



USA Hockey Board of Directors Meeting January 16, 2025

Attendance

Present: Mike Trimboli, Keith Barrett, Ryan Bedford, Cheri Bonawitz, Caitlin Cahow, Tom Cline, Bill Daly, Dwayne Dillinger, Declan Farmer, Don Gould, Noah Grove, Donna Guariglia, Bob Joyce, Donna Kaufman, Kris Knauss, Jen Lee, TC Lewis, Taylor Lipsett, Mike MacMillan, Kevin McKee, Steve Oleheiser, John Tobin and Andy Yohe.

Absent: Julie Chu.

Staff Members: Pat Kelleher, Ted Devine, Tony Driscoll, Casey Jorgensen, Kelly Mahncke, Bob Mancini, Scott Monaghan, Tami Tranter and John Vanbiesbrouck.

Call to Order

Mike Trimboli called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM.

Conflict of Interests

Bob Joyce referenced his law firm's representation of Pure Hockey and his representation of its principal owner.

Legislative Proposals

Donna Kauffman opened with the six legislative proposals that the Board needs to vote on in order to have them on the agenda for the upcoming Congress meeting. The first proposal is the Tier I Commission which establishes a moratorium on Tier I for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 seasons. The second requires that all Tier I teams must submit a roster by October 15 (subject to adds and drops by December 31). The third makes the Vertical Integration Pilot Program a permanent rule. The fourth solidifies the 22-player roster for 18U Tier I teams and 22 players on 15O, 16U youth and girls 19U. The fifth makes the 13O Tier I National Championship Pilot Program a permanent rule. The final proposal comes from the Coaches Section and updates the Coaching Education Program with changes to conform to the changes in our Learning Management System.

Mike Trimboli clarified that these legislative proposals are being brought outside of the normal legislative cycle in order for the Tier I Commission to be able to move forward and there are additional issues that require these legislative proposals such as the new LMS system. Donna clarified that the current vote of the Board is to approve the proposals to move them forward for the Congress to ratify. Mike requested that the relevant committees advise on whether they approved the proposals and received approval from the Youth Council, Girls Council, Player Development Committee, and Playing Rules Committee. Keith Barrett clarified that if a new Tier I Program had already started the Affiliate process for approval there is a process for it to continue during the moratorium. Donna advised that Tier I Commission Proposal #4 ratification would require an amendment to Playing Rule Proposal #3. Mike requested that the Board wait to receive further input from the different committees before voting on the legislative proposals.





Mike MacMillan and Brent Seidel explained the CEP amendment and the changes that would go into effect with the new LMS system.

The Board had additional discussions on the current two-year legislative cycle and ways to address the submissions in off-years. There was discussion about how this could look in the future and a suggestion that the Legal Council examine further for recommendations before next year.

Mike Trimboli welcomed Mike McCullough and asked if the Registrars Section has had a chance to review the six proposals and if they had any feedback or recommendations. Mike McCullough stated that while there may be recommended amendments from their upcoming closed session, that the Section did recommend all six proposals for approval. Mike McCullough added that while the Registrars have some logistical questions about the moratorium, they otherwise have no concerns.

Mike Trimboli stated that the Board can move forward to with approval for Legislative Proposals 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6, with #3 still waiting for feedback from the Playing Rules Committee. John Tobin made the motion to approve Legislative Proposals 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 (2nd Kris Knauss). Motion approved.

Mike welcomed BJ Ringrose to the meeting, who advised that the Playing Rules Committee recommends Legislative Proposal #3. John Tobin made the motion to approve Legislative Proposal #3 (2nd Don Gould). Motion approved.

Legal Council Report

John Tobin advised that three new appeals were received in the last two days with no pending arbitrations. John stated that the Legal Council will discuss several matters in the upcoming meeting, including disciplinary guidelines, arbitration, and ongoing matters with CAHA.

Casey Jorgensen provided an update on the pending lawsuits with CAHA. One lawsuit related to elections was dismissed by the court last month, while the other involves CAHA and its former president and a company he owned. There is also a Legal Council subcommittee reviewing the complaint related to the CAHA elections that was brought by some programs in Colorado. Casey stated that the matter arises under Bylaw 10.F.(4), which addresses challenges regarding an affiliate's status. The matter is referred to the Legal Council, which provides a recommendation to the Board whether any further action should be taken.

Related to SafeSport, Casey described the federal legislation that would make changes to the US Center for SafeSport, the related obligations, duties, and how they conduct business. Since the bill did not have time to move before the end of the Congressional term it is expected to be reintroduced to the current Congress but the timeline is currently unknown. Casey is part of a group of lawyers among National Governing Bodies that is overseeing the pending response from the National Governing Body Council.

Casey provided a summary of the ongoing litigation involving USA Hockey, including a personal injury matter in Illinois and five older cases of sexual abuse allegations in New York State occurring in 1978-92 that arose when the state opened its statute of limitations on sexual abuse cases. Casey also advised the Board on four other matters that do not involve claims against USA Hockey but are in the criminal process.

Casey stated that the new Safe Sport Handbook was published on December 31, 2024, with an email notification going out before. Casey discussed previous conversations with Safe Sport Coordinators on





reviewing our process and their role in investigations, and a summary on conversations with a potential company that would allow real-time reporting and triage matters to more efficiently direct reports to the proper persons. Casey reminded the Board that the deadline for legislative proposals for the 2026 Congress is due April 1, 2025.

NCAA/Junior Hockey Update

Pat Kelleher invited Tony Driscoll, John Vanbiesbrouck, and Scott Monaghan to speak as they were in Plymouth for the Chipotle All-American Game. Tony updated that everything was on track for the game that night including a ticketing push and it is expected to be a competitive game.

Pat discussed the changes surrounding the new NCAA rule change that will now allow for players from the three Canadian Hockey Leagues to be eligible to play NCAA college hockey starting next season. Pat mentioned how USA Hockey is trying to stay on top of the news and trying to determine how to best manage and react to these changes and their impact on our American Development Model and plans. These changes will impact the USHL, the NTDP, the CHL, and Hockey Canada with less impact anticipated for the NAHL at this time. Pat mentioned that these changes would impact the Transfer Agreement that has been maintained between USA Hockey and Hockey Canada since 2014 and governed player movement at the junior hockey level. The current concern is how does USA Hockey promote our junior programs and develop more players to play in the sixty-three NCAA Division I Programs.

Pat described meetings he and Mike Trimboli had with all three CHL leagues related to two teams seeking to leave the USHL and join the OHL. Casey Jorgensen reviewed the IIHF Bylaws that apply and USA Hockey's role as a national governing body under the Amateur Sports Act to sanction those teams. Casey also referenced the correspondence between the CHL, USA Hockey and counsel for the teams. USA Hockey currently sanctions nine CHL teams to operate in the United States, but these would be different as they are teams seeking to leave an existing USA Hockey sanctioned Tier I league. John Vanbiesbrouck described that USA Hockey is the world leader with our hockey development model with our NTDP, leagues, camp system and that we use that to ensure that we are developing hockey players for both skills and retention. Tony Driscoll described a marketing plan to highlight the things that USA Hockey does for development of players. John also explained that the USHL model is a two-step league of college-bound then professional. Pat reiterated USA Hockey's plans to continue promoting the American Development Model and American junior programs to attract more players.

Playing Rules Update

BJ Ringrose was welcomed to the meeting and summarized the work of the Playing Rules Committee in reviewing roughly 215 proposals that have been vetted for the Congress vote. He stated that there are nine proposals that have pending amendments, as well as four proposals that have been taken out of the block for separate consideration. Those four proposals pertain to the shorthanded icing rule and delayed tag of offsides rule and setting the ages for these proposals to apply.

Donna Kaufman explained that her plan for the Congress vote would be to explain the votes that have been grouped as blocks recommended for defeat and blocks recommended for approval, with the option for members to pull individual items out upon request. Donna said that this pattern would be followed for the junior playing rules. Donna stressed for anyone that plans to submit any changes or amendments prior to the vote to try to get those in as early as possible on Saturday in order to get that information ready and out to the Congress prior to the vote on Sunday.





Council Chairperson Reports

Related to Junior Hockey, TC Lewis stated that updates for the Junior Council regarding the NCAA rule change had already been covered earlier in the meeting, and all further updates can be found in the report.

Tom Cline reported for the Adult Council that the ice in Eagle River looks good for the pond event after having to cancel last year. Tom will be working with Donna and Ted to see what improvements can be made to recruiting and retaining adult programs.

Donna Kaufman reported for the Membership Council that everyone has received updated membership numbers through 41 weeks and that numbers are still tracking up with more growth over last year. Donna stated that most Growth Coordinators are now in place so we can start giving objectives and information that they can specifically look at in order to maximize growth and impact within their areas. Ted Devine discussed the numbers in the report specifically that the overall numbers are up by roughly 2.23% across the board but a spreadsheet breakdown of all age groups and all areas would have 38% of the areas showing a decline. Ted stated that there will be a focus on the individual player level to increase and retain membership numbers. Donna said that there will be a focus on data and how the Membership Council will be studying that data to make sure that they can have a clear understanding in each market and age group and increase transparency.

In International, Dwayne Dillinger summarized the recent success of our international teams and the major events on the calendar for the 2025-26 season. Dwayne thanked the NHL for their support and partnership with the men's U18 world championships. Dwayne touched on the upcoming 2026 Olympics, with an orientation event at the end of August in Detroit for the men. He mentioned the number of people from USA Hockey serving on IIHF committees and related contributions including twenty-nine male officials and thirty-seven female officials working IIHF tournaments in the past year. Dwayne discussed that Tim Serratore is moving into a joint position with USA Hockey and IIHF that will cover Mexico, South America, Australia and New Zealand to help develop hockey programs.

Don Gould shared that the Girls Council has been working on retooling its committee structure to better align with the other councils, committees, sections, and staff. Don stated that this new format will focus on leadership, mentorship, visibility, growth, research, analytics, and player development. Don shared that Chrissy Langley will head up player development, with the initial task being to study body contact and hitting and how it may or may not impact girls or women in the future.

Don Gould shared his excitement for the IT Subcommittee and its upcoming projects related to membership and the future impacts that it can have. He stated that the LMS system is currently targeting to go live in June and that there will be additional presentations during the Town Hall. Kelly Mahncke mentioned that the current top priorities for IT are the LMS rollout, the event management system, and analytics/AI. Don stressed that IT is still underfunded for what they want to accomplish but that further information on funding and budgeting can be found in the report. Kelly stated that currently approximately 4% of the budget goes to IT. Kelly provided an example that can be used for the cost analysis of certain software of Microsoft Copilot.

For Youth hockey, Keith Barrett began by describing the High-Performance Youth Development Plan that will be presented at the Town Hall. Bob Mancini presented this plan starting with the current development pyramid. Bob explained that the Tier I model is based upon competition with residency requirements and discrepancies across affiliates potentially causing an uneven playing field. He stated that the Tier I Commission found that the national Tier I footprint needs a consistent direction and that the





landscape had become too large for optimal player development. The Affiliate presidents would like greater oversight of Tier I hockey at the affiliate level, stricter residency requirements, and they recognize the need for high-performance player development.

Next Bob detailed how the landscape is changing with the NCAA rule change, player growth, and the increased interest in youth hockey nationally creating a need for a more focused plan for high performance player development and a need to further refine the development pyramid. Bob explained that the current concept includes creating a National Player Development League for the top American players for full-season teams, focusing on 15U and 17U with open residency. This league would include players at a level between Tier I and junior hockey. Keith explained the proposed working group and its members, as well as the timeline that the group will need to follow in order to begin competition in September of 2026. Bob explained how the age groups were determined and how selection of the teams is still a work in progress seeking to best achieve the goals of the league and its place in the development pipeline. There was further discussion and questions about the logistics of forming this league as well as how it will impact the current development pipeline.

Old Business

Pat Kelleher described the existing one-year pilot program for the NAHL and its request to expand the number of imports. He stated that this program was designed to help best support our Tier II junior league and referenced the data provided by the NAHL. Casey Jorgensen clarified why the Board is voting on this pilot program because the citizenship rules are in the Annual Guide. There was further discussion on how long the revised rule should be in effect. Kris Knauss moved to approve the increase of non-US citizen players at the Tier II level through the end of the NAHL's current agreement (2nd TC Lewis). Motion approved. Casey Jorgensen will prepare a legislative proposal form for Congress consideration.

New Business

Mike MacMillan brought up the idea of taking another look at governance to determine if the changes made in 2022 have been beneficial or if there should be additional changes. There was conversation on how this would progress and keeping it on future agendas.

Mike Trimboli recommended putting together a resolution regarding the support of our positions with the ongoing Junior hockey matters. He proposed adding it as part of the Board agenda for the meeting after the Congress meeting to allow time to put something together.

Adjournment

Andy Yohe moved to adjourn the meeting (2nd Bill Daly). Meeting adjourned.

