

Minutes of ACBL Advisory Council Meeting

*Hybrid in-person/Zoom meeting held on July 26, 2025
via Zoom and at Center City Philadelphia Marriott Hotel & Convention Center*

Chairman Richard Popper called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m., established there was a quorum, announced the meeting was being recorded and welcomed first-time attendees both in person and via the electronic Zoom platform.

The minutes of the previous Advisory Council (AC) meeting held via Zoom on July 13, 2025, were approved unanimously without discussion.

Popper then temporarily adjourned the AC meeting and turned over the podium to ACBL President Margot Hennings to conduct the ACBL's annual General Membership meeting, for which it was established that a quorum was not present.

Hennings asked ACBL CFO Jennifer Webster to present the Finance and Litigation reports, which had been previously submitted to all registered participants. Webster highlighted that there was "not much to see" in the financial report, which she described as good news.

In answer to a question about how much the ACBL had spent so far on litigating the three pending cases mentioned in the report, ACBL CEO Bronia Jenkins said the ACBL was trying to minimize legal expenses and had spent "only a few thousand dollars" so far.

Jenkins then gave her management report, highlighting how the ACBL is trying to make it easier to become a member by establishing a free guest membership. The intent is to convert guest members eventually into paid members through an engagement program known as "sapphire."

Jenkins also reported that the ACBL is still in the middle of an IT upgrade to transition to more modern and robust IT systems. She said the upgrade had been completed on the membership side and the MasterPoint side of the system was next.

Jenkins also briefly described proposed changes to the structure of North American Bridge Championships (NABCs), to give them a "new look" and create a type of event between the multi-day NABC+ events where platinum points are at stake and the Regional-rated events with gold points. A new type of points could be earned at these events, tentatively called "titanium" points, although any new NABC structure will probably not be rolled out before 2028.

Jenkins next outlined proposed changes to the Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR), under which current punishments for players who engaged in illicit online collusion will be reduced in some cases. The two most notable changes would be that players who cheated in the 2020-2021 time period and have fewer than 5,000 MasterPoints will now be given only a warning but will be allowed to play in any and all ACBL-sanctioned events. This new measure will be applied retroactively. Others who admitted to cheating online and accepted fast-track

discipline would be allowed to play in face-to-face club games at the discretion of club managers.

During a lively question-and-answer period, Jenkins acknowledged discipline for online cheaters was a “split issue,” on which some members had pleaded for even harsher punishment, while many others said present punishments were too harsh. “In the end, rehabilitation is our goal, not punishment,” Jenkins said. “If you want to keep the game clean, then you run the risk of having no game at all. Let them go back to their clubs and have their social lifelines back.”

Jenkins noted that ACBL membership at present stands at about 121,000 and has been declining at about 10,000 per year. She said at present ACBL has 4 full-time employees working on discipline, which pushes people out. That is more than the number of people working on marketing to grow the organization, which she said is not an ideal proportion.

AC member Hugh McSheffrey asked whether other bridge organizations like the U.S. Bridge Federation (USBF) had agreed to reciprocity with ACBL on discipline and Jenkins said they had.

AC Chairman Popper reminded the AC members that they will have another opportunity to discuss and vote on the proposed discipline changes at an upcoming Special Meeting via Zoom on Aug. 15, 2025, and asked them, if possible, to save further questions until that time.

The ACBL General Membership Meeting was then adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Reclaiming the podium for the Advisory Council meeting, Chairman Popper noted that the AC at its previous meeting had already seen a series of mostly technical Board of Directors motions, and there was nothing new of substance to discuss.

Popper gave two clarifications on the motions already approved:

- The elimination of the need for written defenses against the 2D multi system applies only at NABC+ events at NABCs, and
- The reason for the earlier deadline (March 31 instead of May 31) for candidate filings for ACBL elected officers in the new all-electronic voting system is necessary to deal with the eventuality of multiple candidacies and possible runoff elections.

Steve Grzegorzewski gave a brief report from the AC’s Teachers/Education committee, highlighting the importance of education to the future of the ACBL and urging all AC members to write articles for their District newsletters, if any, on education and outreach activities.

Popper asked if there were any motions for reconsideration, and there were none.

Popper asked if there was any new business, and no new business was presented.

Adjournment was duly moved and seconded, and Popper adjourned the meeting at 10 p.m.