

2019 Summer Board Meeting Minutes

June 24, 2019 at Los Caballeros Sports Village

President LeaAnn Martin called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Present were Martin, Treasurer Steve Birrell, Secretary Tom Sove, board members Ben VanArsdale, Matt Jorgensen, Denis Hogan, Bob DeVleming, Ralph Fregoso, Gary Cruz, Jeff Wall, Carl Porter and Executive Director Vern Roberts. Also arriving were Rob Nichols, Alethia Mendez, and Terry Nett. Jared Vale sent his proxy with Alethia Mendez and Jamie Simon sent his with LeaAnn Martin.

Martin opened the meeting by asking Board Members to state what they have been doing since the last board meeting to promote and grow handball. Talks centered on bringing in new players, contacting expired members, increasing communication to members, keeping and constructing courts and promoting tournaments. Wall noted a new app for Apple Watches for Ace Referee and some new live-streaming capabilities, as well as an effort to update the USHA website. New ideas for tournaments were addressed, including one-day events, fun doubles, working with outside groups/organizations to promote the game, etc.

Nett moved to approve the minutes as they appear on the USHA website. Mendez seconded. Motion passed 16-0.

Martin reviewed the board/executive committee votes and results since the January meeting.

In discussion, Sove noted the change in the nationals' agreement for this year and it was agreed Promotions would review the existing agreement. Sove moved that if the agreement is altered materially to affect the budget, the board be apprised. Nichols seconded. The motion passed 13-2-1.

President's Report: Martin presented her report and noted the goal to increase communications with USHA ambassadors and noted the meet-and-greet with ambassadors scheduled for Wednesday Night. She articulated her future plans and hopes to see some of her planning come to fruition.

The board took a break at 10:20 and resumed at 10:30.

Ger MacCormac of Macsports, the manufacturer of the Red and White 21 balls addressed the board.

Game Committee: Sove explained the supply of current balls and potential new balls that are to be sold by the USHA. New one- and four-wall rulebooks are being printed and will be available to members. A new referee certification process was described that would offer a new, shorter exam for Level 1 status. Referee rating cards and evaluations would be used for higher levels. There are new awards available for the higher levels as well. Level 5 refs will be vetted and asked to conduct regular referee clinics. There was concern over it being more difficult to reach higher levels. Level 5 nominees must represent the values and goals of the USHA as determined by the Game/Infractions committee. Cruz moved that the Referee certification process be amended for Levels 1 through 3 as outlined by the Game Committee. Birrell seconded. The motion passed 16-0. Mendez moved to form a referee certification sub-committee as outlined by the Game Committee. Martin seconded. The motion passed 15-1.

The Board broke for lunch at 12:30 and came back to order at 1:23.

Treasurer's Report: Birrell noted we are below budget in Memberships, Presidents Club income, and magazine ads. He also noted the audit that suggested an updated policy manual for the organization; as

well as updated procedures, which staff has already started implementing. DeVleming and others want to follow-up with the expired members, who recently came off the membership roster. Nett and Martin asked about budget issues coming up. Birrell did an analysis of balls sales to learn of potential impact of a potential new ball. Talk of a new pricing structure for distributors as well as the potential new ball that is to be sold by USHA will be developed by Birrell and staff.

Planning: Martin noted the three-year plan process and reminded each committee chair to forward her the goals for collating for the winter meeting. The Presidents Club continues to sponsor our junior tournaments, upgrading the Hall of Fame, and the van.

One-Wall: Mendez said two new members have been added to the committee, allowing for broader representation outside of New York. She talked of the work being done to have multiple member-discount events to make membership worthwhile. The wall ball event fee was collected and players will see the value in joining soon, especially if the committee is successful in scheduling more comparable tournaments. The USHA rules were being more widely used in the local events, and referees and the rules are a hot topic in New York right now. There would be an infraction coming from the Wallball event. Three-year goals include unifying local organizations with sanctioning, rules, and reaching out to other area one-wall groups, developing partnerships with outside groups, and increasing the number of certified referees for one-wall.

Promotions: Sove noted the prize money for the nationals would be the same as last year. The schedule for next year was discussed. There were some events still needing hosts, including Masters singles and various junior events. The Awards committee added DeVleming and is looking to garner more nominations. Each board member is being asked to make a nomination for an award. Goals include developing a plan for the split nationals, upgrading awards, building prize funds, and developing a sponsorship package.

Collegiate Committee: Martin gave the report for Mike Wells. Planning includes having more student involvement, retaining collegiate players after graduation and growing the number of college programs. The tournament is still a huge success but it's a struggle to find large facilities to hold it.

First Ace: Hogan outlined the grant reports that had come in for the half-year. Hogan's three-year plan includes road shows, growing the number of teachers, and focus on retaining the graduating seniors from the collegiates.

Member Services: Cruz said the membership numbers being down reflected the number of players being down. Also some states had shown improvement in member numbers while some had fallen. A sample letter was developed to be sent to former members. Planning ideas included developing incentives for selling memberships, improve the image of the USHA, membership discounts, and better member services.

Personnel: Nett presented the review of the board self-evaluation and the scores that needed improvement. Nett has been working on a succession plan for the Executive Director's position for such time as current director retires. Nett will draft the process by July 20 and ask for committee responses by Aug. 1. A final action plan and call would be scheduled for mid-September. Planning goals include making recommendation for developing the executive director's position, update guidelines for personnel, and increasing compensation.

Investment Committee: Wall reported on the year-to-date figures on the Endowment. Funds have been performing well, averaging around 13% for the year. Goals include maximize the endowment contribution to the organization, minimizing risk, and grow contributions to the fund.

Budget Committee: Birrell noted the goals being to fund any transition periods in balls sales and staff, including funding better marketing efforts. Cruz noted that there is the perception that the USHA is flush with money due to endowments but those funds are designated for needs other than operations.

At-large elections: Running for the two available seats are Steve Birrell, Ralph Fregoso and Jim Ward. Steve Birrell and Ralph Fregoso won re-election.

Regional Elections: Nett will chair Southwest, Hogan will chair Southeast, Sove will chair Southern Cal.

Martin asked for committee membership changes from the board and then asked what board members would do to grow the game before the next board meeting in Tucson in late January.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.