

Executive Summary - Advisory Council Meeting – Video Conference.

Membership:

End Feb 2024: 130,615 down **381** vs End Dec 2023 and down **1598** versus 1 Yr ago. Feb saw 563 new members, with **1212** going on unpaid status and **139** deceased.

Club Bridge:

ACBL President Margo Hennings established a task force to address clubs and member growth. No data regarding club tables was shared.

Finance:

Change in Net Assets at **\$592K** for 2023 is driven by investment gains of **\$652K** and a small net loss on operations (**\$60K**). The 2024 budget projects a net loss of **\$313K** from operations. *However several mitigation activities are underway to reduce this gap.*

Jan 2024 actuals are ahead of budget by **\$174K** due to better cost control

Management Report:

IT Roadmap: By the end of 2024Q1 Management projects Backoffice core member data management upgrades, auto renew fix, additional activity reports from Power BI, AS400 migration to the cloud and AD Migration. Project details for 2024 were reviewed. Recent wins include transition from Tableau to Power BI, Microsoft’s data analytics tool (cost savings); Coupons in Entry Express to allow discounts on entries for players staying on site, Significant cloud cost reduction, RDS upgrade to 8.0, n/18 for special games, and overall system stability.

Marketing: Management reported on active programs as follows:

BBO Lapsed Member Campaign	\$20 coupon	1400 lapsed members rejoined
Guest Membership	Yr 1 Discount \$29	4627 GMs → 1563 New Members 2023. 875 new GMs 2024
Lapsed Member Postcards	\$14K	1501 rejoined 2023. 218 rejoined 2024. Replaced by 5/5/5 Unit program
Boost	\$55K	9000 leads 760 students for 120 teachers.
CAP	\$28K	985 Students
Youth NABC College Bowls	\$42K	
LBIAD	\$11K	
Intro to Bridge	\$13K	153 Students
Lifelong Learning	\$14K	Student materials and instructor stipends
TAPS	\$17.5K	59 Regionals
Longest Day	\$2K	5700 tables → \$1.08MM
Grouper/E3H		E3H → Grouper
Support	\$74K	

Unofficial table count data is available at:

https://medcitybridae.com/R_other%20pages/work/F2F%20Updates.html

Submitted Respectfully,
 Stephen Moese K082411,
 Vice Chair ACBL Advisory Council

AGENDA

Doug called the spring general meeting to order at 7 PM ET. He recommended all District Representatives rename themselves with their District number. Doug welcomed new AD members to the meeting. He reminded everyone that the Advisory Council is a conduit to and from Members and Management/Board of Directors. We all need to do our communication work to keep our Districts, Units and Members updated about what's happening. Go out and spread the word about what's happening here.

The AC minutes from Dec 2023 were approved with a spelling correction.

ACBL President – Margot Hennings

Complimented Louisville as an NACB site. Excellent example of a good value. Inexpensive and good food. Will create several task forces – Clubs/Growth, Governance, NABC Business model. Louisville was an extraordinary value. Members will be asked for input to future NABCs.

A quorum was confirmed present for the AC Meeting. 51 total attendance.

Management Report – Bronia Jenkins

- Working with host hotels and player satisfaction at NABCs. People were very happy with Louisville.
- Working on NABC+ ethical behavior policy – work on ethical play at the top level.
- New format for STaCs. – ACBL will handle all billing and returning the fees to the sponsors. \$7.50 goes \$5.20 to ACBL and \$2.30 to the sponsor. Rob Mayer is on point
- Good meeting about online bridge and what the future should be. We want to get the schedule for 2025 finished by Toronto.
- Entry Express died, off 4 days. Revision worked. Many things are available for improvement. Will also look at how better to sell entries.
- EDGAR is underway. Fine-tuning it as we go.
- Patty Tucker in going to the Regional Gifted Conference has found a possible inroad into schools. Get in from the top as opposed to the bottom.
- Reviewed IT roadmaps – Escola is the development company from Poland. Getting new membership system to replace the code that connects the AS400 and membership data management. RDS upgrade to data code. Club game repository improvement next. Looking at how we might bring in other scoring software to replace ACBL Score. Power BI replaces Tableau (cost reduction; Microsoft compatibility) for data reports. Migration to Backoffice. AWS cost cutting successful. Implemented N/18; better system stability. For 2024 switch to backoffice Q2-24. Reviewed recent wins. Host hotel incentive enabled by Entry Express Coupon, responsible for meeting room commitment in Louisville. On Radar: MyACBL Upgrade, LIVE infrastructure upgrade, Trax to the Cloud. Club Management and Payments. Rethinking how to do NAP/GNT Qualifiers.
- Reviewed Marketing roadmaps – reported time spent – 4 marketing people but 8 FTEs covered by management and volunteers. Shared details on evaluation of Outreach, Education, Engagement Programs. E3H is now Grouper. Check to see if you are eligible for it. Grouper will pay for membership if you play. Becomes a marketing initiative requiring less IT integration – easier for ACBL. Need to support recruiters and emphasize 5/5/5 participation. **Return to the Fold** tool given to Units. Club Corner programs (Ambassador, Come and Play Cards With Us, Pickle Bridge) available to introduce bridge within your community. ACBL will pay for data about participants in these programs. Working on the Membership journey. Social Membership and Super Patron Membership in planning stage. Guest Members, Members, and Patron Members are current milestones. Special recruiter links and club based QR codes are available online and through member services.
- Membership continues dropping, but more slowly now.

Questions –

Doug Couchman – 5/5/5 and what Units need to do. The program isn't implemented right now. Most Units are not doing anything necessary to get more than 5%. Where is the information for the Units about what they need to do.

Bronia: Just sent out guidebooks to Units on recruiting. Retention tool has shown 202 Units have not used the tool yet. This needs to change. Just trying gets 2.5%. Some are waiting for the program to start. People are lapsing now – Units also need practice to draw people back to membership. We need help putting out the message.

Link to spreadsheet how Units are doing right now. <https://cloud.bridgefinesse.com/555RetentionProgress.html>

Doug: How do we answer Unit Presidents and Boards who say they do not know what to do? There's money on the table for the Unit, and there's value to the ACBL for the effort. We need to get to work. Get in touch with every Unit.

D14 Steve Gaynor: What Is N/18

Bronia: Is a multiplier given to clubs who runs special games. Not quite 1.5x, but up to 1.5x.

Martin Hirschman: You mentioned EDGAR is up and running. Starting to run batches of members through the system.

Doug: We will address EDGAR in detail with Larry Sealy

Martin: Looks like we will be coming up with some 1500 cheating pairs. Is the Recorder's office staffed sufficiently?

Bronia: No, more like tens of pairs. Larry Sealy has better data

Larry Sealy: We will run everyone who has played a sufficient number of deals in BBO. Original estimates were 2-3%. We find 1.3%. Roughly half our members are playing online.

Doug: More from Larry later.

Bronia: No need for more people in the Recorder's Office. We have trained people available (paid hourly) who have been certified to help when needed.

Hugh McSheffry: There seems to be a disproportionate number of spring NABCs in the East. Is there attention to geographic balance?

Bronia: Scheduling NABCs is an interesting question. The next 4 fall NABCs are on the west coast. Very difficult to optimize the 5-6 criteria necessary to run an NABC. Task force will address this. Should be rotating among 12 cities every 3 years. Mark Aquino is leading the task force.

Mark Lachapelle D1 – I play on BBO, NABCs, clubs, everywhere. Unsure about strategy of ACBL about online bridge because it has a strong tendency to bring people out of clubs hurting them financially.

Bronia: We want to foster all ways for all people to play bridge. Some need online bridge for many reasons. We want to support both.

Mark – But if you never play F2F bridge, you will never go to sectionals, regionals, and NABCs.

Bronia: We send club managers lists of BBO-only players in their area so they can invite them to play at their local club. Important this invitation comes from the club manager who can better manage the relationship.

Jason Furman D3 – One of the problems I have is the many clubs in my area are not offering games I can play because I work. How can we get clubs to offer evening and weekend games.

Bronia – We established pop-up games for red points on weekends at a reduced table fee. From a local club perspective clubs don't feel the local demand so they do not provide the product. Don't know how to make clubs do it.

Vangie Smith: I played in person for many years. I play only online right now and I will never play in person. What I do instead is to play with people to improve their skills so they feel confident to play in person.

Bronia: I agree.

Litigation Report (Bronia Jenkins)

- 1) Peter Marcus case has been settled. Most directors are now hourly employees. Some are managers are remain salaried.
- 2) Gary Hann case has been settled confidentially
- 3) Nic Hammond has countersued EDGAR on patent issues and included ACBL in the countersuit. EDGAR Foundation is in charge of the defense. ACBL Chris Sloan will guide ACBL involvement.

Ken Monzingo: What were the settlement details?

Bronia: ACBL paid money to the directors in the Marcus suit. Also paid the lawyers. Hann settlement is confidential. ACBL working on how to combat cheating at the top-level games.

Doug: Confidential settlements terms cannot be shared with anyone.

Financial Report - Jennifer Webster, Finance Director

- 2023 Final Report (audit complete next week – awaiting pension cost information). Discussed mitigation events to offset potential 2024 loss.
- Change in market value of investment and pension cost are based on market valuation. Retiree health benefits based on an evaluation done by a third party.
- We have about \$8MM in our investment account. AR and fixed assets don't change much from year to year.
- ACBL defers membership dues and only recognize that income monthly. Allowing members to renew ahead of the rate increase increased membership income substantially.
- \$399 spend with ESCOLA in 2023 and \$528 in 2024 to move AS400 to the cloud.
- Strong start to 2024 with a \$100K excess revenue over expense. February looks similar.
- Projected 6000 tables in Louisville. Spring is the lowest NABC attendance. 6757 tables surpassed the budget goal.

Rich Carle D20: I assume investments are in the stock market. Is that important for a NP organization? Should we be investing in fixed income.

Jennifer: We follow the codification and invest through Vanguard. There is a mixture of investments.

Jay Apfelbaum – Are the pension payment current obligation or an actuarially correct payment.

Jennifer: It's an actuarial investment – we should call it a retiree health benefit. Retirees pay for at least half of the plan. So it's fully paid.

Martin Hirschman – We have \$8MM invested – is it an appropriate amount or is it too high or too low?

Jennifer: It's a solid amount. If we had another devastating pandemic we would use up that \$8MM quickly. We are not here to bank money away. We are not for profit and we are not for loss. We want to ensure that the money we take in gets returned to members in a positive membership experience.

David Lodge: We're getting better at estimating table counts at NABCs. 750 tables over budget will boost income \$75K.

Jay Apfelbaum – The \$10 fee reduction for staying at the Galt House was waived for 4 days. How will that affect income.

Bronia: We did not put the \$10 increase in the budget so the 4-day

Doug Couchman – Chair Report to the Advisory Council

Board of Director (BoD) Minutes are not available for this meeting. Doug mentioned prior to the meeting that the BoD is looking to provide the Advisory Council with timely documents for our input and consideration. Lamya Agelydis is the new Goodwill Committee chair. Doug-reviewed Board of Directors actions – [Spring BoD Decisions](#)

ID	Title	BoD Action
241-BR01	Sectional Tournaments	Passed 12-0-0 Heller absent
241-BR02	Chapter X Codification Cleanup	Withdrawn
241-BR03	Chapter VI Codification Amendment	Passed 12-0-0 Heller absent
241-BR04	NAP Conditions of Contest Discussion about changing the levels of the NAP to match the GNT. Objection was based on a desire to do this now and not to wait more than a year to implement.	Passed 10-2-0 Cuneo, Zayac opposed, Heller absent
241-BR05	GNT Conditions of Contest	Passed 12-0-0 Heller Absent
241-BR06	Regionals	
241-GV01:	Board Expenses and Meetings – Split into two motions (Overby, second Aquino) Expenses Raised stipend for BoD Members from \$3K to \$6K Chair of the Advisory Council excluded from the increase Meetings: Eliminate F2F meeting in the Fall. <i>Save money and avoid Thanksgiving holiday. Will consider moving meetings a day or two to allow people to get home for Thanksgiving.</i>	Passed 10-3-0 Glasson, Hennings, Lodge opposed) Carried 7-5-1 Opposed: Hennings, Heller, Sealy, Steinberg, Glasson. Abstain: Lodge Failed: 3-10-1 (in favor Glasson, Hennings, White)
241-GV02:	Board President Expenses Language cleanup	Passed 13-0-0
241-GV03:	Life Members <i>Generated much discussion. Old promise about life membership is a distinction without difference. Claimed difficulty for backoffice data management.</i>	Passed 12-0-0
241-GV04:	Education Foundation Bylaws	Passed 13-0-0
241-GV05:	Clubs and Teachers Committee Desire to have more flexible decision-making. Can be managed with a task force to do the same thing.	Failed 13-0-0
Other Actions	Approved changes recommended by the Competition and Conventions Committee with the exception of the proposal to grant GLM eligibility based on winning the Senior or Mixed US Trials	Rejected 11-1-0 Opposed Aquino Absent Heller.

Doug thanked all the volunteers that make the ACBL work.

Doug mentioned that the AC will take nomination in the summer and elect new leaders in the fall.

Marc Lachapelle D1 – fewer and fewer clubs are holding qualifying games for NAPs. Perhaps the ACBL can offer qualifying sessions online.

Lee Linn D4 – Suspected that the change to the NAP would strain IT change management. We can think of ways to not make it an IT issue.

Lamya Agelidis – moved that members who have achieved the rank of life master be welcomed as life masters with all the privileges thereto.

Steve Gaynor D14 – In favor of the additional stipend to encourage Regional Directors to be more visible in their regions. Let's encourage the Regional Directors to do that!

EDGAR – Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach

EDGAR Foundation runs this tool. The AC Anti-Cheating Committee contributed to getting us where we are today. Asked the Committee to consider disbanding.

Larry Sealy – EDGAR Report

- Reviewed results seen over the past 6 weeks. Over 7000 players screened.
- CBCD – Computer based cheating detection – EDGAR. Started runs Feb 1. Soft launch to see what works and what needs fixing.
- EDGAR paints players as Green (not cheating) **Red** (Cheating beyond reasonable doubt), Yellow (in-between, for further review or needing more data).
- Partnerships have to have played enough deals to have a meaningful result.
- Over 7K players screened. **96** players identified as **RED** or about 1.3% of all players reviewed. **84** were **Yellow**. The balance were green.
- Partnerships with <300 MP and no aggravating factors, are given a warning. Subsequent evidence initiates discipline.
- Partnerships under 2500 (at least one 300+) eligible for Fast Track Discipline.
- If one has 2500 or more, they will be sent to IBA unless recorder's office and players reach a negotiated resolution.
- Aggravating Factors: Previous discipline for ethical violations, position of authority or honor, District and Unit Officials, Awardees, Cheating with multiple partners. Holding more than 5 Platinum Points.
- 4th and 5th runs included unit level board members and general players generated more reds.
- People identified as red have been offered a negotiate resolution. Some sent to the IBA. Some will resign to avoid discipline. Several warnings. Few FTD because people had aggravating factors.
- Very first runs included BoD, Management, Employees, Committees.

Marty Hirschman – Were the larger groups random or not?

Larry: One larger group included Unit Board members. Partner of cheater is included in those numbers. We will get to everybody who plays online. The plan is to do as many players as can be handled. We are still fine tuning our process. 1000 per week is possible. There are 80K people who have played online. That's 40K needing searches. The EDGAR group doing the runs working as intended

Steve Moese D11 – Is there any insight on the type of game where the cheating has occurred ? (VACB, BBO Online, or ACBL Tournaments)

Larry: we are not looking at the data that way for now. It contains all game types. We can see the breakouts in the future.

Steve: The Umbrella for EDGAR is all ACBL games online regardless of provider? Will the ACBL work with providers to ban suspicious players?

Larry: We look at games awarding ACBL Masterpoints. ACBL doesn't have the control to ban players from online play. People can create new accounts at will.

Doug: The AC needs to get the word out that the ACBL is working to clean up online bridge.

MOTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION –

Jay Apfelbaum – Life Member was a contractual agreement with members. Paying us with a year of free dues does not replace being a member for life.

Don Mamula – The board was advised that they cannot make this change in the past.

Motion: Reconsider 241- GV03 Seconded: Hirschman

Marty Hirschman - In 1976 I made life master and was promised to be a life member. Unsure why there is an expense for the computer database.

Wybrand Hoogland – What does it mean? What is the monetary value?

Doug: Service fee provided a \$2 per year discount, and now there isn't a discount anymore. Two issues raised: 1) Modernizing system to handle membership. Having a second membership grade is expensive. 2) Everyone is subject to the arbitration clause except life members.

Rich Carle D20: Terrifically unfair to everyone who has been life members. Some people would be active and play but they have problems. They should be honored for their contributions. I call BS on the coding issue. Just another member type.

Jay: A member gets to vote in elections. The expense of adding the label is nonexistent. Add a field.

Larry Sealy – If someone is a life member but unpaid, they are considered inactive but may play in games (except NABC for GNT). If we catch someone cheating who is inactive there is a potential issue because they haven't signed the arbitration clause.

Wybrand: Who knows who is a life member? What is so important about being a life member?

VOTE TO RECONSIDER

Yes – 9 Nay – 11

The motion fails.

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS -

A motion to require BBO to change their ACBL club game schedule and pricing was mooted by management action.

Doug thanked everyone for their role and contribution to bridge.

AC Members – get out and tell people what you have learned.

Steve Moese motioned to adjourn. Doug Couchman seconded.

With no further business before the board Doug adjourned the meeting at 9:13 ET.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Moese K082411

Advisory Council Vice Chair

Chair, AC Teachers and Club Manager's Committee

D11 AC Representative