2025 SPRING NATIONAL BOARD REPORT

The ACBL Board of Directors convened for virtual meetings on Monday, March 3, followed by in-person (F2F) meetings in Memphis, TN, from Monday, March 10 to Thursday, March 13, preceding the North American Bridge Championships (NABC). The Board, Committees, and Task Forces continue to meet regularly online via Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

FINANCE

In February 2025, the gain from operations was $159k, exceeding the budget by $81k but falling $39k short of the 2024 figure. Monthly revenues reached $1.32M, $45k above the $1.127M budget. Expenses were $1.16M, which was $36k (or 3%) below the budgeted $1.2M.

Year-to-date (YTD), the gain in net assets totaled $257k. This is $364k greater than the budget but $186k less than the $443k YTD gain from the previous year.

The balance sheet remains strong, featuring $9M in investments and $5.8M in deferred revenue from future membership expirations.

MEMBERSHIP TRENDS

As of February, while overall membership showed a decrease from 130,602 last year to 124,076 this year, YTD figures indicate a positive trend with a 25.77% increase in new members and a 27.27% increase in new guest members.

GROWING THE GAME

Two exciting initiatives, the ACBL Community and Jump Start Bridge, are actively working to invigorate the bridge community by engaging current players in new ways and cultivating the next generation of enthusiasts. These programs are of significant interest as they strategically address membership engagement, support local clubs, and the long-term vitality of bridge.

ACBL Community

The ACBL Community empowers players to support their local F2F bridge clubs while enjoying online competition and earning special Masterpoint rewards. This central hub connects players from local clubs, the ACBL Clubhouse, and Community Games, fostering a vibrant bridge community. Importantly, a portion of every game entry fee in the Clubhouse directly supports the player's local club. By participating in the Community Club, players actively invest in and strengthen their local bridge communities, ensuring the continued vitality of F2F bridge.

For details, go to https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/daily-online-games/.

Jump Start Bridge

Jump Start Bridge, an initiative led by Patty Tucker, introduces bridge to middle and high school students, fostering skills such as critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and social development.

The program is garnering significant interest, particularly among teachers attending gifted children conferences who are actively seeking enriching curriculum for their students. This enthusiasm is fueling the program's impressive growth.

Tucker attended the final session of the Memphis meetings to update the Board on the successes of Jump Start Bridge. As of mid-March, over 100 dedicated volunteers have contributed more than 3,000 hours, connecting with nearly 2,000 prospective teachers at 20 gifted children and math conferences nationwide. As a result, 411 teachers have registered, successfully bringing the game to over 18,000 students across 236 cities in 35 states and two Canadian provinces. The program is poised for further expansion, with presentations scheduled at major upcoming educational conferences in 2025.

Jump Start Bridge provides teachers with valuable standards-aligned resources, ongoing support, and incentives like stipends and free supplies. Students benefit from exciting opportunities to participate in championships, summer camps, and youth games.

While challenges such as funding and volunteer recruitment remain, the program's impact continues to grow. Jump Start Bridge's partnerships with the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation are vital, and Tucker emphasizes the significant role of community support in further expanding its reach. Individuals can contribute through donations, volunteering, program promotion within their networks, and advocating for bridge in school curriculums.

For details, go to https://www.jumpstartbridge.org/**.**

MEMBER RETENTION

During its meetings, the Board favorably received a proposal for a Ranking Rewards Program to acknowledge and incentivize member progress. This initiative aims to reward dedication, strengthen local communities, increase tournament participation, and enhance member loyalty through benefits for reaching milestones such as Life Master. Implementation will involve developing a communication plan, partnering with local organizations, and creating a tracking system.

SUPPORTING UNITS AND DISTRICTS

The Board addressed "Pathways to Improving Tournaments," a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing challenges for tournament organizers. Drawing on feedback from organizers and players, and in close collaboration with attending Tournament Directors, the Board discussed three key areas: optimizing tournament schedules, refining overall scheduling, and improving staffing models.

Concerning tournament schedules, the Board emphasized empowering organizers to create appealing and rewarding experiences. Key strategies include tailoring event variety and format to anticipated attendance, ensuring viable event sizes, and strategically balancing pair and team events. The Board stressed learning from past regionals, collaborating with tournament directors, and creating simple, well-stratified schedules, particularly for smaller events.

Regarding tournament scheduling, the Board addressed concerns over declining attendance, mainly at open regionals. The viability of alternative regional types, e.g., senior, Intermediate and Newcomer (I/N), and split regionals, the current allocation method (considering geography, city limits, and minimum table requirements), and the feasibility of regional-based allocations were discussed. Parallel discussions focused on I/N Regionals, examining their designation, allocation, and effectiveness as an alternative to open events, particularly in conjunction with sectionals.

In the area of tournament staffing, the Board focused on better support for the organizers that run ACBL tournaments while balancing cost and quality. Feedback highlighted concerns regarding staffing transparency and cost oversight. Recommendations include increasing transparency through clearer selection processes, improving cost management with better oversight of expenses, and using data to optimize staffing levels.

Following these initial discussions, the Board identified key areas for improving tournament operations at all organizational levels, such as developing best practices to help organizers optimize tournament schedules and actionable strategies to enhance staffing models. Updates will be shared with the membership as this initiative progresses, with the goal of creating a more vibrant and successful tournament landscape.

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

The Memphis meetings provided an opportunity to increase awareness and understanding of the organizations involved in fostering bridge internationally. Officials from the World Bridge Federation (WBF) attended the Wednesday morning session. Their presentation included an overview of current WBF structure and goals and their plans for the future. While unable to attend in person, the Presidents of the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) and the Federation of Mexican Bridge (FMB) joined the presentation via Zoom, providing an opportunity for active participation. A representative from the United States Bridge Federation (USBF) was on-site.

COMBATING ONLINE CHEATING

The ACBL continues to utilize EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach) to detect online cheating. Since February 1, 2024, 12,089 players have been submitted for screening, with a total of 37,875 examined. Approximately 700 players identified by EDGAR have been charged, and the current online cheating rate, which includes all players (members, non-members, and inactive accounts), is between 2.5% and 3%. Screening of all online players is hoped to be completed by year-end. Disciplinary

actions have included Fast Track Discipline (303 players), Negotiated Resolutions (45), Expedited Disciplinary Panels (9), and Institute of Bridge Arbitration resolutions (26), with 20 resignations to avoid discipline and other cases pending.

APPEALS AND CHARGES

The Appeals and Charges Committee Chair reported on one approved Negotiated Resolution for Ethical Violations identified by computer-based cheating detection. An appeal of a May 2024 Expedited Disciplinary Proceeding decision was heard in February, and the original decision was affirmed. ACBL management issued two Suspensions Pending Hearing in March for players competing in the online regional tournament under extraordinary circumstances.

To view Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List, go to https://www.acbl.org/ethics/.

GOVERNANCE

With a focus on user-friendliness and operational efficiency, the Governance Committee is advancing several important initiatives. These include streamlining the ACBL Codification, revising the Board Resource Manual, and reviewing the Board's election processes.

Governance continues its work to streamline the ACBL Codification, the central collection of Board-approved rules and regulations, aiming for a more user-friendly document with simpler language and structure. Navigation will be improved through accurate cross-referencing to foundational documents such as the ACBL Bylaws and the Board Resource Manual, as well as to the ACBL website, ultimately enhancing the clarity and usability of the ACBL's governing documents.

The Board Resource Manual, a valuable tool for both new and returning Board members, is undergoing revision. Designed to anticipate common questions and provide essential reference materials, the revised manual aims to further foster effective collaboration. This updated resource will enhance Board member onboarding and ongoing support by offering quick access to vital information, thereby improving efficiency and overall effectiveness in their roles.

Governance is also actively reviewing and proposing updates to its election provisions before the next election cycle to optimize processes, including adjusting the timeline, removing candidate labels, and transitioning to electronic voting. To enhance engagement, the Committee aims to improve pre-election communication and increase awareness of these positions. The updated Board/Advisory Council (AC) election notice, better defining position criteria, has been published in the March and April editions of the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin.*

Regarding Board operations, the Board clarified allowable expenses based on the expected length of F2F meetings, with the fall meeting date change to start one day

earlier, enabling Board members, supporting staff and management, to return home for Thanksgiving.

Enhancing Communication Practices

The Board is enhancing its communication practices with the newly approved Email and Social Media Policies (effective March 13, 2025), fostering responsible and reliable digital engagement. The Email Policy encourages professional, secure and compliant use of corporate email, while the Social Media Policy promotes clear and consistent messaging, contributing to a more unified and protected online presence for the ACBL.

The Governance Committee plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency and keeping the membership informed about the Board's activities. To this end, Governance produces this *National Board Report,* providing a summary of key discussions, decisions and ongoing initiatives. Additionally, Governance provides content for the Board page of the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*, offering another avenue for members to stay connected with the work of the Board.

Bylaw Amendments Pass Second Reading

Two motions to amend the ACBL Bylaws received unanimous approval at their second readings in Memphis and will take effect upon ratification by the AC at its March 30 meeting:

- Motion (251-BY01) updates Articles V-X concerning the Board and AC elections by eliminating outdated information, simplifying language, and generalizing Board vacancy provisions for greater flexibility.

- Motion (251-BY02) amends publishing procedures, allowing the ACBL to notify members of bylaw changes by either publishing the full text or providing a website link in its official ACBL publication, streamlining the notification process.

NABC SITE SELECTION UPDATE

ACBL management, with Board approval, has selected the host sites for upcoming NABCs: summer 2028 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando (July 21 - August 8) and summer 2029 at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta Downtown (July 27 - August 14). Contracts will be signed pending final negotiations to confirm appropriate hotel room and meeting space, costs, and logistics.

APPOINTMENTS

Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Committee: Betty Starzec has been appointed to the Central National Goodwill Committee, effective March 3, 2025, to complete the unexpired term of Rebecca Brown, who resigned following her election to the ACBL National Board. Starzec's term will continue through March 2027.

Competition and Conventions Committee: Franco Baseggio, Doug Doub, Jeff Ford, David Grainger, and Jeff Meckstroth were appointed for three-year terms ending at the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

Hall of Fame Committee: Kevin Dwyer-Rimstedt, Adam Grossack, and Joe Grue were appointed for three-year terms ending at the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

Ethical Oversight Committee: Kevin Bathurst, Jon Brissman, Bruce Ferguson, Hendrik Sharples, and Eddie Wold were appointed for three-year terms ending at the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

ACBL Disciplinary Committee: Iftikhar Baqai, Chris Benson, Jan Martel, and Chris Moll were appointed for three-year terms ending at the spring 2028 NABC, effective March 3, 2025.

Laws Commission: Chris Compton, Ron Gerard, and Adam Wildavsky were appointed for five-year terms ending at the spring 2030 NABC, effective March 25, 2024.

Masterpoint Committee:

- President At-large Member Appointments: Doug Couchman, Lee Lin and Russ Jones with terms ending at the spring 2026 NABC.

- Management Appointments: Rob Maier, David Metcalf and Sol Weinstein (non-voting Advisor) with terms ending at the spring 2026 NABC.