

**DRAFT MINUTES OF ACBL DISTRICT 4 VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING
November 5, 2021**

Voting Member Attendees:

At-Large: Jeanne Gehret (President), Betsy Cutler (Vice-President), Meyer Kotkin (IPP)
Joann Glasson (DD), Mary Miller (Pres. Appointee) (5 of 6).
Unit 112: Betty Youmans (Unit President), Richard Hurd (for Pat Stadelmaier), James
Carroll, Jerry Manioci, Lynn Ackerman (5 of 5).
Unit 120: Bill Orth (Unit Pres.), Walter Mitchell (2 of 2).
Unit 121: Sue Wessner (Unit Pres.), Bill Buskirk (2 of 2).
Unit 133: Mike Kohler (Unit Pres.), Lois Fuini (2 of 2).
Unit 141: Jay Apfelbaum, Elaine Weintraub, Bob Glasson, John Dickenson, Pat Civale,
Susan Morse, Everett Young, (7 of 12)
Unit 168: John Klinger, Ed Scanlon, Carl Fahnestock, Bob Priest, Linda Ivanoff
(5 of 5).
Unit 190: Trina Williams (Unit Pres.), Rick Rowland, Bill Herdle (3 of 3).
Unit 217: Jim McKeown (Unit Pres.) (1 of 2)

Also Present:

Bill Bauer, D4 Board Secretary
Jim Patton, Syracuse/Rochester Regional Tournament Co-chairperson
Bob Marsh, Finance Committee Chairperson
Richard Popper, 1st Alternate District Director

Excused:

Tom Weik (Presidential Appointee)

CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS

A meeting of the ACBL District 4 Board of Directors was held on-line via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the cancellation of the 2021 Lancaster (Manheim) Regional. Jeanne Gehret, President, called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM, a quorum being present (32 of 39 voting members representing 8 of 8 units). She thanked everyone for attending and those who submitted reports in advance so that they could be included in the agenda. Jeanne then requested that the Secretary introduce first time Unit Representatives. They are Richard Hurd of Unit 112, Bill Buskirk of Unit 121 and Trina Williams (Unit President) and Bill Herdle of Unit 190.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Clubs and tournaments are struggling to get back after the pandemic, with most operating at 30% to 50% of pre-pandemic attendance. Players have gotten comfortable with the ease of playing online in their PJ's and are slow to return to face-to-face. Hopefully, we will see more of a resurgence of face-to-face play in 2022 as the vaccination numbers increase and the COVID numbers decrease.

I am running for ACBL President in 2022. So far, I've scared off all the opposition. The election will be at the beginning of the November ACBL board meetings.

A Regional Director for Districts 3 & 4 will be elected in 2023 to take office January 1, 2024.

SECRETARY’S REPORT & APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 25, 2021

Bill reported the membership by Unit as of October 1, 2019, 2020 and 2021 per the ACBL:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>10/2019</u>	<u>10/2020</u>	<u>10/2021</u>	<u>2020-2021</u> <u>CHANGE</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>2022 REPS</u>	
112	1,131	1,108	1,038	-70	-6.7	5	
120	251	234	201	-33	-16.4	2	
121	172	160	142	-18	-12.7	2	
133	255	254	242	-12	-5.0	2	
141	2,729	2,708	2,460	-248	-10.1	11	(loss of 1)
168	922	901	790	-111	-14.1	4	(loss of 1)
190	598	578	521	-57	-10.9	3	
217	<u>99</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>-11</u>	<u>-12.9</u>	<u>2</u>	
TOTALS	6,157	6,039	5,479	-560	-10.2	31	(loss of 2)

The minutes were approved unanimously as well as a motion to permit the Secretary to include the written reports contained in the meeting agenda in the minutes without those reports having to be read.

TREASURER’S REPORT

The Treasurer’s report was sent out with the agenda. Pat indicated that the report is up-to-date still, the October STaC revenues and expenses not yet all finalized. The District has total assets of \$195,471. Our net income since the beginning of the fiscal year beginning June 1, 2021 is negative \$1,648.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Jeanne thanked Meyer, the Glassons, and Bill plus others for all their help during her first year as President. Jeanne is hoping for normality to return during her second year.

RATIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTION

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

PUBLICITY

Work on the new District 4 website is well underway. Thanks to all who are helping. Jeanne Gehret has organized the effort. Todd Thorsen is providing the website help and Brandon Fong has volunteered to be our new webmaster to replace old and tired Joann Glasson, who created and has maintained the original site for close to 10 years.

DISTRICT 4SPOT

Janet Johnson

The 4Spot continues to prove popular with District 4 members. 4Spot is distributed monthly via email to 3,485 subscribers. The open rate over the last 12 months is stable, at an average 62% (most impressive vs. an industry average of 34%). The click rate, when readers open a link within 4Spot, is 10%, also stable throughout the year.

During the course of the year, I have also sent email announcements about GNT, STaC and NAP. These announcements have an average open rate of 50%. This year, I have initiated the practice of sending out reminder emails to those who have not opened the first email. These emails, which apply to 4Spot and all announcements, follow 4 days after the original and, I repeat, only go those who have not opened the first. We do see a bump from this so I will continue this practice.

A special thank you to Joan Goldstein who took the time to update a seriously outdated I/N contact list.

Jeanne introduced Susan Morse as the new Editor beginning with the February 2022 4Spot after “learning the ropes” over the next two months.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR/D4 STaC COORDINATOR

STaC's – Elaine Weintraub

Added an unscheduled STaC in October, on less than 4 week's notice. Difficult to get the word out to club managers in time. Comparing results to the last autumn STaC, held in November, 2019:

2019 – 70 clubs participated, total tables = 1485

2021 – 28 clubs participated, total tables = 333

There is a regularly-scheduled STaC this November 15-19, which should give a more accurate measurement of the carnage.

Meyer noted that the participating clubs had decent turnout. Most of the shortfall was due to the limited number of clubs that participated (must be F2F).

Tournament scheduling – Elaine Weintraub

Brisk tournament scheduling activity in D4 for 2022 and 2023; considerably more than in surrounding Districts. We have scheduled our first two I/N Regionals: Philadelphia in August, 2022 and Allentown in December, 2023. Open Regionals are scheduled through 2023. STaCs are scheduled through 2023. Units are beginning to schedule Sectionals for 2022 and 2023. Updated schedules will be distributed more frequently in the coming months to keep current with all the additions.

Jim Patton and Betty Youmans questioned why Unit 112 is losing a sectional in 2023. Elaine said that U112 did not lose a Sectional and she is still working with the Unit 112 tournament coordinator to find a solution.

CHARITY

Lois Fuini had nothing to report.

FINANCE

Bob Marsh had nothing to report.

NAP

John Dickenson

Plans to run NAP face to face were scrapped due to Delta wave of COVID and loss of playing sites. My Northern site for B was lost with the canceled Rochester Sectional. In C, only 2 clubs offered to run a site, versus around 8 in a normal year. Thus, NAP finals will be run online on BBO. Flight A: 4 sessions on Oct 30/31. Flight B: 2 sessions on Nov 6. Flight C: 2 sessions on Oct 30. Rob Maier is DIC. Card fees lowered to \$12 per player per session from usual \$15, due to lower costs online and to encourage broad participation.

NAP participation in D5 was disastrous, 6 tables each in A and B, and 4 tables in C. D4 typically gets 12 to 15 in A, 35 in B, and 50 or so in C. I am working with Janet Johnson who has been instrumental in getting the word out via Constant Contact. I have also sent flyers to the larger clubs in D4, asking them to post the flyer and get the word out. By 10/16, I will have posted flyers at King of Prussia BC, North Penn BC, and Yorktown BC which are running 5, 4, and 2 F2F games a week respectively. I would ask that all on the Board do what they can to publicize the event.

The good news is that unlike GNT where D4 provides 100% of travel subsidies, the lion's share of NAP travel subsidies comes from ACBL, so even if attendance is poor the District will not be financially harmed.

At the meeting, John provided some additional observations. On the good side, the ACBL provided a list of qualified players. Also, 11 tables competed in Flight "A" which is close to normal. On the bad side, only 8 tables in flight "C" compared to 50-65 tables when the event was held by clubs and promoted by club managers and teachers.

Ed Scanlon noted that Flight "C" competed for players against an on-line ACBL regional Gold Rush Pairs event.

GNT

John Dickenson

Not much to report. Some clubs are running GNT club level qualifiers, which allows them to offer extra points. It should be noted that D4 does not require club level nor unit level qualification. I am still of the opinion we should run 2022 GNT online again, as we had tremendous participation and better geographic diversity.

We are tentatively scheduling Flights A and C for the weekend of 2/26/2022 and Flights Open and B for the weekend of 4/9/2022. A further advantage of running GNT online is we can utilize weekends in February which are risky for F2F tournaments due to uncertain weather in the Northeast.

At the meeting, John provided the following update. He believes the new proposed ACBL Conditions of Contest will require F2F play if conditions permit.

EDUCATION

Mary Miller

The ACBL and ABTA continue to have monthly videoconferences with bridge teachers. I would encourage all teachers to either participate in these, or to view the recording, which is sent to all teachers on the ACBL website the following day. As is true in District 4, there is a shortage of bridge teachers across the country which has been complicated by the pandemic. The consensus seems to be that most teachers who have started teaching on-line will not return to in-person classes. Some teachers have “paused,” but will return to in person classes when feasible, and others have completely stopped without any intention of returning to teaching.

The ACBL has developed two beginning bridge classes and have started rolling them out. The first is a 10-week introduction to Bridge (cost is \$50). The classes are being offered on-line, and they finished the first series in October, and have started additional classes. Each class is 40-60 students. At the end of the series, students are referred to teachers in their local area. To assist with this, the ACBL has agreed to survey teachers currently listed on the website to ascertain who is/isn't still teaching.

The second is a free 20-session series for school-age children (grades 4-12). Also on-line, the classes run from October through April. Over 2000 students are taking this class.

INTERMEDIATE/NEWCOMER
I/N Regional Status

Betsy Cutler

Philadelphia – Reserved space for I/N Regional August 2-4, 2022 in King of Prussia

Lehigh Valley – Scheduled for Dec. 15-17, 2023 at Lehigh Valley Active Life, Allentown.

Harrisburg - Not scheduled but looking for facility and date.

Will be watching Philadelphia closely to see how it goes and how many tables to expect.

TOURNAMENT

Meyer Kotkin (Acting Chairperson)

Meyer had his son, Josh, check out the dealing machine. It seems to work fine. Neither Marc Laibowitz nor Meyer has visited Inner Space where all the tables and card boxes are stored (along with leftover prizes from a number of different tournaments). Marc will still remain the interface with Inner Space. The rental cost is \$900/calendar quarter. Walt Mitchell offered to look into storage, but Meyer does not know how much space we occupy. There are 100 tables, 200 cases of boards/playing cards and miscellaneous boxes of prizes.

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON DISTRICT – CLUB COOPERATION

Unit Presidents or a designee were asked to report the status of club's F2F and virtual game attendance, membership trends and beginner bridge lesson offerings. The reports from the units follow.

Unit 112 – Jim Patton, Vice-President

Unit 112 has 6.7% fewer membership, but significantly more are not playing:

- Unit 112 had 1038 players on October 1, 6.7% fewer than one year ago.
- 37% of Unit 112 players have not won a masterpoint in 2021, presumably because they are not playing. Historically, there are always several members that have not won a masterpoint each year, but that number is much lower, typically 15% - 20%. We have approximately 200 more members than usual that do not seem to be participating in any kind of duplicate bridge (F2F, VCG, BBO)

Half of Unit 112 Face-to-Face Duplicate Bridge Clubs are currently open

- Unit 112 had 23 clubs in 2019
- 12 Clubs are currently playing F2F (52%)
- 4 Clubs opened but then closed due to Covid (17%)
- 7 Clubs never reopened
- Total F2F tables/week in September 2021 was 37% of what it was in 2019 (last pre-Covid full year)
- Many clubs are now requiring both proof of vaccination and wearing of face masks.
- Many clubs have seen even fewer players the last few weeks. It is not clear whether that is due to increased Covid concern, people not wanting to wear a mask, or both.

The number of total tables (F2F + VCG) playing duplicate bridge is 80% of pre-Covid numbers

- There are 7 Virtual Clubs in Unit 112, many offering multiple games per week
- Only one closed F2F club is offering VCG's
- Three clubs offer both F2F and VCG's
- Total tables/week in Unit 112 (VCG + F2F) is 80% of what it was in 2019 (last pre-COVID full year).
- Our largest club runs an Open F2F game coupled with a 2-section VC game. Players participate along ranking lines - most open players are only in F2F games, and most Under 500 players are only in VC games.

Beginner Bridge Lessons continue at a reduced rate

- There are significantly fewer lessons of all kinds offered compared to pre-pandemic days.
- Many teachers clearly prefer teaching face-to-face. They have either been unable or unwilling to teach F2F.
- There are three pockets of beginner bridge lessons in Unit 112

- The Bridge Club in Ithaca has resumed beginners' classes with a half dozen instructors. They expect to teach about 25 students/year.
- None of the Rochester area Duplicate clubs have offered lessons in recent years; Several excellent teachers have historically offered classes in various community recreation centers. None of these teachers appears interested teaching online. So far, two have resumed teaching; one is adding a third class.
- Mary Miller in Canandaigua is a prolific teacher. She feels Shark Bridge (online) is the best method for teaching beginners. She has declared it is so much better than F2F teaching that she would never go back. She is currently teaching around fifty beginners and intermediates in the Finger Lakes and Rochester areas.

All Unit 112 2021 Sectional have been cancelled.

Unit 120 – Bill Orth, President

3 clubs are running small games (about 4 tables)

Unit 121 – Sue Wessner, President

Unit 121 is up and running F2F since July 7. We run a Tuesday and Thursday stratified open game at 12:15 at Good shepherd UCC in Reading. We average 6 to 8 tables weekly. The playing fee remains at \$6.00. At the beginning I was taking forehead temps, but now we ask our players to wear a mask upon entering the building, and then masks are optional. I would think about 40% of our players wear masks through the entirety of the game. At the meeting, Sue reported that 12 tables of players signed up for the annual meeting and game this coming week.

Unit 133 – Mike Kohler, President

- Status of Club Re-openings
Bethlehem, Lehigh Valley Active Life and the 3 country clubs all opened for face-to-face bridge in late June. The Easton club has not reopened.
- Attendance
Attendance at the country clubs has been good and is similar to that of pre-COVID.

Attendance at Bethlehem and LVAL is worse than that of pre-COVID. Both clubs require masks which reduces attendance.

On-line attendance has been dropping over the last few months. We only have one regular online game remaining.

- Membership Trends
According to the September QUIP report, Unit 133 membership is down 4.7% over the past 12 months, which is the lowest reduction in D4.

- Beginner Bridge Lessons

Beginner lessons continue, though participation is less than that of pre-COVID.

Unit 141 – John Dickenson

AMI Bridge club just reopened last Friday with 9 tables. This past Monday the club had 7-1/2.

King of Prussia (new member-owned club) attracts about 30 tables/week. Club requires VAX & masks.

North Penn about 25-30 per week. Club requires VAX & masks.

Yorktown had 3 tables Friday evening, 8 tables on Saturday and 5-1/2 on Tuesday.

Elaine Weintraub reported that Cinnaminson plays F2F on Monday & Friday attracting 9-12 tables.

Unit 168 – Bob Priest

Current club situation in H/L/Y is a merger of Bridge Boardroom and White Rose in York open. John's and Debbie's club in Lancaster open and Harrisburg Bridge Club open. Camp Hill Bridge Club will not be reopening.

Our three city virtual club is still up and running smoothly.

South of Harrisburg, only Hagerstown Bridge Club (MD) and The Woods DBC Hedgesville WV are open for F2F.

Ed Scanlon noted his club's 17 table opening day game had a couple who was fully vaccinated test positive the next day. That development resulted in seven more positives and a 4-week closure of the club. Fortunately, no one became seriously ill (all fully vaccinated). On-line games have attracted 40-50% of pre-COVID club attendance. Ed is of the opinion that online should continue to be offered even in the event COVID no longer exists.

Carl informed the board that the BBO \$1.25 & \$1.75 games are BBO (not ACBL) games. The Directors are not ACBL Directors.

Joann added that BBO pays the same \$1.00/table sanction fee to the ACBL that clubs pay. Additionally, BBO pays the ACBL \$500,000/year for the right to award ACBL masterpoints.

Unit 190 – Trina Williams, President

At the meeting, Trina reported that all clubs in South Delaware remain closed. Up North, the club in Dover gets 3 tables. Middletown gets less. The Bridge Studio is not back to pre-COVID attendance. The two country clubs are doing fine. The Unit's two Sectional tournaments have operated at a small loss.

Unit 217 – Jim McKeown

Membership has declined about 10%. (Secretary's numbers from the ACBL show about -13% on an October 1 to October 1 basis). We had two clubs at the beginning of 2020. One club closed in early 2020 and sold their building. They were already in financial difficulties due to very low play. They would probably have closed even without Covid. The other club returned to F2F play ahead of schedule on July 8. We require proof of full vaccination. The location we were playing started requiring masking during play when the CDC recommended masking indoors for everyone. Players are currently required to wear a mask whenever they are in the building. Play for the two full months we have in 2021 (August and September) was 98% of 2019.

We held a sectional October 8-10. Our Fall sectionals have been small. This one was 15% smaller than fall 2018 and 2019. Part of that was due to sky high hotel prices for that weekend which discouraged a few people from coming or reduced their number of days. (No, it was not a home football weekend.) At least two players refused to play due to the COVID precautions the ACBL required (proof of vaccination and masking). We usually offer quite a bit of snacks and dessert. We did not offer that to reduce potential COVID transmission. (ACBL policies would have allowed a little of this, but we decided to skip it entirely.)

We never had any lessons and have not run virtual games directly. Instead we pooled with BAND. Play with BAND has decreased as F2F returned, though the total of F2F and virtual is higher than F2F pre-COVID.

TOURNAMENT REPORTS:

IMPORTANT

Jeanne reminded Tournament Chairs to have Bob Glasson review the proposed contract with the host site before signing. Also, have the proposed tournament event schedule reviewed by Meyer Kotkin prior to submission to the ACBL for approval.

Valley Forge (6/27 --- 7/3/22) - Meyer is hopeful that the 2022 tournament will be held as scheduled after two cancellations. Publicity and schedule development will begin in February or early March when we may have a better feel for how COVID is trending. 2022 will be the last of the three one-year contracts with the VF Convention Center.

Lancaster (10/31 – 11/6/22) - Jeanne reported that the 2021 Spooky Nook Regional was cancelled. \$5,000 deposit rolled over to 2022.

Rochester (8/7 - 8/13/23) - Jim has selected August 7-13, 2023 for the Regional in Rochester. The venue used the last few years is quite expensive and fairly inflexible.

**Wilkes-Barre
(2023)**

- Walt Mitchell did not report any details.

**Syracuse
(8/8 – 8/14/22)**

- Betty Youmans, Mary Miller, and Jim Patton met with the new manager of the Liverpool, NY Ramada Inn. The hotel has changed from a Holiday Inn to a Ramada Inn since we signed the original contract. The new manager had been the Holiday Inn event manager so there was some familiarity.

We told her at the time we really did not know what to expect. She seemed fine with that. I need to send her another email telling her we really still did not know any more.

The Syracuse venue has always been more casual and easier group with whom to work. One thing we learned was that the convention room reservation cost was the same every day of the week. If we decide to shorten the Regional to five days, we could pick the days based on what we think would work best (presumably Wed - Sun) and not what would be cheapest.

**Delaware
(5/2 – 5/6/22)**

- The Delaware Regional is still moving forward scheduled for May 2-6, 2022 at the Rehoboth Convention Center. Caroline Hughes is co-chairing the event with Kim Holm and right now everything is in good order. I am hosting a Sectional in Rehoboth starting this Thursday with reasonable expectations. Hopefully by May the COVID scene will have settled down and players concerns will be alleviated.

**King of Prussia I/N
8/10/21 – 8/12/21
(8/2-8/4/22)**

- Joan & Bill Goldstein were not present. Of course, the event was canceled and rescheduled for 8/2 – 8/4/22.

**Allentown (U133) I/N
(12/15 – 12/17/23)**

- Betsy Cutler will hold the event at the Active Life facility in Allentown.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Rich Popper noted that changes in ACBL governance will necessitate changes in the District 4 bylaws. For example, 1st & 2nd alternate District directors will not exist after 2022. Also, do we want the Regional Director who will take office January 1, 2024 to be

a member of the board? Who will chair the Nominating Committee? The ACBL Board of Governors becomes the Advisory Council.

Bill will draft some changes and first have them reviewed by a committee of Rich Popper, Jay Apfelbaum and Betsy Cutler. Once completed, the Executive Committee will then review the changes. Finally, the full Board will receive the proposed changes to adopt at a future Board meeting. Some of these items need to be in place for 2023, others for 2024.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT & ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Joann reported that based upon the Board approved bylaws changes in 2019 the officers for next year, serving the second of their 3 year terms, will be as follows:

President – Jeanne Gehret

Vice President – Betsy Cutler

Treasurer – Pat Civale

REMARKS & APPOINTMENTS BY THE (INCOMING) PRESIDENT

Jeanne Gehret nominated Bill Bauer to continue as District Secretary. The board ratified the nominee.

Jeanne nominated (incumbents) Mary Miller & Tom Weik to be Presidential Appointees to the Board for 2022. The appointments were approved by the Board. The next day, Jeanne informed the Secretary that she was appointing incumbents Mary Miller & Tom Weik to the Executive Committee along with (incumbent) John Dickenson to the seat reserved for a member of the Board of Governors.

All Committee Chairs & Coordinators will remain the same except for the aforementioned change of 4Spot editors. Susan Morse will take over for Janet Johnson effective with the February 2022 issue.

NEXT MEETING

The Board will meet Friday evening, July 1, 2022 at 7:00PM during the Valley Forge Regional (hopefully F2F).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectively submitted by: William L. Bauer III
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