

**Minutes**  
**Special Meeting of the**  
**USA Fencing Board of Directors**  
**April 14, 2020 via Teleconference**

The board voted unanimously, via email vote open from April 2-9, 2020, to direct the USA Fencing National Office to secure the maximum funds available from the Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to assist with employee payroll expenses and benefits, some contractor payments, rent and utilities.

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

**Guests:** Peter Barton, Bob Bodor, Kris Ekeren, Jill Grotzinger, Doug Hayler, Nicole Jomantas, Melissa Jones, Dan Mott, Kate Reisinger, Suzie Riewald, Christine Simmons

**I. General Information and Organizational Items**

General Announcements

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

Conflict of Interest Announcement – No conflicts were disclosed.

**Q:** Jonathan Jefferies – What is the status of Veteran World Championships in Porec what is the qualification pathway after the cancelled NAC?

**A:** (Mr. Anthony) We have not received an update from the FIE on the status of this event.

The meeting was stopped and then resumed immediately to address background noise that was interfering with the meeting proceedings.

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

**Guests:** Peter Barton, Dan Berke, Bob Bodor, Kris Ekeren, Jill Grotzinger, Doug Hayler, Jonathan Jefferies, Nicole Jomantas, Melissa Jones, Dan Mott, Jim Neale, Kate Reisinger, Suzie Riewald, Christine Simmons

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

1. To approve the February 17, 2020 and March 12, 2020 meeting minutes.
2. To approve the December 2019, January 2020 and February 2020 financial reports.
3. To accept the Audit Committee and Election Committee Minutes.
4. To accept the recommendation from the Audit Committee and approve BiggsKofford as the auditor and tax preparer for 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Second Mr. Watson  
Motion passed.

## **III. National Office Update**

Ms. Ekeren: Before I give an update on the strategic direction during this crisis, I also want to address the Zoom incident that occurred last week. While we realize that the damage and hurt from the event cannot be undone, we are committed to improving our diversity and inclusion efforts to create a positive environment for the fencing community. The National Office is looking forward to working with our athletes, volunteers, club owners and others on the important initiative.

As we continue to work to persevere as a sport through this difficult time, I want to thank our clubs and members for all of the work you have done and continue to do to grow and promote the sport of fencing. During this unprecedented crisis, we are concerned about the challenges that clubs, coaches and others in the fencing community are facing.

Ms. Simmons: Member Services has been focusing on Member, Division and Club communications and creating marketing resources that will be available once clubs reopen.

The Events Team have been working on various initiatives including rescheduling the 2020 National Championship, managing refunds and transfers for postponed tournaments, qualification paths and planning for the 20-21 national event season.

Mr. Bodor: Member Services continues to focus on communication with Divisions, Clubs and Members and includes conference calls, weekly club updates and video communication pieces. We are working on building marketing resources to provide to clubs when they begin to open for business. The Member Services Team is also reviewing membership types and adding additional benefits for members.

Mr. Mott: The Events Team is working with Louisville on available dates in the venue and for hotels for the 2020 National Championship and July Challenge. The qualification paths to the National Championships are being reviewed by the National

Office, Tournament Committee and Referees' Commission. The Events Team is planning for the 20-21 national tournaments and creating a procedure for tournaments centered on providing a clean and healthy competition experience for members.

Ms. Reisinger: We received an update this morning from the FIE, which will help guide our planning for the upcoming months. All competitions scheduled for April through June have been canceled. The final FIE qualifying events for each weapon will be held when the following conditions are met:

- The global health situation will be safe
- Fair and adequate training and preparation of athletes can take place
- No federations will be prevented from participation
- International competitions, including several "preparatory" World Cup/Grand Prix competitions, have taken place beforehand.

From a USA Fencing perspective, we made a commitment to the athletes to keep our Olympic selection criteria as close to the original as possible. Once we have the updated FIE event calendar we will be able to make adjustments to our criteria relatively quickly. I want to thank our Athlete Reps for providing such solid leadership and guidance through this period.

Ms. Grotzinger: I'd like to express our gratitude and appreciation of the individuals who opted to donate all or part of their March or April NAC registration fees. Your investment in the future of the sport of fencing is valued in these difficult time. We had over 135 USA Fencing Heroes and the large majority were first time donors.

In an attempt to diversity our funding streams the development department is continuing to identify foundations and organizations that we align with their giving priorities and then apply for those grants.

Ms. Jomantas: The communications department has been working with other departments within the National Office, including membership, sports performance and national events, to convey updates to the membership in a timely fashion via the website, eblasts and social media. We also have begun a series of initiatives to increase positive messaging in order to keep USA Fencing members engaged, including Motivation Monday, Fencing Friyay and new features. Thank you to our past and present national team athletes who have taken the time to participate in these initiatives which include a campaign to support USA Fencing clubs which has included recent videos on social media from Olympians Sada Jacobson, Gerek Meinhardt and Lee Kiefer.

Mr. Hayler: From the February 2020 financials, Membership Services total net income is currently ahead of budget by \$22K, total income \$19K ahead of budget and expenses are \$3K budget. Membership's net income is \$1,632K, which is \$66K ahead of prior year actuals of \$1,566K as of 2/28/2019. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus, we do not expect to see any new memberships for the remainder of the fiscal year. We have adjusted the working budget based on this expectation.

National Events total net income is currently behind budget by \$80K, total income is

ahead of budget by \$27K and expenses are \$53K over budget. Hotel expense is \$8K higher due to higher room rates. Airfare is \$18K higher due to higher flight costs. The remaining expense variance is due to several smaller budget overages. The February NAC in Columbus, OH had a net income of \$268K. It came in \$6K under the budgeted net income of \$274K. Registration revenues came in \$19K over budget. Expenses were \$30K over budget. Airfare came in \$13K over budget and the remaining expense variance is due to several smaller budget overages. The February SJCC held in Baltimore, MD had a net income of \$47K. It came in \$5K over the budgeted net income of \$42K. There were no significant budget differences. Due to the impact of the COVID-16 virus, the Anaheim SJCC, March and April NAC's were cancelled and it is likely that Summer Nationals will be impacted in some way. The cancellation of these events will have a severe impact on our budget. We are reviewing the impact and will be working with the budget committee on adjustments to the existing budget.

Marketing and Communications total net income is currently ahead of budget by \$4K, total income is ahead of budget by \$5K and expenses are \$1K over budget. No significant variance to report on at this time.

General Admin total net income is ahead of budget by \$13K, total income is \$1K over budget and expense are \$12K under budget.

Sports Performance total net income is currently ahead of budget by \$34K, total income is \$26K ahead of budget and expenses are \$8K under budget. We have received a \$10K Grant for Parafencing and \$9K in restricted donations that have been recognized.

Development total net income is currently \$5K over budget, total income is \$5K over budget and expenses are on budget. There is \$9K in restricted donations recorded in Sports Performance to meet the donors' restrictions. We have also received an unrestricted \$10K major donation.

US International Events total net income is currently behind budget by \$62K, total income is \$36K behind budget and expenses are \$26K over budget. The Foil Grand Prix was cancelled which will have an impact on the March financials. We are working with vendors to maximize our refunds but there was significant work performed in setting up the event so there will be expenses with little to no revenue to offset these expenses.

Executive Office and Board and Committees are on budget or close to budget with no major variances.

Our YTD net income is \$1,023K versus a budgeted number of \$1,083K giving us a negative variance of \$60K. Our prior year net income was \$1,623K versus a budget of \$1,489K as of November 30, 2018. Our Cash + Receivables exceed our Payables by approximately \$2,708K. The cash on hand includes \$152K in a money market account, \$1,313K held in the US Olympic Endowment account, and \$1,670K in an insured cash sweep (ICS) account, as of 2/29/2020.

The impact of cancelled events will severely affect our cash flow and bottom line. The finance team is working hard to update the budget and will be working with the budget committee and providing updates to the Board of Directors. We are looking into all financing programs offered by the government. These programs consist of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). These programs are very fluid right now and we are working diligently to stay on top of all the information coming out. We are communicating with our bank, as they are an SBA approved lender and they are keeping us informed as things change.

Q: Are the March and April NAC's postponed or cancelled?

A: (Mr. Hayler) I believe the events will be cancelled.  
See staff clarification in Good and Welfare.

#### **IV. Strategic Plan Update (Ms. Ekeren)**

While our strategic plan will continue to guide our operations, it has become clear that we need to focus on specific initiatives to enable USA Fencing to survive and thrive again after we emerge from this crisis.

We have identified the top initiatives to focus on over the next several months:

- Return and rebuild grass roots fencing as fast and safely as possible
  - Club recovery initiatives – insurance; restore sanctioning and explore options for online coverage
  - Reinstating events – local, regional and national
- Put our athletes in best position for Tokyo
- USA Fencing's viability - maintain organization while rebuilding reserves
  - Cost savings in all areas – events, overhead; explore coverage
- Plan ahead for marketing of membership and organization - diversify revenue
  - Prepare for the future
- Restart development focus 21-24; look to 2028
- Serve our members, volunteers and staff members while reflecting our core values:
  - Excellence, Respect, Teamwork, Inclusion, Passion

It has been suggested that we reconvene the strategic plan working group to provide feedback on this most important effort and I will be reaching out in the next few days to schedule a time to meet. I look forward to working together with our athletes, club owners, board members and other volunteers to ensure that the sport of the fencing will thrive in the United States.

#### **V. Legal Update (Mr. Neale)**

There is nothing new happening on the legal side worth discussing. The usual legal work has decreased due to the decrease in opportunities for there to be issues. We will hear more in Executive Session on the status of a couple of previous complaints.

#### **VI. Good and Welfare**

Our next meeting will occur on 4/29.

The National Events team provided further information on the status of the March and April NAC's and whether they are cancelled or postponed. Neither of these events have officially been cancelled. We are continuing to look for other opportunities to hold these events at a later date.

Dan Berke, Chair of the Election Committee: The committee met last Friday to review election procedures. We did receive one petition for the President position from Peter Burchard. The National Office validated that the petition did contain the required number of signatures and club representation. The dates of election have not changed and everything is on track for the election to be held on time.

Ms. Brown: Is there anything special in terms of communication or publicity that can be done that is different from years past beyond what the candidates themselves will do?

A: (Mr. Berke) The National Office posts election announcements on the website and social media platforms. All eligible voters will receive their ballots by email and as the election progresses they will receive reminder emails if they have not voted. We do not plan on doing anything different this time. The only difference from previous years is that the candidates themselves cannot meet in person at NAC's or at regional events. There are options to purchase email announcements, which is standard during our elections. It is up to the candidates to leverage whatever they can to communicate with voters.

Ms. Brown: My suggestion is that we should do something more during this unprecedented time.

Ms. Jomantas: Our plan is to communicate and push out the importance of the election on social media and eblasts to the full membership, particularly in a year when officers are being elected. We understand that it is important to communicate a lot right now.

Mr. Jefferies: To recap in order to pass on the word for Veteran Worlds in Porec, we are waiting for the FIE to make an announcement. The April NAC is either cancelled or postponed. Is there a contact at the National Office for members to get information from?

Ms. Reisinger: The Veterans Committee has made a proposal to the National Office that is currently being reviewed. Once finalized we will be making the updates in the Athlete Handbook and communicate any changes shortly. We hope to have this complete before end of this month.

## **VII. Recess to Executive Session**

**Motion (Mr. Arias):** to recess to Executive Session.

Second Ms. Brown

Motion passed.

### **VIII. Executive Session**

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

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The board received an update on the resolution of a complaint that had been sent to a disciplinary panel.

The board voted to approve the recommendation from a disciplinary panel with eight votes in favor and one opposed.

The board received an update from the Black Card Review Group.

The board received an update on insurance and sanctioning events.

The board received an updated on the status of the association's Paycheck Protection Program application.

The board discussed diversity and inclusion awareness in fencing.

### **IX. Adjournment**

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

Second Ms. Schneider.

No objection was heard.

**Appendix A**  
**President's Report**  
**April 14, 2020**

We continue to live in unprecedented times as many have made adjustments that involve a virtual world of meetings, coaching and other creative ways to keep our fencing community engaged. Unfortunately, we now find ourselves in uncharted waters that we are, at times, unprepared to navigate.

We recently had an experience on a Zoom call with the Women's Foil Team where we were celebrating their amazing victory at the World Championships in Wuxi. During the call it was bombed by someone posting a racial slur targeting one of our team members, Nzingha Prescod, and national office staff member, Brandon Dyett. I want to apologize to them personally and as an organization for not being better prepared for this type of attack. The attack caught us all off guard and we did not have a plan in place to address this type of situation. The initial reaction from those involved was shock and the proper actions were not taken to shut down the session and regroup. The fencing community should never have to experience this type of hatred, intolerance and bigotry. There is nothing that we can do now to change the past, however we have learned from this experience and proper protocols are now in place. The proper response, should this happen again, is that the session will be shut down immediately, participants will be consulted and a determination on whether a new session would be appropriate will be made.

We learned a number of lessons from this devastating experience and will be proactive in addressing these issues internally and externally. These initiatives will include identifying a secure video platform before using this medium for USA Fencing virtual events. We will also be focusing on Diversity & Inclusion initiatives within the fencing community. USA Fencing was recognized by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee with its first Diversity and Inclusion Award in 2015 for Diversity in our community. We recognize from the subsequent conversations had on this topic that there is still much work to be done so that all members of our Diverse Community feel welcomed, supported and valued. Much of this work will involve increasing awareness and sensitivity to the experiences, backgrounds and cultural heritage that we all bring to our great sport. These initiatives will include a broad spectrum of undertakings from sensitivity training and awareness to targeted programs to continue bringing diverse populations to fencing.

We are also very concerned with the impact COVID-19 is having on our athletes, coaches, clubs, volunteers, parents and staff both economically and mentally. We want to do everything we can to ensure the safety, health and financial stability of the community to the best of our ability. The closure of our clubs has been devastating. We are a club based sport in the U.S. and without our clubs USA Fencing would not exist. Bob Bodor has been passionate in exploring ways that USA Fencing can support our clubs and divisions. I applaud him for his work in conjunction with the rest of the staff as we continue to search for creative ways to get our clubs and divisions through these challenging times.

The IOC and the FIE have established ground rules on how the Olympic qualifying cycle will begin when conditions permit. USA Fencing is in the process of doing the same.

We all have to work together during this difficult time for the benefit of those we care about and for the greater good of all those that make up the fencing community. I want to thank those that have put in countless hours trying to manage through this "new normal" we are experiencing. The relentless work of our volunteers, coaches, clubs, athletes, parents and national office is greatly appreciated and is not going unnoticed. We will get through this crisis and if we focus on doing what we have to do now it will create an opportunity for us to be a

better organization and propel our sport to an even greater level.

I want to also recognize our board member Ann Marsh-Senic who is on the front lines of the COVID-19 response as an ER doctor along with all of those who are fighting this fight on the frontlines. Thank you all!