

# 2022 APRIL ACBL DISTRICT DIRECTOR REPORT

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## Greetings!

It was terrific to see old friends (and meet new ones!) when I played with my son Isaac at the Dayton sectional last month. It reminded me of the best that our game offers, what I call those “moments in between” – the table banter after a hand is played, touching base with friends between rounds, hearing laughter from a distant table, and even the drive up and back to Dayton.

The COVID Era is still upon us, unfortunately, and our clubs and tournaments are struggling to adapt to the new reality of significantly lower table counts. Costs haven't gone down, and clubs and Units need your help to survive. If you haven't been to your local club since COVID hit, would you consider it?

I'm including the ACBL Board report from our Reno meetings at the 2022 Spring NABC at the end of this newsletter. But I wanted to highlight some of the important developments and questions facing the ACBL and provide some news from around the District. I'll focus on decisions that matter most to our players, but if you're not interested in a particular item, feel free to skip to the next one. I also want to maintain an approach that balances the informational content (what did the Board decide?) with opinion (why did I vote a certain way?).

## District 11 ACBL Membership Update

	Unit Name	Members	Year-Over-Year Trend
Unit 130	Central Indiana	864	-5.5 %
Unit 124	Cincinnati	784	-4.6 %
Unit 122	Central Ohio	555	-3.8 %
Unit 117	Louisville	430	-4.6 %
Unit 136	Miami Valley	281	-12.2 %
Unit 193	Cardinal States	337	-4.5 %
Unit 164	Bluegrass	296	-3.2 %
Unit 227	West Virginia	84	-12.5 %

## Membership Update

As you can see from the table above, the membership news is, well, not great. Our District-wide 5.3% decline in YOY membership is not much different from the ACBL-wide 6.1%, however, and only 17 of our 292 Units in the entire ACBL showed any growth at all. Membership growth faces several headwinds – demographic, geographic, COVID challenges, changes in players' preferences and behaviors – and it seems silly to hope for a magic bullet. We'll see what the future holds, but in the meantime, we appreciate your continued support.

## Royal STaC Coming! Gold Points at Your Club!

In an effort to jumpstart the attendance at in-person clubs, we've allowed every District to run a single Royal STaC week that awards equal parts Gold/Red/Silver/Black points. This is a rare opportunity to win gold points outside of a Regional, so I hope anyone needing some of their colored point requirement high tails to their club for some games.



Our Royal STaC week is April 25 - May 1, 2022. Make sure your local club is signed up. District-wide awards are available if similar MP-limited games are aggregated in the same time slot (morning, afternoon, evening).

## GNT Winners!

2022 D11 GNT Winners			
Open Flight	Flight A	Flight B	Flight C
John Bishel Tom Bishel Dennis Hesthaven John Hinton	Barbara Levinson Larry Klein Steve Moese Mike Purcell	Thomas Lepping Terry Maguire R Blaine Mullins Charles Seelbach  Pam Campbell Larry Newman Dennis Schultz Isaac Stephani	Robert Bradford Steve Jonas Charles Middleton Pat Whitney

We had our first GNT District Finals since 2019, and though the turnout was lower than hoped, it seemed to run smoothly. Starting in next year, all GNT District Finals will be held in Cincinnati (with the possible exception of Flight C), the most centrally located large city in our District (NAP Finals have been held in Cincinnati for many years). These are my favorite events of the year, and I wish more people had a chance to experience them. Get October 15-16 (the NAP Finals) on your calendar now!

## ACBL Board Election



You might have heard that several years ago we combined District voting to reduce the size of the ACBL Board from 25 down to 13. That process is underway, and our District is combined with District 8 (Illinois ex-Chicago, Missouri) and District 10 (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, western Tennessee) to form a single Region. That's a big area, stretching from almost from the Great Lakes down to the Gulf of Mexico. I have declared my candidacy for that position, and I will be making some trips in the coming months so that Unit and District Boards in those other Districts can meet me

personally. If you have a Unit Board meeting in the next several months and would be interested in my ACBL Board member experience and to ask some questions, please let me know.

We didn't change our electorate, which remains Unit Board members. If you're a Unit Board member, PLEASE make sure to vote in this election – because of the way we calculate the voting power, non-voting Unit Board members have their share of the vote allocated to those Board members who DO vote.

Also, in case you were wondering: this has no other implications for our District. Our District Board, GNT and NAP contests, tournament policies, and District-wide programs will remain unchanged.

## Cincinnati Flying Pig Regional

This year, we're having a real Regional! We held a teaser "un-Regional" last October, but now we're ready for the real thing this June 12-17. Remember how much you enjoy the thrill of a big tournament? Make your plans and reservations now!

A few notes:

- The game schedule and tons of other information is located on the Flying Pig Home Page (click [here](#)).



- The tournament is running an unusual Sunday-Friday schedule (we have our reasons). Get used to it – I suspect many more tournaments will adopt a similar schedule change in coming years.
- Room rates are still an unbelievable \$89/night – for a Marriott property, that’s unheard of! And the hotel is beautiful after a \$10 million makeover – they’ve got a brand new restaurant inside, a Starbucks, and a great new microbrewery with a wonderful lunch menu right next door. Use our special reservation link (click [here](#)) to get the special group rate.



- Free t-shirts for everyone! The first 300 people who register will get a free t-shirt this year – our way of saying thank you for coming back to live tournament bridge.

- Remember to bring proof of vaccination – although ACBL policies could change, vaccination will likely be required. Masks will be recommended, as always.



## ACBL Board of Directors Happenings

The ACBL Board of Directors resumed its regular(ish?) in-person meetings in Austin back in November and again in Reno last month. We still continue to figure out the right way to think about the relationship between online bridge vs. in-person bridge, physical clubs vs. virtual clubs, and safety vs. individual choice. The ACBL Board and Management are not always on the same page on many of these questions, and we’re trying to figure out how to work together to figure it out. New ACBL President Joann Glasson gets kudos for jumping into the position with both feet!

Rest assured that I understand the situation facing our in-person clubs, and I’m advocating as hard as I can to make sure our game survives. Our playing environment will change, and it has already changed, but our clubs are our lifeblood. We need help, and I’m trying to resound those pleas to anyone who will listen.

Here’s the nuts and bolts of what the ACBL Board and Management have been busy with:

The ACBL Board of Directors held 3 days of meetings on March 8-11, 2022. The ACBL Board of Directors, committees and work groups continue to meet regularly through Zoom and conference calls. Here’s a breakdown by Board Committee and department:

### NATIONAL DIRECTORS REPORT

## SPRING 2022

### FINANCE

As of year-end 2021, net assets totaled \$9.9M. The increase in net assets for the year was \$2.65M. This included a COVID relief item from the federal government of \$1.5M and \$450,000 of non-operating items. Therefore, the actual gain from operations was approximately \$700,000. The budgeted loss for 2022 is \$858,000 which includes depreciation of \$302,000. The Reno NABC loss has yet to be determined, but will significantly impact the actual loss for the year if all other items remain as budgeted.

### MEMBERSHIP

According to the latest ACBL Quarterly Unit Improvement Package (QUIP) Report issued 3/31/22, ACBL membership totals 139,108; a decline of 1.54 percent since the report was last issued on 12/31/21.

### STRATEGIC

The Board has established key goals and objectives for the organization that include a robust return to F2F club and tournament play, building and retaining membership and improving technology. Management is developing action plans and implementation strategies for established goals and objectives. The Strategic Committee is developing the long range or vision and setting quantifiable targets. Plans are to be delivered in Providence.

The Board held Breakout Sessions in Reno to address the challenges facing the ACBL today and into the future. This gave Board members the opportunity to share concerns from their District(s) and knowledge acquired from serving in bridge governance. A detailed report was prepared and delivered to Management to provide additional input into the planning process.

### MARKETING

ACBL Marketing develops and implements initiatives to increase membership and member value.

The Intro to Bridge program has led to over 880 new bridge players, many of whom transition to the Guest Membership program. Over 2,500 guest members have come through this program since its launch in February of 2021. The ACBL will continue to build on these programs to support its mission to promote, grow and sustain the game of bridge while serving the bridge-related interests of its members.

Marketing has refreshed the ACBL website, streamlining content and improving functionality. It has refreshed the *ACBL Bridge Bulletin* and rolled out new logos and a tag line: Dealing Infinite Possibilities.

The first Member Appreciation event was held in October with more than 160 prizes awarded. The event produced strong engagement through ACBL social media channels, improving the ability to identify, target and attract bridge-playing audiences. Additional events are planned for 2022.

The *Speakeasy* newsletter electronically delivers updates and event reminders to membership twice monthly, reducing email overload. The *Speakeasy* is now posted on *BridgeFeed* and the ACBL Facebook page.

Long term, Marketing will embark on a research program that will help the ACBL better understand and meet the needs of prospective and current members. Through this process, Marketing has created member/prospect personas and journey maps. Both will provide a clearer picture of each touchpoint and how to improve them, which in turn will lead to greater member retention and membership growth.

[Supporting Alzheimer's Research](#)

The ACBL has raised \$7.8 million for Alzheimer's patient care and research through participation in The Alzheimer's Association's The Longest Day fundraising event. During 2021, approximately 300 Units and Clubs raised \$917,000. All Virtual Club Games held the weekend of June 18 and 19 are designated Alzheimer's Association games, and the ACBL sanction fees will be donated to the Alzheimer's Association. Clubs that have returned to F2F play can choose any day during the week of June 19-26 to hold their events and offer upgraded games.

Marketing is working with The Alzheimer's Association to schedule informational webinars about the latest scientific research and caregiver/patient support opportunities for ACBL members.

### Supporting the People of Ukraine

The United Nations World Food Program will receive net proceeds from the Hollywood Magic Online Regional held March 24-27, and additional proceeds from games held F2F and virtually March 28-31. BBO will donate \$10,000.

The ACBL Charity Foundation will donate up to \$25,000 of funds raised in virtual clubs, April 4-10, to UNICEF - Help Children in Ukraine.

## **APPEALS AND CHARGES**

In Reno, under Item C221-AC01, the Appeals & Charges Committee reported the outcome of its most recent hearing.

The Anti-Cheating Commission (not to be confused with the Anti-cheating Committee of the ACBL Advisory Council) was formally disbanded. The Commission was formed in the wake of high-level cheating scandals in 2015 and 2016, resulting from a recommendation of the Bridge Integrity Task Force. Over time, the committee made recommendations and reviewed players of concern to it. However, the committee was not in the position to do anything concrete, and the members did not feel that retaining the structure served any purpose. Discussion between the ACBL Executive Director and the National Recorder about possible reconstitution of the committee as a clearinghouse between bridge organizations resulted in action being taken in that direction apart from the committee. ACBL management believes that it is time to retire the formal committee. Many of the people who generously agreed to serve on the Anti-Cheating Commission will still be available to consult as needed.

The ACBL Board heard a confidential presentation concerning exciting new developments in detecting online cheating: Introducing EDGAR! More details coming soon, but a featured Bridgewinners thread was recently devoted to EDGAR's rollout (click [here](#)).

Complete information about the ACBL Disciplinary Process can be found at <https://www.acbl.org/ethics/>. This includes an explanation of how the process works, Disciplinary Disposition Summary Charts, and various disciplinary committee hearing reports.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Governance had a relatively light agenda for Reno, with three motions, a non-agenda item and two discussion items:

Motion (Item 221-GV01) eliminates the National Charity Committee and recognizes outstanding members who participate, organize and/or promote charity endeavors in their respective communities through the receipt of a Charitable Recognition Award. It proposes that District Presidents make the selections instead of the Region or District Directors. Details regarding process and timeline will be reported. Motion carried: Unanimous in Committee/Full Board.

Motion (Item 221-GV02) reorganizes, updates and clarifies the Codification relating to a Unit's relationship to the ACBL, Unit requirements and Unit responsibilities and privileges. It eliminates the requirement for Units to hold at least one sectional every two years, and clarifies that the 11 percent of full dues payments and life master service fees paid by their members is intended to supplement Unit funds for activities related to membership building and retention. Motion carried: 19/0/0.

Motion (Item 221-GV03) addresses a discrepancy in the election procedures for Board officials, non-Board committee members and representatives to international bridge organizations. Motion carried: Unanimous in Committee/Full Board.

Motion (NA221-01) was introduced as a non-agenda item (NAI), which means that it was not submitted in time to be included as part of the formal Reno agenda. NAIs are time-sensitive and require immediate Board attention. This NAI addresses the special election procedures that are needed to fill the vacancy left by the sudden and tragic passing of Region 6 Director, Mike Kovacich. The procedures adopted unanimously by the Board will govern the election of someone to serve the remainder of Mike's term.

Mike Kovacich had just begun his second term on the ACBL Board as the Director for Region 6, having been elected as the District 7 Director when he first ran in 2018 before the Board reorganization took effect. A long-time volunteer for his District, Mike held countless official positions both in D7 and in the Mid-Atlantic Bridge Conference. He brought his legal expertise, his keen insight, and his old-fashioned common sense to bear on a vast array of bridge policy discussions. He was most recently Vice-Chair of Governance, a member of the Bridge Committee, Board Liaison to the Masterpoint Committee, and an ardent supporter of finding incentives to encourage players to return to F2F bridge. He will be sorely missed.

Discussion Item (DI221-GV01) addresses a fairly complicated motion (213-GV04) having to do with the formation, transfer and dissolution of Units that had been submitted and then tabled in Austin last fall. A thorough discussion was held, both in Committee, and then again with the Full Board, where the Governance Committee made a number of recommendations concerning Unit formation, transfer, and dissolution; geographic boundaries; how to address administrative challenges borne by Units; and the processes whereby changes to a Unit's status may be made. Based on Board input, a motion will be submitted for consideration in Providence.

Discussion Item (DI221-GV02)—addresses the more extensive changes regarding election procedures, e.g., how notifying interested parties of upcoming vacant positions should be accomplished; declaring candidacy for these positions and a date by which this must be done; allowing nominations from the floor; the election procedures that govern them; and announcing the number of votes cast for whom. The Governance Committee met virtually in advance of Reno and presented a detailed set of recommendations to the Full Board concerning these and other procedures related to elections of Board officials, non-Board Committee members, and representatives to international bridge organizations. Based on Board input, a motion will be submitted for consideration in Providence.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REVIEW**

Executive Director Review (EDR) generally meets in executive session to protect the confidentiality of what is said by both the Board and the Executive Director. In Reno, there was one "public" motion (Item 221-ED01) which updated the Executive Director Succession Plan in the Codification Part 1 – Governance and Policy, Chapter II – Business Management, B. Employees and Consultants, Section 5. The wording in this section was significantly condensed and a new detailed Succession Plan was incorporated as Appendix 2-D. Motion carried: Unanimous in Committee/Full Board.

## **BRIDGE**

As the National Board reduces in size to 13 members, non-core related functions continue to be transferred to outside Committees and to Management. This will ensure that a smaller Board can focus on the strategic and financial goals and objectives of the ACBL. This transfer of authority is reflected in the majority of motions and a discussion item brought forth by the Bridge Committee.

Motion (Item 221-BR01) was put forth to refine the structure of the Competition and Conventions Committee and to define lengths of service. Motion carried: 19/0/0.

Motion (Item 221-BR02) to strengthen the eligibility restrictions for limited Masterpoint events was deferred to the Competition and Conventions Committee.

Motion (Item 221-BR03) to permit the use of robots to continue without over-inflating Masterpoint awards was deferred to the Masterpoint Committee.

Motion (Item 221-BR05) was put forth to streamline the process of Masterpoint modifications. Motion carried: 19/0/0.

#### Extended Timelines for NABC Hospitality Fundraising

The pandemic has impacted the ability for Districts to hold all allowed NABC fundraising weeks (for hospitality) in local clubs. A motion (Item 221-BR06) clarifies the current regulation that applies to F2F clubs, allows weeks that were missed in one (or two) of the three years before the NABC to be moved into the last year and adds one week of NABC fundraising in Virtual Clubs (only those run by clubs within the District).

Due to IT constraints, NABC fundraising in virtual clubs was removed from the motion. Management will report timeline, schedule and cost to run said games during Board meetings in Providence. Motion then carried: 19/0/0.

Also, a clean up motion (Item 221-BR08) was put forth to eliminate the redundancy in NABC hospitality requirements. Motion carried: Unanimous in Committee/Full Board.

#### Updated Electronic Device Policy

Players rely on their electronic devices to check scores and to pre-register for events. Therefore, (Item 221-BR04) moves that electronic devices (phones, tablets and watches) be allowed to be visible in and out of the playing area. Devices must be turned off during the play of the hand, but can be used between rounds. Penalties will continue to be assessed for disruptions due to devices that “ring” during play. Motion carried: 17/2/0.

Discussion Item (DI 221-BR01), reviewing opportunities for expanding hybrid online and F2F bridge, was deferred to the Strategic Committee. Current technical constraints are impeding immediate developmental activities. The longer term vision is to optimize the combined features and benefits of both online and F2F bridge capabilities.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

In 2022, the ACBL will invest heavily in Information Technology. In Reno, IT reported progress and timelines for building a reliable, streamlined and cost effective infrastructure.

IT will rely on third-party vendors and staff to continue architectural changes to the website, complete migration of the AS/400, update and finalize the Masterpoint Engine and improve ACBL Cloud. In addition, TRAX will be moved to a cloud-based application while ACBLScore will be moved to a web-based application. Progress regarding the tournament registration platform is highlighted below.

The Board liaison will continue to communicate progress and challenges.

#### Masterpoint Engine

Improvements have been made to the Masterpoint Engine special events calendar, allowing for queueing of special events months in advance. In addition, IT fixed AWS scaling rules to better handle additional load. It created new application workflows to process large games files previously restricted due to maximum file size limitations.

## Report Migration

IT continues the monumental effort to migrate the reporting from the old AS400 platform. It is building the pipeline to deliver reports and graphics through email distributions as well as the triggering and scheduling elements needed to deliver these emails in a purely automated manner.

## Pre-registration Platform

IT has made significant progress toward completing the tournament registration platform. In Reno, members had the option of pre-paying and pre-registering for various events through the ACBL Express Entry application. In the future, data analytics and reporting information will be provided to help tournament sponsors refine tournament schedules and reduce hospitality and director costs. A partnership “desk” component for those seeking partners for pair and team games will be provided.

I am always available by phone (513-313-0488) or e-mail ([AJStephani@gmail.com](mailto:AJStephani@gmail.com)) with questions or concerns. Take care of yourselves, your partners, and your neighbors out there.

Hope to see you in Cincinnati!

A.J.