may support a breakfast in return for a table with their literature and representative. Another option is a silent auction to purchase games with pros and teachers.



**Relationships with ACBL, District 16, Clubs and Teachers****Paul Cuneo**

Please refer to the handout which will be attached to the minutes.

**Unit 174 Objectives and Board Duties****Paul Cuneo**

Please refer to the handout which will be attached to the minutes.

**Assignments****Betty Starzec**

**President-- Betty Starzec**  
**Vice President- Brigitte Sandifer**  
**Secretary- Paddy Fiorino**  
**Treasurer- Steve Gordon**  
**Electronic Contact- Paddy Fiorino**  
**Tournament Coordinator- Brigitte Sandifer**  
**Membership Chair- "Peaches" Hallie Eads**  
**Webmaster- Allison Ochsner**  
**I/N Coordinator- Lesley Kellet**  
**Tournament Coordinator- Brigitte Sandifer**  
**Tournament Site Coordinator- Paul Cuneo and Gary Kerr**  
**District Representative- Fred Gregory**  
**Membership Communications Chair (5-5-5)- Hallie Eads and Cindy Schaefer**  
**Supply Coordinator- Gary Kerr and John Dubose (volunteer)**  
**Charity- Karen Nussbaum and Cindy Schaefer**  
**Awards- Cindy Schaefer**  
**I/N Coordinator- Leslie Kellet and Judi Whaling**  
**StaC Coordinator- Brigitte Sandifer**  
**Publicity (Facebook)- Sarah Springer (volunteer)**  
**New Player Services/FLM- Cindy Cox (volunteer)**  
**Attorney- Chuck Gillis**  
**Election Director- Brigitte Sandifer**  
**Photographer- Al Fortier**  
**Financial Verifier- Jim Woodward**  
**Parliamentarian & Election Judge- Paul Nimmons**  
**Unit Newsletter Editor- Evvie Gilbert**

**Overview of the Procedure Manual****Betty Starzec**

BTS instructed all BOD members to review the duties of their assigned position for relevance and assess update needs. BTS, BSA, and KN will be updating the P&P manual. Board members were instructed to check the manual for tournament time frame guidelines.



Please refer to the handout which will be attached to the minutes.

**Priorities for the next 12 months****Paul Cuneo**

The board identified priorities for the next 12 months:

1. Focus on the newer/younger players
2. Tournaments—get caught up with desired lead times (flyers, contracts, etc.), prepare realistic budgets, look for outside revenue sources as sponsors for hospitality items, have tournament items cleaned, work to bring back former tournament players and encourage new players to come.
3. Marketing- promote the Facebook page and post tournament flyers on the site, utilize Directors to take flyers for our tournaments to other locations (especially the Regional), purchase lower cost flyers and printed material online to improve cost effectiveness.
4. All board members need to use Box to improve record keeping and communication.
5. Recruit more members
6. Reset expectations on costs with our members.

**Communications****Paul Cuneo**

Please refer to the handout which will be attached to the minutes.

**“Box” Tutorial****Paddy Fiorino**

This was a demonstration only.

**Adjournment**

***The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 pm***

Respectfully submitted,

*Paddy Fiorino, Unit 174 Board Secretary*



## **Ground Rules**

- **Be “present” the whole time**
  - **Participate fully in all activities**
  - **Turn off cell phones (or at least “vibrate”)**
  - **Avoid texting during meetings**
- **One conversation at a time; avoid side conversations**
- **Seek first to understand, then on being understood (balance Inquiry & Advocacy)**
- **Stay open, constructive, and non-defensive**
  - **Accept feedback as input**
  - **Work toward an acceptable way forward**
- **Be on time and help us move forward**

## ACBL, District 16, Clubs and Teachers

ACBL sets:

- The “conditions of contest” for all Tournaments and Special Events
- The masterpoint limits events and club games
- The number of Regionals allocated to Districts annually
- The requirements for tournaments to be sanctioned
- The requirements for sanctioned clubs and games which award ACBL masterpoints.
- Sponsors awards for volunteers and for the Mini-McKenney and Ace of Clubs

ACBL provides funds to Units for their efforts to increase membership retention and recruitment. A base of 5% of member dues is rebated to units annually through quarterly payments. Units have the opportunity to increase this to 15% through activities that support retention and improvements in retention and new member recruitment. [5-5-5 FAQ.pdf](#)

Key Unit officials who interface with ACBL are:

- President – invited to periodic meetings with the Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins.
- Tournament Coordinator – Sanctioning Unit sponsored tournaments
- Electronic Contact – receives reports from ACBL

District 16:

- Allocates Regional and Sectional tournaments including STaCs to units and approves unit requests for ACBL sanctions prior to ACBL approval. (Some districts operate the regionals held within the district.)
- Runs the North American Pairs and Grand National Teams competitions to select D16 representatives to the National level of competition.
- Supports Club Director and Teacher training programs with grants to units
- Has an active annual awards program.
  - Jacoby award for service to District 16
  - Presidential Extra Mile award
  - Teacher of the year
  - D16 Star – one person from each unit
  - Unit Goodwill awards
- Hosts monthly lecture series
- Unit 174 has several people who serve on the D16 Board:
  - Jack LaVigne, President
  - Betty Starzec – Immediate Past President
  - Karen Nussbaum – Unit 174 Representative and Charity Committee Chair

- Jim Woodward – Financial Verifier
- Dolores Aquino – Lecture Coordinator
- Carol Jewett – I/N Newsletter Editor
- Sam Khayatt – I/N Coordinator and Teacher of the Year Chair
- Lauri Laufman – Membership Chair

#### Clubs:

- Are independent entities that operate ACBL Sanctioned Club games. An annual sanction for each weekly session the club holds must be obtained from ACBL.
- I/N Sectionals may be delegated to Clubs by the Unit
- Choose whether to participate in ACBL, D16 or Unit activities such as:
  - ACBL Wide Games, NAP Club level qualifying, and special games benefitting ACBL and local Charities/Funds
  - D16 STaCs and Charity games
  - Unit STaCs, Unit Championships, Unit Charity games
  - Administer Club level discipline
  - Set their own rules for which convention chart is used in their games
- Are incented to recruit and retain new members
- The Unit has 24 Unit Championships and 4 Unit Charity games per year which have been distributed to the clubs to run

#### Teachers:

- Are independent and may select their own curriculum for lessons.
- May affiliate with Clubs
- ACBL offers a certification program for teachers called Best Practices.
- Are incented to recruit and retain new members
- Teachers may apply for “Boost” advertising funds spent by ACBL to provide leads for potential new students. There are significant reporting requirements if they qualify

## **HOUSTON UNIT 174**

### **AMERICAN CONTRACT BRIDGE LEAGUE (AS AMENDED 4/7/19)**

American Contract Bridge League Unit No. 174 exists under the sanction of the American Contract Bridge League and functions as an unincorporated nonprofit association in compliance with the Constitution, Bylaws and regulations of the American Contract Bridge League.

## **ARTICLE I**

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANIZATION**

The objectives of the organization shall be:

- To preserve and promote the best interest of the competitive or tournament form of contract bridge and any modification thereof;
- To cooperate with and assist the League in the promotion and conduct of contract bridge tournaments conducted by the League in the city of Houston and surrounding areas within the Unit jurisdiction;
- To conduct contract bridge tournaments under its own auspices within its jurisdiction;
- To prescribe rules of eligibility for participating in tournaments within its jurisdiction;
- To consider and pass upon reports of dishonest, unethical or improper conduct of participants in tournaments and games and to bar or suspend persons within its jurisdiction guilty of such conduct from further participation in tournaments and games;
- To promote the development and organization of affiliated clubs within the Unit;
- To conduct such other activities as may be in keeping with its principal objectives.

No member of the Unit shall receive any pecuniary gain from his membership in the Unit except as specifically provided as salary, wages, or expenses in the Bylaws.

### **Nonprofit board member duties:**

- Duty of Care – Act in the best interest of the Organization as a whole
- Duty of Loyalty – Support the organization's decisions
- Duty of Obedience – Operate within the Law and high ethical standards



## **Sources and Uses of Funds for Unit 174 in 2024**

### **Sources:**

- **General Revenue**
  - ACBL Dues rebate. 5% to 15% of member dues depending on performance in Retaining and recruiting new members.  
\$10,863
  - Interest earned - \$4360
  - Net from Best Practices Teacher Workshop - \$564
- **Total General Revenue - \$15,787 in 2024**
- **Tournament Revenue**
  - StaC - \$1723
  - Event Naming - \$4975
  - Table Fees - \$179079
  - Other Tournament Revenue - \$2270
- **Total Tournament Revenue in 2024 - \$188,047**

## Priorities for the next 12 months

### Process:

- Each participant offers an item that they believe should be a top 5 priority for the Board. Every participant writes the items down and lists them in numerical order.
- Once the first person offers an item, we will go around the room clockwise and a different item must be proposed.
- When no more items are offered, participants will determine which items are in their top 4.
- The votes determine the top 5 for the next 12 months.

## Communications

- Once a decision has been made by the Board, all members are obligated to support it! You may have been in the minority on the vote, but do not air your differences outside of the meeting. This is part of the duty of loyalty.
- In all communications about issues, follow the principle of seeking first to understand the other person's positions before seeking to have your position understood. Encourage conversations about potential options and the pros and cons of each.
- Email should be the primary method of documenting communications among the Board.
  - Decide which Board members should be included in the discussion. If it is 3 or more, please copy the President.
  - Discussions among members on items that require Board approval should be considered "Confidential" and not shared outside of the Board.
  - Do not use **bcc**! If you want either another Board member or someone outside of the Board to see the email, either address it to them or copy them.
- Document decisions made in your area of responsibility. Make that information available to the Board either at the next meeting or when the topic comes up.