

# Board Meeting Minutes

## Special Meeting

### USA Fencing Board of Directors

Saturday, December 16, 2023 at 10:00AM (MT) – Via Zoom

#### I. Call to Order

**Present:** Ivan Lee, Donald Alperstein, David Arias, Ben Bratton, Peter Burchard, Kat Holmes, Darryl Jacobs, Mike Joo, Selina Kaing, Damien Lehfeltdt, Amanda Nguyen, Nzingha Prescod, Abdel Salem, Lauryn Deluca (joined starting at Motion 5 and the revisit of Motion 2), Emily Bian (Treasurer), Peter Barton (Parliamentarian).

**Absent:** Aimee Rice

**USA Fencing Staff:** Phil Andrews, Tabitha Chamberlin, Amanda Lilly, Christina Pachuta

#### II. Opening Remarks

A moment of silence was held in remembrance and recognition of former USA Fencing President, Sam Cheris and significant contributor Mel North. Various Board Members paid tribute to the impact of these individuals on USA Fencing and their memories of both individuals, with particular emphasis on Mr. Cheris.

#### III. Conflict of Interest

Damien Lehfeltdt acknowledged a conflict related to sport excellence goal portion of the Strategic Plan (Motion 1) related to his involvement with the National Team. He will still vote on the motion as the conflict does not rise to the level to require recusal, but he wanted to make that conflict known.

Damien Lehfeltdt acknowledged a conflict related to Motion 10; his appointment to the Referee Commission Nominating Committee and will abstain from voting.

#### IV. CEO, Operations & Financial Update (Mr. Andrews, Ms. Chamberlin)

#### V. Consent Agenda Items (Mr. Lee)

- a. To approve the minutes from the September, 10, 2023 meeting ([Appendix A](#))
- b. Parafencing Resource Team Charter ([Appendix B](#))

**Second:** Damien Lehfeldt  
**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**VI. Motion to accept the reports of the Committees, Resource Teams, and Working Groups included as follows (Mr. Lee):**

- a. Parafencing Resource Group Report ([Appendix C](#))
- b. t109 Working Group Report ([Appendix D](#))
- c. Youth Development Resource Group Report ([Appendix E](#))
- d. Division Resource Group Report ([Appendix F](#))
- e. Data Resource Group Report ([Appendix G](#))
- f. International Relations Committee Report ([Appendix H](#))
- g. Coaching Advisory Resource Group Report ([Appendix I](#))
- h. Referee Commission Report ([Appendix J](#))

**Second:** Abdel Salem  
**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**VII. New Business**

**MOTION 1 (Mr. Lee):** To approve the strategic plan of USA Fencing as stated in [Appendix K](#).

**Rationale:** USA Fencing requires a documented approach to guide the organization, its' decisions and give direction to the organization across the period 2024-2028. USA Fencing has held a planning weekend and received feedback from across its' community to arrive at the document presented for approval today.

**Second:** Damien Lehfeldt  
**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**MOTION 2 (Mr. Lee):** To approve a revised USA Fencing logo, to be shared during the meeting, to merge our USA Fencing and USA Parafencing shields into one shield. Such logos to replace current logo usage at the next natural time of change for printed materials; and to be used as soon as reasonably possible in digital materials.

**Rationale:** USA Fencing has expressed its' commitment to treating Parafencing in an equal fashion to its' able-bodied counterpart. By merging our able bodied and Parafencing shields into one shield, USA Fencing provides a further step in integration of Parafencing into the sport, and a further sense of belonging for our Parafencing community.

**Second:** Ben Bratton

**Motion to Lay on the Table:** Ivan Lee

**Second:** Darryl Jacobs  
**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**Motion to Take from the Table:** Ivan Lee

**Second:** David Arias  
**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**Result:** Defeated by voice vote

**MOTION 3 (Mr. Lee):** To approve the creation of a dedicated parent and family membership, equivalent in nature to the existing Access Membership type, and instruct the staff of USA Fencing to determine the benefits and implementation strategy of the membership type. The Board will delegate control of dues structure to the National Office Staff the decision of which will be reviewed during annual budget approval process.

**Rationale:** In line with the USA Fencing strategic plan goal of aiding communication and interaction with the parents and families of young Fencers; the creation of a meaningful membership category will allow us to better understand our membership base while focusing on enhancing the experience to all fencing families.

**Second:** Peter Burchard  
**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**MOTION 4 (Mr. Lehfeldt):** To amend rule t.20.2 to the following language: "Any fencer taking a lesson must wear at least a mask, jacket, plastron, glove, and plastic chest protector (where applicable)."

**Rationale:** A more stringent competition lesson safety standard is needed to mitigate potential safety risks and ensure maximum protection for athletes taking a lesson in competition. While the current language of t.20.2 aligns to that within the FIE rulebook which stipulates that only a mask and glove must be worn, altering the verbiage to promote greater safety will have no demonstrable effect on international competition readiness.

The Referees' Commission (RC) has reviewed the amendment to t.20.2 and is in support of the rule change. However, the RC wishes to note that referees are not expected to enforce this rule in any way, shape, or form. Enforcement of this rule rests with the supervisor of the competition and/or members of the Bout Committee, as well as the coaches and athletes."

Recommend instituting an effective date of February 1, 2023, to allow sufficient time to communicate these changes to the community and our numerous impacted stakeholder groups, which include:

- Referees (simply need to be made aware)
- Athletes
- Coaches
- Bout Committee/Supervisors

### **Motion Withdrawn by Mr. Lehfelddt**

**MOTION 5 (Mr. Lehfelddt):** To re-affirm the American exception for rule t.109 in the USA Fencing rule book.

**Rationale:** The previous Board voted for passage of rule t.109 (a ban on strip coaching) which would have had an effective date of September 1, 2023. In September 2023, the current Board voted to suspend implementation of rule t.109, leaving uncertainty as to whether it would be implemented at a future date.

Based on the report from the t.109 working group, this motion seeks to clarify that no implementation will occur, and the current exception to t.109 which reads:

“In USA Fencing competitions, coaches and spectators are allowed to give advice to fencers...in all situations, coaches and spectators must not disturb the order of the bout”

will remain in place.

**Second:** Ben Bratton

**Result:** Passed by voice vote with 1 opposition

**MOTION 6 (Mr. Lee, as liaison to the Referees’ Commission):** That the following prospective amendments to Sections 12.11.b.i and 12.11.b.ii of the USA Fencing Amended and Restated Bylaws be approved for publication pursuant to Bylaw Section 14.2.a, and that this amendment be considered for adoption at the next meeting of the Board following the required comment period:

That Section 12.11.b.i be amended to read in its entirety as follows:

The Referees’ Commission shall be organized under the leadership of a Chair, Vice-Chairs of Domestic Grassroots Development, Domestic National Development, Rules and Examinations, International Development and Assignment, ~~Domestic Development~~ and Ombudsman, and three athletes.

And that Section 22.11.b.ii be amended to read in its entirety as follows:

The Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Referees’ Commission shall be elected by experienced referees. The standards for electors and the method for nominating candidates for these positions shall be determined by the Board of Directors

consistent with these Bylaws, ~~and nominees~~ Nominees for the positions shall be elected by a vote of the electors that is conducted by the Election Committee, and notwithstanding Section 9.10 of these Bylaws, such election shall be by simple majority.

**Rationale:** The first of these amendments makes three basic changes to the existing Bylaw provision. First, it splits the Vice-Chair of Domestic Development into two Vice-chair positions, one for grassroots development and one for development of national level referees. Second, it renames the Vice-Chair of Rules to Vice-Chair of Rules and Examinations to better reflect the duties of that position. Lastly, it eliminates the redundant reference to “Domestic Development.” Of these, only the first is substantive.

Experience has shown that the task of overseeing the development of referees through the spectrum of P-N1 is a larger undertaking than initially envisioned and has proven too great a burden to fairly ask of one person. While the path from beginning referee to the highest level of national competence is continuous, the demands of developing starting referees are somewhat distinct from those of honing the skills of more experienced officials. It is expected that the Vice-Chair of Domestic Grassroots Development and the Vice-Chair of Domestic National Development will coordinate their efforts, but it makes sense to separate the basic functions. This change also postures the Referees’ Commission to better meet the referee development goals of the USA Fencing Strategic Plan.

With the proposed change, the Referees’ Commission will comprise a Chair, five Vice-Chairs, and three athletes, a total of nine individuals, thus assuring the required athlete representation is met.

The second proposed change means that Referees’ Commission elections will be by simple majority, in contrast to elections of directors and Hall of Fame honorees, which are by preferential voting. This makes sense because under the rules consistently approved by the Board under the Section, the elections for Referee Commission Chair and Vice-Chairs are races between two people, in which circumstance preferential voting is unnecessary and an avoidable burden on the Election Committee.

**Second:** Darryl Jacobs

**Motion to Amend as follows (Mr. Arias):** Amend paragraph 3 to correct the following typographical error:

“And that Section ~~2~~12.11.b.ii be amended to read in its entirety as follows:”

**Second:** Lauryn Deluca

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**MOTION 7 (Mr. Lee):** In the role of the sole member of the US Fencing Foundation, to approve the revised US Fencing Foundation Bylaws, as stated in [Appendix L](#) subject to legal counsel approval.

**Rationale:** Since October 2022, the operation of the US Fencing Foundation has changed from a savings-based principle into the active fundraising arm in support of USA Fencing. The revised bylaws of the US Fencing Foundation bring the governance model of the Foundation into line with similar foundations, for example the US Olympic & Paralympic Foundation or USA Triathlon Foundation.

**Second:** Lauryl Deluca

**Motion to Lay on the Table (Mr. Lehfeldt):** Table the motion to schedule a working session to include Board Members and the Foundation Trustees to discuss further and to then schedule a Special Board meeting for a vote at the earliest possible time.

**Second:** Abdel Salem

**Result:** Passed by roll call vote with 6 for, 3 against, and 1 abstention

**MOTION 8 (Mr. Lee):** In the role of the sole member of the US Fencing Foundation, to approve the revised Articles of Incorporation of the US Fencing Foundation attached as [Appendix M](#) subject to legal counsel approval.

**Rationale:** In concert with the approval of new Bylaws, the Articles of Incorporation also require amendment to move some of the powers vested in the articles to the bylaws, primarily the power to appoint new Trustees of the Foundation.

**Second:** None

**Result:** Motion does not move forward

**MOTION 10 (Mr. Lee):** To appoint Damien Lehfeldt as the Board of Directors Representative to be named to the Referees' Commission Nominating Committee for the Referees; Commission election to be held in 2024.

**Rationale:** During the September 10, 2023 the Board approved the composition of the Referees' Commission Nominating Committee which charged the Board with appointing their representative.

**Second:** Ben Bratton

**Result:** Passed by roll call vote with 9 for and 1 abstention

**MOTION 9 (Mr. Burchard as liaison to the Hall of Fame Committee):** To approve the list of Hall of Fame Nominees as attached in [Appendix N](#).

**Rationale:** In line with past practices, the Hall of Fame Committee has put forward a slate of nominees for the Class of 2025 Hall of Fame inductees.

**Second:** Ben Bratton

**Motion to move to Executive Session (Mr. Lehfeltdt)**

**Second:** Ben Bratton

**Result:** Passed by voice vote with two oppositions.

## **VIII. Good and Welfare**

Next scheduled meeting to be held in-person on February 17, 2024, at Junior Olympics in Charlotte, NC.

**Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session (Mr. Lee)**

**Second:** Abdel Salem

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

## **Reporting Dates of Committees & Resource Teams**

<b>Committee/RT</b>	<b>Date of Last Report</b>	<b>Report This Meeting</b>	<b>Board Liaison</b>
Referee Comm.	12/16/23	Yes	Ivan Lee
Hall of Fame Comm.	12/16/23	Yes	Peter Burchard
Audit Comm.		No	Aimee Rice
Budget Comm.	6/10/23	No	Emily Bian
Election Comm.	9/10/23	No	Darryl Jacobs
Nominating Comm.	9/10/23	No	Amanda Nguyen
DEIB Comm.		No	Darryl Jacobs
IR Comm.	12/16/23	Yes	Ivan Lee
SEMI Comm USA	10/22/22	No	Damien Lehfeltdt
Tournament Comm	7/4/23	No	Peter Burchard
Veterans Comm.	7/4/23	No	Abdel Salem
Club and Member RG		No	David Arias
Division RG	12/16/23	Yes	David Arias
Mar/Comm RG		No	Darryl Jacobs
Parafencing RG	12/16/23	Yes	Lauryn Deluca
FenceSafe RG		No	Nzingha Prescod
Sports Medicine RG		No	Kat Holmes
Youth Development RG	12/16/23	Yes	Ivan Lee
Sports Performance RG		No	Kat Holmes
Coaching Advisory RG	12/16/23	Yes	Ben Bratton

Data Science RG	12/16/23	Yes	Kat Holmes
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