

# Minutes

## Special Meeting of the USA Fencing Board of Directors

July 23, 2020

The board voted, via email vote open July 13-20, 2020, to convene disciplinary panels in two separate matters.

**Present:** Donald Alperstein, Don Anthony, David Arias, Cliff Bayer, Raquel Brown, Sam Cheris, Alan Kidd, Lorrie Marcil Holmes, Cody Mattern, Jeff Salmon, Daria Schneider, Adam Watson

**Absent:** Ann Marsh-Senic

**Guests:** Peter Barton, David Blake, Peter Burchard, Maggie Dull, Kris Ekeren, David Hitchcock, Melissa Jones, Rachael Kraft, Jim Neale, Suzie Riewald, David Sierra, Kelley Stanley, Michael Tarascio, Essene Waters, Jason Weintraub, Maia Weintraub, Rich Weiss

### I. Call to Order

General Announcements: The next board meeting will be held on August 27, 2020 to address the proposed bylaw amendments.

Remarks – Donald Anthony, President (**Appendix A**)

Conflict of Interest announcement – No conflicts were disclosed.

### II. Consent Agenda Items (Mr. Anthony)

1. To approve the minutes from the June 22, 2020 meeting.
2. To approve the May 2020 financial reports.

Second Mr. Watson.

Motion passed.

### III. New Business

**Motion (Mr. Anthony):** To authorize an independent investigation into the 2020 USA Fencing nominating and election process. The final report on the findings should also

include a recommendation for improvements going forward and an independent interpretation of the bylaws regarding the term of the president. The investigation firm will be selected by the USA Fencing General Counsel.

Motion withdrawn by Mr. Anthony.

#### **IV. Recess to Executive Session**

**Motion (Mr. Arias):** to recess to executive session.

Second Mr. Watson.

Motion passed.

#### **V. Executive Session**

**Present:** Donald Alperstein, Don Anthony, David Arias, Cliff Bayer, Raquel Brown, Sam Chervis, Alan Kidd, Lorrie Marcil Holmes, Cody Mattern, Jeff Salmon, Daria Schneider, Adam Watson

**Absent:** Ann Marsh-Senic

**Guests:** Peter Barton, Kris Ekeren, Melissa Jones, Dennis Kraft, Paul Levy, Jim Neale, Keith Pesto, Suzie Riewald

Mr. Anthony recused himself from the discussion and vote.

The board voted to suspend Dennis Kraft from all fencing activities until the completion of certain conditions.

#### **XI. Adjournment**

**Motion (Mr. Bayer):** to adjourn.

Second Mr. Kidd.

Motion passed.

## Appendix A

### President's Remarks

July 23, 2020

I want to start with a couple of points of clarification. This Board of Directors meeting was called to address a pressing issue regarding a disciplinary panel which will be addressed in Executive Session following the General Meeting.

I added a motion to the agenda for the purpose of creating a dialogue around accusations of impropriety starting with a lack of governance and transparency, fiscal impropriety and corruption that were made against the Board, National Office and me personally. The accusations started with a concern about the Nominating Committee and interference during the recent election process.

I would like to clarify two things. The first is that I have no intent or desire to try to overturn the election results nor do I have any interest in continuing to serve as Administrative President or Board Chair. I served my eight years and I am quite willing to have Mr. Burchard serve USA Fencing to the best of his ability as I have done. However, given the circumstances surrounding the election and how the motion has been received and interpreted my intention is to withdraw the motion at the appropriate time in the agenda this evening.

For me, being President of USA Fencing was never a personal goal. I served as President because members of the fencing community thought I could help the organization get on sound financial footing and move USA Fencing forward by bringing our diverse membership together to work towards a common goal of growing our sport, creating positive working relationships with the USOPC and FIE and being successful internationally.

The National Office, Board of Directors, our amazing volunteers and members worked diligently to get USA Fencing where it is today as one of the most respected NGBs and Federations in the Olympic Movement. The last thing I want to do now is anything that would be divisive or weaken USA Fencing as we transition into a new administration.

Actually I hope to do the contrary. As I look around at the world we are currently living in with COVID-19 running rampant in this country, at a rate disproportionate to our world population and our health care capabilities overloaded all due to divisiveness and misinformation. The impact of COVID-19 has been devastating to so many individuals, families, businesses, our sport and members of the fencing community. Our clubs and members are suffering due to these outside influences. We don't need to compound this suffering in USA Fencing by not doing everything we can to make sure factual information is presented to our membership. And if there is truly something amiss in how the Board, National Office, Committees or the President is operating then that information should be brought out in the open and addressed appropriately.

The motion for an internal investigation was a preliminary attempt to make sure that facts prevail around USA Fencing's operations going forward in general and specifically around the nomination and electoral processes so that no one can cast dispersion on USA Fencing's

integrity, governance, fiscal management and ethical behavior.

I hope the Board will explore ways to address the issues raised by President-Elect, Mr. Peter Burchard, during his campaign so that the next election cycle will be beyond reproach. Personally I found it quite disturbing, through innuendo and accusations made regarding the nomination process, that I was implicated as having interfered and tampered with the process for my own personal gain. As a member of USA Fencing's Board clearly stated in a recent meeting, I believe an investigation would prove this untrue along with many of the other accusations leveled against the Board and National Office. What is even more disturbing is that the Nominating Committee and by association the Board of Directors is also accused of being complicit in this governance and ethical infraction.

I believe USA Fencing will come through this difficult and challenging period in a very strong position if we work together and rise above negativity. Fencing has a rich tradition of expected behaviors, ethics, sportsmanship and values. I hope the Board will take the initiative to explore guidelines for how future campaigns in our sport are run in a manner that reflect our values and image going forward and investigate any campaign irregularities that may have taken place during this election. I feel as though our voting system is solid and exemplary in its accuracy and efficiency. However, I don't feel as though misinformation, slander and unfounded accusations have a place in our sport.

My goal from the very beginning as President of USA Fencing as it continues to be today, is to leave my sport in a better place than when I found it. I will continue to do this through the transition to the next administration and I wish Peter Burchard and the Board of Directors much success in Peter's new administration as President.