

2024 SUMMER NATIONAL BOARD REPORT

The ACBL Board of Directors held its summer meetings face-to-face (F2F) Monday, July 15 through Wednesday, July 17 in Toronto. The Board, Task Forces and Committees continue to meet regularly through Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

FINANCE

The year-to-date (YTD) gain in net assets was \$1,176,000 through June 30, 2024. This includes a gain from investments of \$401,000. Excluding this gain, the gain from operations was \$775,000. This exceeded the budget by \$915,000. Revenues were \$7,779,000, \$431,000 in excess of budget. It is expected that this revenue variance will be maintained and will probably get larger by the end of the year. Expenses were \$7,004,000, \$484,000 under budget. It is expected that this variance will decrease since many budgeted costs will not be incurred until later in the year.

The balance sheet remains strong. Net assets are \$9,916,000 as of June 30, 2024. Cash and investments are \$12,567,000.

AUDIT

The ACBL Audit was completed following the spring NABC and ACBL passed without qualification. As required, the Committee will conduct its annual review of its Charter, found in Appendix 4-D1 of the Codification, prior to F2F Board meetings held this fall.

MEMBERSHIP

ACBL membership continues to stabilize. As of July, there were 128,604 paid ACBL members; a 0.27% decrease compared to July of 2023. Membership initiatives (January - June) include 27 campaigns that produced 430 students, 240 new members and 81 paid members with a cost per member acquisition of \$35. YTD, over 3,800 former guest members converted to paid members and approximately 1,030 current guest members (within the 120-day free trial period) converted to paid members.

STRATEGIC

The Committee of the Full Board established the strategic goals of the organization. Focus remains on membership recruitment and retention and the establishment of a Social Bridge Division. Financial stability encompasses refining strategic direction for online bridge, approach to VACBs and revisions to the way NABCs are conducted. Continuing to provide a clean game, both online and F2F, is a top priority. Stabilizing and modernizing ACBL IT infrastructure to allow ACBL to implement projects that will ensure balance between online and F2F bridge remains key.

A Membership Recruitment and Retention Task Force, a Club Task Force, an NABC Business Model Task Force and an Online Provider Task Force have been formed to facilitate and streamline the planning process. Each is comprised of Board members and non-Board liaisons.

The Membership Recruitment and Retention Task Force is supporting the launch of a Social Bridge Division, identifying pathways to participation, required infrastructure and

strategies for engagement. ACBL now holds a social bridge night online. Visit: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/social-bridge/>

The Club Task Force is soliciting club best practices and providing pathways for access, improving the functionality of the Club Corner page of the ACBL website and identifying ways to combine online teaching with traditional F2F play.

The NABC Business Model Task Force is developing strategies to revitalize the current NABC Model to maximize attendance, customer satisfaction and the profitability of future NABCs. A proposal for new NABC Models, including experimental formats and schedules, will be presented in the fall.

ACBL members who have and have not attended an NABC were surveyed. See the attached PDF for the takeaways.

As part of the NABC discussions, the NABC Site Selection Liaison reported a rationale for selecting Rio Las Vegas as the site for the summer 2027 NABC. Financial benefits, a variety of affordable dining options and favorable room and event terms were outlined. The Board then approved the site for summer 2027. View the NABC calendar: <https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/nabccalendar/>.

The ACBL Online Provider strategy will foster innovation, eliminate dependency on one provider and give ACBL the flexibility to meet the current and future needs of its members. The strategy includes offering e-sanctions to educational platforms and to tech platforms to hold ACBL games. Current trials with a number of potential platforms are underway.

COMBATING ONLINE CHEATING

ACBL is using a Computer-Based Cheating Detection Program (CBCD), EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach), to detect cheating in ACBL masterpoint games held on BBO.

After an initial launch of six weekly runs, ACBL is now submitting monthly requests to The EDGAR Association (TEA). 5250 players have been submitted to TEA for screening since February 1. A total of 17,501 players have been examined. This includes partners of the submitted players as well as some redundancy (some players may have been submitted more than once, e.g., due to being under “Heightened Scrutiny” and then being part of a random draw for screening). EDGAR has identified 242 players as cheating and about 200 as needing further review. The rate of cheating is estimated to be under 2%.

Since, 2020, approximately 83,000 ACBL members have played in ACBL games held on BBO. All players will be screened. It is estimated that the running of all online players will be completed in Q1 of 2026.

The severity of discipline depends on the total masterpoints of each player and on aggravating factors: Previous discipline for ethical violations, members in positions of authority or honor (ACBL Board members, ACBL employees, Advisory Council (AC) members, national committee members, District and Unit officials and awardees), cheating with multiple players and players with over five platinum points.

Forty-four players have accepted Fast Track Discipline (FTD) based on EDGAR results. Thirty-eight have agreed to Negotiated Resolutions (NR). Eleven cases are pending before The Institute for Bridge Arbitration (IBA) – eight pairs and three individuals.

For more information on EDGAR, see August 2024 *Bridge Bulletin* article, “What Every Online Player Needs to Know about EDGAR, p. 28.

APPEALS AND CHARGES

The Appeals and Charges (A&C) Committee Chair reported on the NRs received between March and June of 2024, the majority of which were for ethical violations identified by EDGAR. One NR was initially rejected and approved after modifications were submitted.

Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List can be found on the Ethics & Discipline page of the ACBL website: <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>.

Upholding ACBL Disciplinary Guidelines

The United States Bridge Federation (USBF) permitted two players “Not in Good Standing” to participate in the 2024 USBF Team Trials and their subsequent selection for international competition. In response, the Board expressed the need for synergies between ACBL Disciplinary Guidelines and those of the North American Bridge Federation (NABF) and its NBOs - the USBF, the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) and the Federación Mexicana de Bridge (FMB). The Board stressed the importance of fostering open and consistent communication and suggested potential deterrents to prevent future occurrences such as amending the Codification to link adherence to ACBL Disciplinary Guidelines to funds distributed to the NBOs, primarily raised through International Fund games.

Management was directed (Action Item 242-AC01) to use the May 8, 2024 version of the CDR to apply the appropriate level of Fast Track Discipline (FTD) retroactively to individuals who originally would have qualified for lower discipline under the May 8, 2024 CDR and agreed to a NR.

Sentences will be commuted to the time served for those disciplined persons who are currently serving suspensions whose discipline would be reduced to a warning under this action. All other qualifying members as defined above will have their suspensions reduced based on the new penalties set forth in the May 8, 2024 CDR. In no case will the penalty or prohibitions be increased because of this Action Item. This action does not apply to any party whose case is pending before the IBA.

Motion (Item 242-AC02) updates the ACBL Recorder Regulations as required in the Codification I - Membership Operating Guidelines F. ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations and Disciplinary Administration, Section 3.4 (Attachment C).

Carried: 13-0-0

Effective: July 29, 2024

GOVERNANCE/COMMUNICATIONS

Governance continues to streamline the ACBL Codification, the compilation of the rules and regulations passed by the Board. The goal is to create a user-friendly document that is less complex in language and in structure.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for ACBL regulations, policies and procedures were completed in January, and include definitions, scope and positions responsible for enforcement. The SOPs are being used to identify ACBL regulations, policies and procedures that will be removed from the Codification and then “live” in an online document library for ease of access and scheduled/periodic review. Redundancies and outdated provisions and language will continue to be removed from the Codification.

Governance/Communications produces the *National Board Report* and provides content for the Board page of the *Bridge Bulletin*. Board policies and protocols are being reviewed. A correspondence to stakeholders that clarifies the distinction between Regions and Districts and the use of Regional logos is complete.

As part of its preparation for meetings in Toronto, Governance reviewed the following seven motions.

Currently, the ACBL Bylaws do not include a provision to fill the position of Regional Director (RD) when no candidates have declared. This prompted Motion (Item 242-GV01), offering a provision to extend the term of the incumbent RD, subject to incumbent consent. This Motion was tabled (13-0-0) to provide additional time to discuss all provisional options and to ensure that the proposed provision comports with NY law. Communication protocols to stakeholders regarding open RD positions are being reviewed.

The Board Oversight Committee consists of the Board Vice President as Chair and two additional Board members. Motion (Item 242-GV02) proposes that the two additional members of the Committee be elected annually by the Board in lieu of the current process which is automatic and based on status as Past President and longevity on the Board.

Motion failed: 4-8-0

Motion (Item 242-GV03) redefines the role of the Executive Committee to include decisions relating to Board Oversight, and clarifies existing language relating to the Committee such as length of service and Committee roles. The Motion-Makers will resubmit the Motion without reference to Board Oversight for consideration in the fall.

Motion failed: 11-2-0

Motion (Item 242-GV05) focuses on policy regarding official ACBL publications, amending the Codification to identify the duties that shall be performed by the Editor and where the Editor has discretion to determine communication vehicles used to publish information deemed of value to membership.

Motion carried: 12-0-1

Effective: July 29, 2024

The following three Motions were placed on the Consent Calendar with effective dates of July 29, 2024:

Motion (Item 242-GV04) proposes that the Board “Interim” Guidelines, enacted for Board meetings in fall of 2023 and further refined for Board meetings in spring of 2024, be incorporated into the Codification.

Motion (Item 242-GV06) references to the Board Social Media Policy in the Codification.

Motion (Item 242-GV07) removes the ACBL Charity Foundation Bylaws from the Codification. The ACBL Charity Foundation is a self-supporting, independent organization; therefore, the Foundation’s Bylaws should not be part of the Codification.

BYLAWS

The Committee, as part of its duties, is preparing a revision to the Bylaws to eliminate language related to the District-to-Region reorganization.

BRIDGE

As part of its preparation for meetings in Toronto, the Bridge Committee reviewed the following five Motions:

Motion (Item 242-BR01) gives Districts the ability to hold one annual junior, youth or collegiate regional in addition to the five annual NLM Regionals already being allotted.

Placed on the Consent Calendar
Effective: January 1, 2025

Two Motions (Item 242-BR02) and (Item 242-BR03) relate to Grand National Teams (GNT) and North American Pairs (NAP), and were initiated to promote participation, mainly in the lower Flights. A Fourth Flight was added to NAP, and the Flight with 0-2500 masterpoints was expanded to 0-3000. The lowest Flight was expanded to include all players with 0-750 masterpoints rather than Non-life Masters with up to 500.

The proposed “re-labeling” of Flights for both GNT and NAP are:

- Championship Flight: 0-unlimited
- Flight A: 0-6000
- Flight B: 0-3000
- Flight C: 0-750

Changes to the GNT Conditions of Contest will go into effect September 1, 2024 to coincide with the start of the GNT 2024/2025 qualifying period and the summer NABC GNT Finals held in July 2025.

Changes to the NAP Conditions of Contest will go into effect June 1, 2025 to coincide with the start of the 2025 NAP qualifying period.

Carried: 12-1-0

Alert: The Advisory Council, during its summer annual meeting held August 3, passed two motions requiring the Board to reconsider both the GNT and NAP Motions (Item 242-BR01 and Item 242-BR02). This was due to the objections to opening the lowest Flight to all players with 0-750 masterpoints rather than continuing to limit Flight participation to Non-life Masters with fewer than 500 masterpoints. The Board will vote to reconsider these Motions before the GNT Conditions of Contest go into effect on September 1.

Motion (Item 242-BR04) clarifies the masterpoint awards for concurrent club games, stating that F2F games may count F2F concurrent limited tables at the same location with the same club sanction. Online games may count online concurrent tables with the same club sanction that start within 30 minutes of each other. F2F venues may not count online tables, and online venues may not count F2F tables.

Carried: 13-0-0

Effective: July 29, 2024

When a Sectional (excluding STACs) or a higher-rated event is being conducted within a 25 mile (radius) of a club game's playing site, the club is permitted to hold only its regularly scheduled club masterpoint games. This regulation does not apply to Limited/Restricted Sectionals. To further promote F2F play and to support local Units, this motion (Item 242-BR05) proposes increasing the radius to 75 miles.

Motion (Item 242-BR05) was tabled (8-5-0) to fall to provide time to determine if one radius, regardless of distance, can be applied to all Districts and if ACBL has a pathway to enforcement.

APPOINTMENTS

John Jones, Phil Clayton, Alex Kolesnik, Chris Moll and Pam Wittes were appointed to the Online Ethical Oversight Committee to each serve three-year terms from the end of the 2024 summer NABC through the end of the 2027 summer NABC.

Carried: 13-0-0

Effective: July 29, 2024