

**MINUTES OF ACBL DISTRICT 4 - LANCASTER BOARD MEETING**  
**November 3, 2023**

Voting Member Attendees:

At-Large: Jeanne Gehret (President), Betsy Cutler (Vice-President), Bob Glasson (Presidential Appointee), Mary Miller (Presidential Appointee) (4 of 5).  
Unit 112: Betty Youmans (Unit President), Dan Boye (for Part Stadelmaier), Phil Geibel, Lynn Ackerman, Jim Patton (5 of 5).  
Unit 120: Joe Distini (Unit President), Walter Mitchell (2 of 2).  
Unit 121: (0 of 2).  
Unit 133: Grace Sutherland, Betty Abrams (2 of 2).  
Unit 141: John Dickenson (Unit President), Jay Apfelbaum, April Apfelbaum, Ellen Berkowitz, Susan Morse, Robbee Perlman, Elaine Weintraub, Cathy Strauss, Rex Saffer, Cheryl Rouge (10 of 10)  
Unit 168: Linda Ivanoff (Unit President), Bob Priest, Bridget Whitely (for Ed Scanlon), Ron Orr (4 of 4).  
Unit 190: Harold Jordan (for Trina Williams), Ala Hamilton-Day, Richard Popper (3 of 3).  
Unit 217: Jim McKeown (Unit President) (1 of 2)

Also Present: Joann Glasson, District 4 District Director and ACBL President  
Bill Bauer, D4 Board Secretary  
Lou Glasthal, NAP/GNT Coordinator  
Dennis Shaub (to be designated Bridge Ambassador for D4)

Excused:

Pat Civale (Treasurer)  
Meyer Kotkin (Immediate Past President)

**CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS**

A meeting of the ACBL District 4 Board of Directors was held F2F being called to order by President Jeanne Gehret at 7:00 PM, a quorum being present (31 of 35 voting members representing 7 of 8 units). Jeanne requested the Secretary to introduce the Board members attending their first meeting. They are Joe Distini (Unit President of Unit 120), Grace Sutherland of Unit 133, Cathy Strauss, Cheryl Rouge, and Rex Saffer, all of U141. Note: After the meeting, it was brought to the Secretary's attention that Grace Sutherland had attended a previous Board meeting.

President Gehret next introduced Dennis Shaub a teacher extraordinaire in Harrisburg, Lancaster, and King of Prussia. She then named Dennis as "2023 Bridge Ambassador for District 4" and presented him with a commemorative beer glass and a bottle of his favorite beer.

Jeanne then updated us on Meyer Kotkin's health (non-Hodgkin's lymphoma). She noted that Meyer appreciates all the thoughts and prayers and asked to be forgiven for not responding to every expression of concern.

**DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Joann reported that her second term as ACBL President will end this year as well as her term as District 4 Director on the ACBL BoD. However, Joann has been elected to

become Region 3 Regional Director on the ACBL BoD. Note that Region 3 comprises Districts 3 & 4.

Joann finds the new ACBL Executive Director, Bronia Jenkins, an enthusiastic leader. And the newly hired IT Director is a bridge player which the staff appreciates as it facilitates communication. Joann concluded by saying the ACBL “is in a good place”. Our Board gave Joann a standing ovation for her years of service on the ACBL Board and as President the last two years.

**SECRETARY’S REPORT & APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 4, 2022**

The Secretary requested approval of the minutes of the F2F Lancaster Board meeting of November 4, 2022 (unanimous). The 2023 Valley Forge Board meeting was not held; however a collection of reports was distributed. They were emailed to the prospective attendees. Bill reminded the Board that the minutes also appear on the District 4 website.

The membership by Unit as of October 1, 2021, 2022 and 2023 per the ACBL was:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>10/2021</u>	<u>10/2022</u>	<u>10/2023</u>	<u>2022-2023 CHANGE</u>		<u>2024 REPS</u>
				<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	
112	1,038	959	928	-31	-3.3	5
120	201	186	181	-5	-2.8	2
121	142	122	111	-11	-9.9	2
133	242	231	221	-10	-4.5	2
141	2,460	2,343	2,316	-27	-1.1	10
168	790	775	744	-31	-4.2	4
190	521	503	480	-23	-5.8	3
217	<u>85</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>+1</u>	<u>+1.2</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5,479</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>5,063</b>	<b>-137</b>	<b>-2.7</b>	<b>30</b>

There is no change to the number of each unit’s voting representatives for 2024.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The complete report for the fiscal year starting June 1, 2023, through October 18, 2023 was emailed to prospective attendees.

Here are some highlights:

The balance sheet shows current assets of \$158K with \$117K reserved for hosting future NABC’s held in D4.

The income statement shows a loss of \$16,694 for the fiscal year to date (June 1 – October 18, 2023).

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

Jeanne presented her “take” on District finances. Jeanne’s suggestions and the actions agreed to by the Board are recorded under New Business.

**RATIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

1. Approved the request of Bharat Rao, NAP Coordinator, to expand from 2 to 3 sites for the NAP Flight ”B” District finals.

2. Approved a subsidy to hold a Best Practices Teacher Course at the Valley Forge Regional. D4 members would pay \$50 rather than \$140 and receive lunch on Sunday, Non-D4 members would pay the full \$140 + \$15 for Sunday lunch. Anticipated subsidy is \$1,000. The actual subsidy will be known at the time of the Board meeting.
3. Approved the distribution of 2023 Charity foundation grant to District 4. The awardees are as follows:
  - a. Louis S Wolk JCC of Greater Rochester (new site of the Finger Lakes Regional) (\$3,000)
  - b. Good Shepherd United Church of Christ (home of the Unit 121 bridge game) (\$2,000)
  - c. Lehigh Valley Active Life Senior Center (home of local bridge games and the upcoming I/N Regional) (\$2,000)
  - d. Manna on Main Street (provides food, social services and community outreach in Montgomery County) (\$3,000)

**The Board unanimously approved the Executive Committee actions.**

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **PUBLICITY**

no report

### **DISTRICT 4SPOT**

Susan Morse had reported that all is going well prior to the meeting.

### **TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR/D4 STaC COORDINATOR**

As Elaine reported in June, many of our Units have begun scheduling their sectionals further in advance than they did prior to the pandemic. As a result, most Units have been able to lock in their preferred dates for these tournaments, particularly in 2025. The downside is that the schedules for both 2024 and 2025 are so filled that there is little wiggle room for changing tournament dates, should the need arise.

Because the 2025 summer NABC will be held in Philadelphia in July, we will not be holding the Valley Forge regional that year. The Tournament Committee may decide that we should host a “substitute” regional in June in a location further from Philadelphia. If not, we will have two additional weekends in June which could be used for sectionals or special events, if needed.

Stac attendance is showing some improvement compared to last year, although still not close to pre-pandemic levels. The May 2023 Stac increased by 63 tables over the May 2022 Stac, and the August 2023 Stac increased by nearly a hundred tables over August, 2022.

Despite the increased table counts, the income to District 4 from STaCs has fallen well below the \$3000 per year target, which was set when the current Stac policy was adopted. In my June report, I documented some of the reasons for the dramatic decrease

in income to the District – increased sanction fees to ACBL, inability to make use of the sliding scale for sanction fees, reduced table counts due in part to reduced number of club sessions, etc. Other than increasing the table fee charged to clubs, which would be a hardship to many clubs, I suggest the Board consider the following remedies:

Short Term: The StaC policy adopted by the Board did not mandate the current split of net revenue between the District and the Units (presently 25% for the District, 75% for the Units), but rather stated that each year the treasurer could recommend a different split to meet the District's needs. I hope the Board will consider a different split for the next two years, perhaps one which allocates 60 – 100% of the net revenue to the District, depending on the treasurer's analysis and recommendation.

Long Term: Like D4, many Districts have seen their StaC participation decrease by more than 50%. But ACBL has not changed the cut-off points for the sliding scale (500 tables, 1000, 2000, 4000). I am seeing Districts joining together with other Districts to run combined STaCs, to take advantage of that scale. For example, District 3 (central and north Jersey, eastern NY state) has been running joint STaCs with District 24 (New York City and Long Island) since the beginning of 2022. I suspect this will be a growing trend, and I suggest we investigate doing the same. To that end, I have contacted my counterpart in D6 to see if they would be interested in setting up a trial (perhaps one StaC in 2024) to see how well we could make such an arrangement work. As of this writing, I have not yet heard back from them.

## **CHARITY**

Lois Fuini was not present. Distribution of 2023 ACBL Charity Foundation funds allocated for District 4 has been accomplished (See Executive Committee action #3).

## **FINANCE**

No report received.

## **NAP**

No report received.

## **GNT**

No report received.

## **EDUCATION**

Jerry Manioci reported that he sent a survey to all accredited teachers in District 4, and replied to almost all who wrote back. Approximately 10% responded. One wrote back to say that she does not open attachments from strangers. Jerry regrets that he is not as well known as Meyer, the district chick magnet.

The responses indicated that those who teach do so 1-3 times/week. Many have stopped teaching. Class sizes varied from 1 to 24. Nearly all who are teaching teach F2F indicating a need to train teachers to teach on-line. Class size tended to be smaller than pre-COVID.

No one requested help with their teaching. No one expressed an interest in help advertising. Teachers were mostly unaware of whether their students migrated to sanctioned club games. Lacking hard they guessed about 10-25% made the transition. Most teachers would not mind Jerry following up with former students who did not transition to club games. The teachers had no requests for the Education Chair.

In follow up emails Jerry asked if they would be willing to share lesson plans with other teachers. Jerry believes such a database of lesson plans would be useful to reduce prep time. The response was mixed.

Jerry also asked whether those who responded would be willing to participate in focus groups of teachers to exchange ideas on teaching and how to increase class size and how to encourage students to make the transition to club bridge. The respondents were generally receptive to this idea.

Jerry concluded with a suggestion to increase club attendance. Have the director put together a group of player volunteers call to encourage players to return to the game in order to approach pre-COVID attendance.

### **INTERMEDIATE/NEWCOMER**

Betsy Cutler and her tournament committee are excited to move forward with the NLM Regional in Allentown this coming December. Betsy has travelled to many sectionals this fall and promoted this event. The excitement of the players is infectious. Betsy has given out many flyers and folks are talking about making hotel reservations so they can play for 2 days. This is very encouraging to me, and I hope the momentum continues to build.

The next NLM Regional in Harrisburg in 2024 seems to be on track also.

### **TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE:**

Jeanne Gehret report is under New Business.

### **TOURNAMENT REPORTS:**

#### **King of Prussia**

(6/26 – 7/2/23)

The tournament was very successful and well attended. Survey respondents gave the tournament a 98% satisfaction score - the highest score ever received by a Regional. Tournament co-Chairs Mark Cohen and Betsy Cutler have since resigned their tournament roles but remain willing to assist. Rex Saffer and John Dickenson will co-Chair the 2024 Tournament.

#### **Lancaster**

(10/30 – 11/5/23)

Attendance growth was good, with face-to-face tables of 1202, plus another 42 online tables. Food and food service, a weakness of the '22 event, was improved. Attendees were overwhelmingly happy with the event and good feedback is anticipated from the survey.

#### **Rochester**

(8/7 – 8/11/23)

See attachment from Betty Youmans.

#### **Philadelphia Summer 2025 NABC**

(7/23 – 8/3/25)

No report received.

#### **Wilkes-Barre**

Walt Mitchell will await his Unit 120's Board meeting in December before making a request for his Unit to host a 2025 Regional.

**Rehoboth Beach Delaware**

(5/1- 5/5/23)  
(4/29- 5/3/24)

-  
No new report received. See the report in the Board Updates from the Valley Forge Regional.

**Allentown (U133) I/N**

(12/14 – 12/16/23)

NLM Regional Committee - we are prepping for the upcoming event and hope to get more flyers distributed and then do some email blasts both via constant contact within the district and Pianola to a bigger radius of potential attendees. We plan to help all find partners and hope to have a very successful tournament.

**Harrisburg (U168) I/N**

(11/22 – 11/24/24)

Harrisburg I/N (non-LM below 750)) Regional is sanctioned for the weekend before Thanksgiving 2024. We are waiting for the conclusion of Allentown I/N Regional this December to get a feel for what to anticipate.

Initial plan is for two events daily, Friday and Saturday, 0-750 pairs and 0-750 bracketed teams. Single session pairs entries (for red points only) permitted. Sunday 0-750 bracketed teams and a single session (Red points only) 0-750 pairs.

Our plan is to have presold entries, nontransferable but totally refundable, at \$15/p/s (up to Sunday before the event), with day of entries at \$20/p/s.

This should allow us to pre plan staffing and set-up prior to the events, rather than trying to do it on the fly.

**OLD BUSINESS**

The matter of having Wilkes-Barre host a future D4 Regional. Covered under Wilkes-Barre Tournament Report.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Jeanne Gehret presented her analysis & recommendations regarding the District’s impending financial crisis. Operating funds have diminished to \$57,883 at the 5/31/2023 close of the fiscal year from \$100,810 on 5/31/2019 (pre-pandemic), a 43% decline. The reduced operating funds makes pre-funding Regional Tournament expenses problematic.

**CAUSES:**

- Fixed operating expenses continued, and some even increased, during the pandemic, while income came to a stand-still.
- STaC income to the district is about 30% of pre-pandemic (~\$1,000 in 2023 with ZERO stipend taken for the work of processing STaC proceeds. If the stipend were taken - \$200 per STaC - there would be virtually no income from STaCs to the District).
- Participation in GNT & NAP District finals has been declining, which does little to offset stipends for travel to the NABCs. Stipends total ~\$12,000.
- Regional Tournaments, the traditional primary source of funding for District expenses, have not made a positive contribution to the District bottom line in either 2022 or 2023.

- Regionals went forward with the knowledge they would basically break even or lose a little money. The District supported this as necessary to get players back to tournaments.
- Tournament Final Financial Reports don't provide the whole story. While a tournament may show a small profit or loss, the story for the District is different after deducting Free Plays for some District volunteers, a room for the week for the District President, and the Board Meeting expenses. District expenses add up to ~\$10,000 annually.
- While restarting Regionals was imperative despite the losses, that trend must be reversed. With solid and improving attendance, now is the time to implement fees that do more than cover costs, as well as profit guidance for Regionals.

### **IMPLEMENTED ITEMS:**

- **Implemented: Expense Reduction**
  1. **Eliminated practice of providing free plays to TCs at not just their own, but all Regionals**
    - Had become practice but was never Board-approved.
    - TCs receive FPs at their event, or if they cannot or do not use all due at their event, can use remaining balance at another District Regional.
    - In no case would a TC receive more Free Plays than the # of sessions at their Regional (unless, perhaps, they volunteered at another Regional – I/N Lecture = 1 free play, etc.).
- **Implemented: Income Generation**
  1. **Opened a District Credit Card Account** – 3% cash back on tournament rooms & hospitality has netted over \$1,000 in 2023.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Recommendations: EXPENSE REDUCTION**
  1. **Reduce in-person Board meetings to 1x yearly** (Cost of Board Meeting = ~\$5,000/event)
    - In lieu of a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, options are to either issue an Interim Report with committee updates (April/May timeframe); or to hold a virtual meeting by Zoom.

**ACTION: By motion, the Board approved having 1 meeting/year (with 1 dissenting vote). The President will decide whether a Zoom meeting or issuing an Interim Board report is appropriate.**

    - Utilize Executive Committee for interim decisions; however, put decision items out to Unit Presidents in advance of any vote to permit input from the Units. This is a good-faith procedural change that was not voted upon, but which will be implemented.
  2. **Create Student Entry Fee policy for Regionals** – Recommend ½ price exclusively for District 4 Junior members (25 & under). Receiving ½ price for 2 sessions offsets the cost of providing lunch for the player (currently \$15 in Lancaster & \$21 in KoP).
    - Currently Philadelphia Regional offers free entry to all full-time students; no other Regionals provides this benefit.

- Prior years cost Philadelphia Regional ~\$200, in 2023, the cost exceeded \$1,000 because of out-of-district junior ‘pros’.

**ACTION: The Board approved ½ price, rather than free (D4 under 25 only) for full-time students.**

• **Recommendations: INCREASE INCOME**

1. **Raise Regional Tournament Entry fee to \$25/session**, and create baseline 7.5% target profit (% of gross receipts)
  - Cost of food has soared from pre-pandemic levels.
  - Venues have raised rates.
  - Director costs are higher and will be raised significantly in 2024.
  - Assessment of income: Using 2023 total F2F Regional Tables – Gross receipts of \$328,000 x 7.5% = \$24,600
  - Regionals would remain committed to providing great hospitality and value for the players.

**ACTION: Give latitude to Tournament Chairs to charge an entry fee up to \$25 with the goal of making a profit of 7.5% of gross revenue.** Approved with 6 dissenting. Dissenters pointed out that there will be an impact on attendance. Some also objected to using the increase to offset the loss associated with GNT team subsidies which benefit only a few players.

2. **Increase participation in GNT and NAP District finals** – Unit/club commitments/ideas and promotion needed.

Mary Miller stated that players need to better understand these two events to want to participate. Bob Priest noted that clubs and Units could run GNT “qualification” games and pay a fee to the District. The funds would go toward offsetting GNT subsidies. A suggestion of holding the District finals at a Regional to reduce costs was made. Note: This did not work in the past.

**ACTION: Bob Priest, Jay Apfelbaum and Rich Popper volunteered to help NAP/GNT Coordinator, Lou Glasthal, come up with recommendations.** An unanswered question is whether the GNT can be split-site?

3. **Monthly online game for benefit of District 4** - ~ \$4-5,000 annual revenue
  - 3 or 4 levels of play (99’er, gold rush, midflight, open)?
  - Strive to choose a consistent date/time that doesn’t conflict with established D4 Online Club games.
  - Details TBD

**ACTION: Motion approved by Board.**

4. **Royal STaC fees** – Change to accrue solely to the District, with no distribution back to Units.
  - With approval, recommend immediate implementation of this item.

**ACTION: Motion made and approved unanimously.**

5. **Traditional STaC Fees** – Reassess how table fees are apportioned to District & Units
  - Decision on this may be dependent upon items #1, #2, and #3 above.



- More inclusive discussion may be needed.

**ACTION: Motion to change the split of profits to 75% for the District and 25% for the Units. The split is to be revisited annually. Motion passed with four dissenting votes.**

- **Recommendation: OPERATING EFFICIENCY**
  1. **99'er game rebates:** Propose accruing ACBL payments and issuing semi-annual payments to clubs
    - The amount received from ACBL is \$250-\$300/month.
    - Small Checks are written & sent when amounts exceed \$20.
    - Modified practice will reduce the effort involved in issuing and mail checks.

**ACTION: Motion passed to make a payout to Clubs once/year.**

### **FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION:**

- **TERM OF PRESIDENCY: Recommend reduction in term from 3 years to 2 years.**
  - When a 3-year term was proposed, it was to align term of service with the District Director.
  - 2023 is the final year for the District Director position in D4 and will become part of the Region grouping going forward.
  - That means the “Region Director” may or may not be a District 4 member.
  - As such, the alignment of District President and the Director role is less critical.
  - A 3-year term expects a lot from volunteers, and likely reduces the number of candidates willing to come forward.
  - A 1-year term is less likely to produce impactful leadership.

**ACTION: Since there was no appropriate notice per the bylaws, the Secretary was asked to begin the process per a motion approved with one member dissenting.**

- **REGIONAL SCHEDULE FOR 2025: Seeking guidance for when/whether to schedule Regionals.**
  - No Philadelphia Regional due to NABC in late July 2025.
  - FLX /Rochester too soon after NABC, so they would like to change the week to the one vacated by the Valley Forge Regional.
  - Wilkes-Barre also has expressed interest in hosting a Regional in 2025.

**ACTION: The Board unanimously approved the change of the week for the Rochester Regional.**

**Followup for possible action: Walt Mitchell will get back to the President after the Unit 120 Board meets in December to say if & when Wilkes-Barre wants to hold a 2025 regional.**

### **NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT & ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Jeanne Gehret presented Meyer Kotkin’s Nominating Committee report as follows:

The President, Vice-President & Treasurer are to be elected to 3-year terms.

President – Betsy Cutler of Unit 133

Vice-President – Ala Hamilton-Day of Unit 190

Treasurer – Pat Civale of Unit 141

There were no nominations from the floor. The above slate was elected unanimously.

### **REMARKS & APPOINTMENTS BY INCOMING PRESIDENT**

Betsy Cutler thanked our outgoing President Jeanne Gehret for her outstanding performance & dedication during her 3-year Presidency.

Next Betsy nominated Bill Bauer to continue as Secretary for the next year. The Board unanimously concurred.

Then, Betsy nominated Mary Miller & Bob Glasson to continue to serve as Presidential appointees to the Board. The appointments were approved in a unanimous vote of the Board. Betsy then appointed them to the Executive Committee. Betsy also selected John Dickenson from D4's ACBL Advisory Council members to again serve on the Executive Committee.

Betsy announced the following Committee Chairmanship changes:

Finance – Phil Geibel

Education – Mike Kohler

Intermediate/Newcomer – An offer has been made but not yet accepted. Update: Linda O'Malley accepted the next day.

Two days after the meeting, Betsy announced that the following individuals agreed to remain in their positions as follows:

Publicity - Jeanne Gehret

4 Spot - Susan Morse

Tournament Coordinator - Elaine Weintraub

Charity - Losi Fuini

NAP/GNT Coordinator - Lou Glasthal

Tournament - Jeanne Gehret

Disciplinary – Rick Rowland

Appellate – Bob Glasson

District Recorder – Lou Glasthal

And a new appointment: King of Prussia Tournament Co-Chair Rex Saffer

Update: About a week after the meeting, Betsy announced that Ala Hamilton-Day would co-chair the Philadelphia 2025 NABC.

### **NEXT MEETING**

Betsy announced that the next F2F meeting will be Friday, November 1, 2024, at the site of the Lancaster Regional.

Format for the King of Prussia meeting to be either Zoom or pre-tournament Board reports, but not F2F.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:05.

Respectfully submitted by: William L. Bauer III  
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