

Agenda

USA Fencing Board of Directors

April 23, 2014 via Teleconference

1-877-885-3221 Access code: 6869204

7 pm EDT/6 pm CDT/5 pm MDT/4 pm PDT

I. General Information and Organizational Items

General Announcements

Remarks – Donald Anthony, President

II. Consent Agenda Items (Mr. Anthony)

1. To approve the minutes from the February 20, 2014 Meeting.
2. To approve the financial reports for January and February 2014.
3. To accept the Audit Committee (Appendix A) and Referee Working Group (Appendix B) reports.

III. Executive Director's Report (Kris Ekeren)

IV. 2014-15 Budget Discussion (Sam Cheris)

V. Legal Update (Jim Neale)

VI. Old Business

1. Proposed Bylaw changes (Appendix C)

Motion (Mr. Anderson): To adopt proposed amendments to the USA Fencing bylaws, as previously published.

The proposed amendments are included in Appendix C.

VII. Good and Welfare

VIII. Executive Session to consider personnel, litigation, disciplinary and membership matters

IX. Adjournment

Appendix A
April 8, 2014 Audit Committee Report

The Audit Committee received the 2013 audited financials including full notes, audit report and presentation from BiggsKofford regarding their findings.

The Committee had the opportunity to thoroughly review these documents and ask a number of questions.

In general we are very pleased with the continued progress the NO office and Finance teams are making.

Among our comments:

1. Elimination of going concern language a very major step forward for the entire organization
2. Solid financial results for the year
3. Continued improvement on transparency and quality of financial forecasts
4. Improving ability to forecast cash
5. Strong cost discipline
6. Auditors clearly comfortable with testing done on risk items, and in agreement regarding all major accounting policies
7. Good rapport/cooperation between Staff and external auditors

8. Overall all parties involved are ensuring that USA Fencing is ahead of plan in regards to its liquidity and financial solvency, while staying adherent to the Organization's core values.

In conclusion, we believe the Board and Membership should be made aware of the continued excellent progress in these areas by NO and Finance team.

Appendix B

REPORT OF THE REFEREE WORKING GROUP

March, 2014

The Referee Working Group (“RWG”) is an informally organized assembly of individuals who expressed concern about the role and status of referees in USA Fencing. The RWG was initiated by the president and given the general charge of recommending methods and means for addressing perceived shortcomings in the recruitment, development and retention of fencing referees and the attendant dissatisfaction that was evident in the referee cadre. In late 2013, the president identified a core group of members and staff to lead these efforts and requested that they select and work with other interested and knowledgeable individuals on the project. Attached is the RWG’s attempt to articulate its mission, the issues it hoped to consider and its objectives.

The RWG met in Virginia Beach during the January NAC. A subgroup met again during Junior Olympics in Portland. Also in Portland, the RWG chair met with Lee Metcalf of Daugherty Business Solutions, a consulting firm working with USA Fencing on a variety of management and organizational issues. As a result of these conversations, and ensuing email exchanges, the size and complexity of the project became apparent. Of particular concern, information that the RWG felt it needed to discharge its task does not exist, and the resources to produce or derive it were not available to the Group.

Early on, the RWG realized that unless it could ground its work in solid data, any conclusions it reached and recommendations it offered would have little persuasive weight. Its initial efforts therefore focused on identifying the nature and possible sources of information that would provide a reliable picture of USA Fencing’s relationship to its referees. The Group soon realized that pertinent records are woefully scarce and unreliable. The few items we were able to locate were incomplete, haphazard or otherwise of limited use. They comprise the following:

- National tournament referee usage data from Fencing Time. Dan Burke provided this information for the NACs and National Championship Tournaments from January 2012 through December, 2013. This data is of the type that would have been extremely useful had it been available for a significant period of time, but the limited duration of the records does not allow tracking of referee enlistment, progress, retention, instauration or withdrawal.
- AskFred’s referee database. Unfortunately, the reliability of the information contained in this repository is dubious, as revealed by recent FOC requests that referees review their records to locate errors and frequently reported lapses in the information’s accuracy, currency and completeness. It also provides a snapshot in time, and does not readily yield historical data. While the AskFred spreadsheet may be the most complete roster of USA Fencing referees, its accuracy, comprehensiveness and utility to the purposes of the RWG are limited.

USA Fencing's records of payments to volunteers, specifically its archived Form 1099 reports. While the office has confirmed that such reports exist, they are apparently not sorted to indicate the purpose of the payments, and analysis of this information for RWG purposes would first require the laborious process of vetting voluminous records to identify and cull those reflecting payments to referees. Further, as of the date of this report, the office was unsure how far back Form 1099 records exist, adding additional doubt about their utility.

- "US Fencing Study of Referee Stress & Coping." This study, published by USA Fencing sport psychologist John Heil in 2007, is based on data culled from referee questionnaires collected in 2000, and is thus of limited relevance to the experiences and attitudes of current and recent referees. Had the RWG continued its work, one proposal being considered was to resurvey members of the current cadre and those who have recently discontinued referee service with the same questions asked in 2000. Doing so would allow a reviewer to ascertain changes in attitudes during the intervening years.

The RWG also attempted to locate the following specific sources of information without success:

- Referee rosters and usage reports for national competitions. Each tournament produces lists of invited referees, attending referees and referee usage. Hard copies have in the past been maintained by the National Office as part of its tournament archives. Apparently, in the not too distant past, perhaps when the office was relocated, those historical records were jettisoned and it is no longer the practice to archive tournament materials much beyond the season in which they were generated. The RWG hoped that by studying this information, or by sampling certain tournaments over many seasons, it could quantify the number of different referees who have served, their progress, the introduction into the corps of new referees and the retention of these individuals.
- XSeed referee reports. This program, used before FencingTime was adopted, also accumulated referee usage information, and the RWG hoped that it could be used in conjunction with FencingTime's data to create a historical picture of referee usage at national tournaments. However, according to Joe Salisbury, USA Fencing's technology consultant, the data archives were not routinely or systematically retained, and that those that do exist are stored in formats that are no longer used and on obsolete media that cannot be read with equipment currently available. Extracting the information from the records that do exist would be an arduous task that might yield minimally useful results.
- FOC internal referee tracking, test results, and records of rating adjustments. The RWG

consulted current and past members of the FOC, who report that such records have not been systematically retained, and that if they exist, they are were assembled by and in the possession of individual FOC members. The RWG has not further pursued these sources, as doing so seems unlikely to produce useful results.

- FOC sub-group records and reports. In late 2012 or early 2013, in response to a perceived groundswell of referee dissatisfaction and complaints, a group composed of Jerry Benson, Sharon Everson, Justin Meehan and perhaps one or two others was tasked with “taking the temperature” of the referee cadre and reporting its findings to the FOC chair and the president. The group solicited comments, then collected and collated the results and presented its findings as requested. The RWG hoped to track down both the report and the comments, but the members of the FOC sub-group were unable to locate and produce them. Not much energy has been devoted to the task of locating the materials because of a general concern about the limited utility of anecdotal accounts of information that was not collected in a controlled manner.

In light of the RWG’s significantly limited ability to locate or generate useful information, we believe we cannot complete the tasks outlined in the attached statement of mission, issues and goals. This is by no means a conclusion that the relationship of USA Fencing to its referees is other than in crisis. On the contrary, even in the absence of hard data, we believe that relationship requires urgent attention and the devotion of substantial resources to studying, analyzing and addressing issues surrounding the recruitment, development, retention and satisfaction of fencing referees. In the near term, this means implementing programs and policies that are calculated to increase the size of the referee cadre and to encourage accomplished referees to participate in national level competitions, to recruit new members to their cadre and to mentor up and coming officials. Additionally, if it is to approach referee issues and concerns meaningfully in the future, the organization must establish data collection and retention procedures that accommodate ongoing, informed understanding of USA Fencing’s referee needs and the needs of its referees. And then it must act on those findings.

Respectfully submitted,

USA Fencing Referee Working Group

Donald Alperstein, Chair
Abbas Fadel Emik Kaidanov
Kelly Koehler-Johnson Bill Oliver
Ian Serotkin Russell Wilson

Staff Liaisons: Kris Ekeren and Seth Kelsey

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Appendix C

Proposed USA Fencing Bylaw changes

PROPOSED AMENDMENT NO. 1

The 2013-2014 Nominating Committee recommends the following amendment to the USFA Bylaws, as amended in September, 2012:

Change the period at the end of Article II, Section 2(g), subsection “ii” to read “; or”, renumber existing subsection “iii” as “iv,” and add the following new subsection iii:

iii. has within the preceding ten years served as the USFA’s national head coach (however denominated) for a fencing discipline contested at the Olympic Games or for which the FIE conducts a Senior Open World Fencing Championship, or has been appointed the head coach of a United States Olympic fencing team, a United States Open World Fencing Championship team or a Pan American Games fencing team.

Rationale: The Elite Coach Director position exists to bring high performance expertise to the Board. As currently specified, only individuals who have been identified as the primary coach of proven high performance athletes qualify for the position. But others, who have administered high performance programs or have been deemed to possess sufficient technical proficiency to be given responsibility for a weapon team at the Olympics or a Senior World Championships, may offer the needed expertise as well. Indeed such individuals may better understand the organizational contribution to competitive success better than does a coach whose main strength is in recruiting or technical training of fencers.

The Committee also noted that the requirements for nomination by petition (25 signatures representing five member clubs) is for many individuals less demanding than the official nomination process.

Because the Board membership categories and nomination procedures are specified in the Bylaws, we recommend that a task force be convened to explore both alternate ways of configuring Board membership, with the mandate that any such recommendations ensure that all constituencies continue to have a voice in the governance of the association, as well as the nomination by petition process.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT NO. 2

Article IX, Section 3(a) currently requires the Nominating Committee to nominate at least two candidates for the offices of President and Treasurer, thus assuring contested elections for those positions. The Nominating Committee recommends that the requirement be removed from the Bylaws and that the section be amended to read as follows:

a. The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one qualified candidates candidate for the office of President and at least one qualified candidates candidate for the office of Treasurer, and shall announce its nominees no later than January 15 of the calendar year in which the elections are to be held by publishing the names of the nominees and any report issued by the Committee on the USFA web site.

Rationale: The Nominating Committee feels that it should be given more flexibility in nominating candidates since there may be cases when only one candidate is deemed worthy to be nominated by the committee while in other cases there may be three or more candidates worthy to be nominated by the committee.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT NO. 3

Article IX, Section 4(a) requires the Nominating Committee to nominate at least two candidates for each position on the Board of Directors, thus assuring contested elections for those positions. The Nominating Committee recommends that the requirement be removed from the Bylaws and recommends that the section be amended to read as follows:

a. Nominations by the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least as many qualified candidates as there are directors to be selected in each category, and shall announce its nominees no later than January 15 of the calendar year in which the elections are to be held by publishing the names of the nominees and any report issued by the Committee on the USFA web site.

Rationale: The Nominating Committee feels that it should be given more flexibility in nominating candidates since there are cases when only one candidate is deemed worthy to be nominated by the committee for each elected position while in other cases there may be two or more candidates worthy to be nominated by the committee for that elected position.

Summary

Article IX, Section 10 discusses the timing of elections. The Election Committee proposes the removal of paragraph 10.c and renumbering of paragraph 10.d as follows:

Text of Amendment

Section 10. Timing of Elections. The Election Committee shall establish the dates for balloting in all USFA elections, provided that:

- a. The period during which ballots may be cast shall not be less than two weeks in duration; and
- b. The period for casting ballots for officers and directors shall end no later than June 25; and

~~c. In the event a runoff election is required, the period for casting votes shall end no later than July 31;~~

~~and~~

d. c. In the event a special election is required, the Election Committee shall establish dates for the nomination of candidates by the Nominating Committee, nomination of candidates by petition and the period during which ballots may be cast that are as expeditious as possible while adhering to the general principles set forth in this Article, provided that strict compliance with time frames and dates stated herein is not required.

Rationale

With the elimination of the plurality requirement for election, there are no circumstances under which a runoff election will be necessary. This amendment eliminates the obsolete text that still references a runoff election.