

ACBL DISTRICT 4 VALLEY FORGE VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Held on Zoom
June 20, 2024

Voting Member Attendees:

- At-Large: Betsy Cutler (President), Ala Hamilton-Day (Vice-President), Jeanne Gehret (Immediate Past President), Mary Miller (Presidential Appointee) (4 of 5).
Unit 112: Betty Youmans (Unit President), Dan Boye, Pat Stadelmaier, Richard Hartz, Sr. (4 of 5).
Unit 120: Joe Distini (Unit President) (1 of 2).
Unit 121: William Buskirk (Unit President) (1 of 2).
Unit 133: Betty Abrams (1 of 2).
Unit 141: John Dickenson (Unit President), Jay Apfelbaum, April Apfelbaum, Cathy Strauss, Rex Saffer, Joann Glasson, Ellen Luchette, Pat Civale, Lou Glasthal, Susan Morse (10 of 10)
Unit 168: Bob Priest, Ron Orr (2 of 4).
Unit 190: Harold Jordan, Barbara Rhoades, Kim Holm (3 of 3).
Unit 217: Jim McKeown (Unit President) (1 of 2)

Also Present: Joann Glasson, Regional Director
Bill Bauer, D4 Board Secretary
Pat Civale, Treasurer
Lou Glasthal, NAP/GNT Coordinator
Larry Sunser, D4 representative to the ACBL Advisory Council

Excused:

Bob Glasson, Presidential Appointee
Walter Mitchell, Wilkes-Barre Regional Chair

ALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS

Betsy Cutler

President Betsy Cutler called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Joann Glasson

ACBL Clubhouse

ACBL Clubhouse is a new community of games online for players with limited numbers of masterpoints. It was created to fill the gap left because it's difficult for individual virtual clubs to provide enough games for new players.

Games are held at different times during the day for players with 49, 200 or 300 masterpoints. To play just go to BBO and look for the ACBL Clubhouse button.

When players play in these games a portion (\$1.50) of the \$5.00 and \$6.00 entry fees is returned to the face-to-face club that you have played in.

It's important to direct traffic to these games.

5/5/5

11% of membership dues collected by the ACBL has traditionally been returned to the units to support membership growth and retention in those units.

A new program 5/5/5 has been initiated and the first payment reflecting it will be in July.

Each unit will get 5% of the membership dues, an additional 5% will be given to units for helping ACBL with member retention and another 5% of dues are available to units for membership growth.

In addition, the ACBL is sponsoring Bridge Ambassador Programs for any person or unit who sets up a booth or table to promote the game of bridge. An ambassador will receive \$250 from ACBL.

Entry Express

Entry Express. The story is long and painful, but the end of the story is that Entry Express will only be used at national tournaments going forward. It is not as automated as promised and requires expensive staff to maintain so a business decision has been made to limit usage to nationals.

Finances. The ACBL is in good financial condition. Changing the fee structure for face-to-face clubs and online clubs has had a positive impact on the bottom line.

EDGAR – ACBL is actively cleaning up the online game with the use of EDGAR, an automated detection system.

SECRETARY’S REPORT & APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 3, 2023

The Secretary reported that a quorum was present -- 27 of 35 voting representatives with all 8 units represented.

The Secretary has prepared and distributed the minutes of the F2F Lancaster Board meeting of November 3, 2023. Bill reminds the Board that the minutes also appear on the District 4 website. The minutes were approved by the Board.

These zoom meeting minutes consist of the reports to the Board from our officers, Committee and Regional Chairs and our Coordinators. Each report may be followed by additional information, questions from the Board, discussion, sometimes lengthy, and any resultant motions.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Pat Civale

Preliminarily, net income for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2024 is \$483.53 following a number of years of losses. The District fund balance is \$80,000 and the National reserve fund balance is \$117,000.

The complete report is attached.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Betsy Cutler

Betsy called upon Bob Priest to make an announcement. Bob informed the Board that he had gotten a call from retired National Director Doug Grove informing Bob of the passing of retired ACBL Director Ted Stryker. Ted directed sectional and regional tournaments in D4 for over 30 years in the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and perhaps into the 90’s. Ted did a great job.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Betsy Cutler

District 4 has been a busy place since the Lancaster Regional board meeting. We had our first Non-Life Master Regional in Allentown, qualifying for the Grand National Teams in

Harrisburg and Cherry Hill, Bridge at the Beach in Rehoboth and the new monthly online games for our members only.

In December, Lois Fuini and I were overwhelmed by the response to the first ever Non-Life Master Regional. The line to pay for entries was literally out the front door of the building! It was so much fun to see all the newer players showing up for a chance at red and gold points. It was especially exciting to see some players who were attending their very first regional tournament. The tournament not only broke event but made about \$3000 plus everyone seemed to have a great time. A special thanks to Bob Cole, DIC, and Tim Sumner, assistant director, for all their hard work.

The Grand National Teams had decent numbers of entries with the surprising exception of the Championship flight with only 4 teams. In my experience it has been flight C that usually has the fewest teams but this year that was not the case. Thanks to Lou Glasthal for his hard work coordinating these events and to the Harrisburg and Cherry Hill Bridge Clubs for hosting them.

Kim Holm and Harold Jordan ran an amazing tournament this past month – Bridge at the Beach was a resounding success! Thanks to all who helped make this event such a success and so much fun for all. The Wednesday evening wine and charcuterie event was truly special. Rehoboth Beach supplied wonderful weather for most of the week and a good time was had by all attendees.

The newly added District 4 monthly online games seem to be catching on with more of our members. The inaugural outing was the best attended but the games are still maintaining decent attendance. We have raised a nice amount of money to help fund the NAP and GNT stipends. Thanks again to Bob Cole and Ed Scanlon for directing these monthly games. Many of you have asked about playing with a partner from outside of District 4 but unfortunately the BBO software does not allow us to make exceptions to the list of allowed players except to fill a half table. We did have a few glitches the first month with outsiders joining our game, but that loophole has been closed now. We will make an effort to hit as many games with extra or pigmented points moving forward. The full revised schedule is on the D4 website. We have given out a total of 8 free plays from the January and March games. Pat Civale has all the numbers.

I want to wish Rex Saffer and his committee the best of luck for a successful Philadelphia Regional next week! I hope to see all of you at this event and at the August Finger Lakes Regional as well. Of course, I should see most of you at Lancaster in October as well.

At the meeting, Betsy added three points of information:

1. The monthly D4 game will now be 18 boards and the cost will be \$5.00 (\$6.00 for special games).
2. She apologized to John Dickenson for omitting his name as co-chair of the Valley Forge Regional in her above report.
3. Next Thursday at the lunch break at the Valley Forge tournament, Betsy will announce and present certificates to the various masterpoint contest winners.

On the matter of non-D4 players playing in the open game, that is an ACBL problem. It is an ACBL policy that only D4 players can play in the monthly game and it is up to the ACBL to enforce its policy.

RATIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIONS

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Betsy Cutler

There have not been any Executive Committee actions since the Lancaster Board meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PUBLICITY

Jeanne Gehret

District 4 mailings include, 4Spot (Susan Morse) and Silver & Gold (Bill Herdle), Regional tournament advertisements (Jim Patton), and other “as-needed” communication (rare – Jim Patton). The Publicity team manages their work with great independence, month in and month out. We are fortunate to have Bill, Susan, and Jim as the communications team keeping our members apprised of what’s happening in District 4.

The reach of our Constant Contact mailing list is ~4,400, and our mailings are opened by roughly half of the recipients.

Mailing list updates (done by Jim Patton) utilize the monthly “In/Out Report” to add in new & incoming members, update changed emails, and scrub deceased members (no action taken on members leaving D4, as they can “unsubscribe” if desired).

There are approximately 500 members that we do not reach through Constant Contact mailings. Those include members that have asked the ACBL to not share their email, those with no email, or those with an invalid email address.

Every email sent results in an average of 3 “unsubscribes.

Website update - new featured posts include the 70%+ F2F games, and D4 Online Games schedule and results

DISTRICT 4SPOT

Susan Morse

The 4Spot continues and all is well. Susan added that some contributors are missing deadlines, however.

We consider it a point of pride to get the thing out on the first of every month. Many thanks to those who manage to get their submissions in well before the deadline, which is one week before the first day of the following month.

Some of our Unit News submissions could easily come in much earlier, as ACBL posts new members and rank advancements very early in the previous month. My proofers and

I would greatly appreciate seeing more of our Unit submissions by the one-week deadline if not sooner.

We try to send out a reminder to the stragglers when the deadline is near. If you receive a reminder email but have already submitted, please resend.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR/D4 STaC COORDINATOR – Elaine Weintraub

D4 TOUNAMENT COORDINATOR

The tournament calendar for the rest of 2024 is close to 100% full. The calendar for 2025 has less than a half-dozen good weekends still open. Any Units that have not scheduled their planned sectionals for 2025 should try to do so very soon – our neighboring Districts have not yet scheduled their full complement of tournaments for 2025, so some of the open weekends might become unusable for us when they do.

Planning ahead, D4 has previously gotten sanctions for all of our Regionals for every year through 2028. As far as I know, ACBL still allows us to schedule them up to 8 years out. I think it might be advisable to sanction all 4 Regionals out to 2032. I will be glad to submit the sanction applications if you provide the desired dates to me.

After the Board was told we can schedule our Regionals further out in time than we had thought, a motion was passed for our 4 Regionals to be scheduled as far out in time as the ACBL will permit. It was noted that we cannot do the same with our District NAP & GNT finals because the ACBL must approve the Conditions of Contest before a sanction request is made.

D4 DISTRICT STaC COORDINATOR

During the week of May 6-12, 2024, we ran our first-ever joint STaC with District 6; it ran very smoothly, thanks to our excellent director, Rob Maier. ACBL is no longer using a sliding scale of table sanction fees, so there is no longer an increase in per-table revenue to the District for running larger STaCs. Instead, ACBL will return a flat \$2.30 per table to D4; for this joint STaC, D4 will then send a portion of the money received from ACBL, equal to the percentage of total table count supplied by D6 clubs, to D6.

Although there is no longer a monetary advantage for having larger STaCs, there is still a nice benefit to the players, in terms of larger silver point awards for the winners, and more winners receiving these point awards. Below is a sampling of one session in the May, 2023 STaC, compared to the same afternoon in the May, 2024 STaC:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Total Tables	542	899.5 (D4=581.5, D6=318)
Mon. Afternoon:		
Session tables	53	102
1 st place	11.81 pts	15.82 pts
2 nd place	8.86 pts	11.87 pts
3rd place	6.64 pts	8.90 pts
Etc.		
# places w/extra awards	7	10

Quite a lengthy discussion ensued regarding the advisability of joining District 6. Some thought our players may be receiving fewer points although the top awards were greater. Combining seems like there is no difference in revenue (or expense) as the District receives \$2.30/table for each D4 table in the event.

A motion was passed to hold a joint regular StaC and a joint Royal StaC with D6 until the Board says otherwise. The other two StaC's will be D4 only. Attendees were reminded that it is a club option whether to participate in any club session.

Note: A Royal StaC awards 25% each of gold, red, silver and black points.

CHARITY

Lois Fuini

No report.

FINANCE

Phil Geibel

NAP

Lou Glasthal

2024 NAP District finals will be held as follows:

A: September 14-15 at Game Friendly in Cherry Hill

B: October 6 at 3 separate locations (North Penn, Harrisburg, W. Elmira)

C: September 15 at any clubs wishing to participate that can provide a minimum of 5 full tables. Any interested club owners/managers should reach out to me for details.

GNT

Lou Glasthal

GNT Play was moved off-line for the first time since the start of COVID. Overall attendance was up significantly, with 32 teams participating this year vs. 25 last year. Some ideas that are being explored for increasing attendance even further in 2025 include implementing club-level or unit-level qualifying games and allowing players to qualify as individuals (as is currently being done for the NAP).

Winners by flight were:

Open (4 teams played in Cherry Hill vs. 3 online last year): Andy Kaufman, John Dickenson, Michael Shuster, Kevin Fay

A (8 teams played in Harrisburg vs. 4 online last year): Mark Henderson, Paul Amer, Bernard Rehberg, Jeff Ruben

B (9 teams played in Cherry Hill vs. 10 online last year): Jerry Jia, Huiyao Liu, Barry Dehlin, Matt Sherman

C (11 teams played in Harrisburg vs. 8 online last year): Robert Davenport Jr, Kurt Meyer, Jane Detra Davenport, Richard McMullin

National finals will be held this summer in Toronto. Thanks to the levels of participation, we are eligible to send two teams for both Flights B and C.

Much discussion ensued about Team expense subsidies to offset some of the players' expenses to participate in the NABC GNT events. Bob Priest offered 2 suggestions:

1. Encourage clubs to hold as many Grass Roots Fund games as they benefit the District and are intended by the ACBL to help Districts manage the cost of subsidizing teams representing the District. They can be scheduled in the 8 months that the ACBL has not designated for another purpose.
2. Encourage units to hold Unit NAP “Qualifying” games. The District can levy its own sanction fee. Of course, participation in the unit game is not a prerequisite for playing in the District final’s events. The only reason to play is to win masterpoints, not to mention “fame & glory”. Note: no one mentioned “fame & glory”. The Secretary just likes that expression.

Lou has a committee formed to look into how to boost attendance at the District finals and otherwise raise money to support subsidies. Members are Bob Priest, Richard Popper and Jay Apfelbaum.

EDUCATION

Mike Kohler

On May 7, an email was sent to leaders in all 8 units asking for a representative from each unit to join the committee, with the intent of starting an informal review of current educational activities.

To date, potential volunteers have been identified from units 112, 121, 133 and 168. Some of us may get together at the King of Prussia or Lancaster Regionals.

INTERMEDIATE/NEWCOMER

Linda O’Malley

Rehoboth Regional:

One of the goals at the Rehoboth Regional was to encourage new players, who had never attended a tournament, to come to Rehoboth and play. At least one teacher actively recruited her students and agreed to be there with them. Ways to promote attendance and a positive experience were as follows:

- Players with 0-20 MPs played their first game for free
- The players only played 18 boards
- After the game the directors talked through hands to further teach the players.
- The games were held on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning to split it up for the new players.

Rehoboth Novice Game:

- For the newcomers game, there were 7 tables on Thursday and 10 tables on Friday.
- 5 new players joined the ACBL

Sectionals:

The sectionals have been well-attended for the most part.

Bridge Clubs & Newer Players:

Clubs are trying a variety of ways to recruit and retain new players:

- In-person and online lessons
- Novice games (0-50, 0-500 with a 0-20 section, etc)
- Evening lessons to draw in people who are still working

- Pro-Am events and other events pairing novice and intermediate players with more advanced players
- Weekly (or more) shuffle and deal opportunities with volunteer mentors
- Limited game (0-20) with a teaching component built in (discussion after each board)

Possible New Upcoming Events:

- Additional of a Novice section in the Fall Sectional in South Jersey
- Possible 0-500 Sectional in South Jersey in 2025

Harrisburg I/N Regional

- Attendance usually comes from the entire unit, with 10-20% from outside.
- There has been criticism in the past for misrepresenting the Gold points in the regional. For the upcoming 0-750NLM Regional in November, no LM will be included and the flyer will clearly state that Gold points will be 30% of the payout.

TOURNAMENT

Jeanne Gehret

Jeanne Gehret reports:

- Revisions are needed to the most recently approved D4 Regional Tournament Guidelines from December 2019. Board Members can anticipate review/approval of this work at the November '24 meeting.
- Implementation of the new Board-approved guideline seeking ~7% return on Regional entry fees is being monitored, and is expected to produce varying results. Rehoboth Beach, with an entry fee of \$25, 20+% attendance growth, and increased hospitality, is tentatively reporting a ~20% return on receipts.

Some Board members encouraged units to conduct I/N Regionals as there is an unlimited number permitted (if you can find dates on the calendar).

TOURNAMENT REPORTS:

Valley Forge

Rex Saffer & John Dickenson

6/26/24 – 6/30/24)

Here are the main points of our preparations for the KOP regional in June:

The following items describe planning for our upcoming tournament June 24–30. Preparations are well under way, as follows.

- As of May 15, attendees have made reservations totaling 263 room nights. Our commitment to the Alloy is 392 room nights.
- The schedule of events has been revised significantly from last year. The main changes are:
 - Elimination of KOs in favor of Bracketed Swiss Teams every day except Thursday, which will remain as the Philly Dupli–Swiss event.
 - We will give the Monday free relaxed 0–20 game another try.
 - 199er games every day except Sunday.

- o Juniors (25 and under) will play for 1/2 price.
- o Online games have been consolidated into a 2-session Sunday event.
 - Masks are optional.
 - There is an expanded schedule of free morning and lunchtime lessons to take place Monday–Thursday. This year these will take place in the Fusion playing room downstairs to greatly improve crowd and noise control for the lunchtime talks. 199er games will also take place in Fusion.
 - Table fees have been set at \$23 per person per session, \$20 for online games. Our budget projections indicate that we will meet or exceed the suggested 7.5% profit margin.
 - Latest version of flyer and schedule are attached.

Any additional information needed? Please let me know.

Rex added that the number of room nights the Tournament guaranteed has been met and that should bode well for attendance.

Lancaster
 (10/30 – 11/5/23)
 (10/28 – 11/3/24)

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Jeanne Gehret

2023 highlights:

- Attendance - excluding the online game – increased 50 tables over 2022 (+4.8%), making Lancaster the first Regional in the country to achieve 75% of pre-pandemic attendance (as reported by ACBL HQ).
- Based upon the post-tournament survey, scores improved in all areas. The item having the greatest improvement (40 points!), was food; however, the rating of 64% leaves much more room for improvement (and is a major focus for 2024). Just a note that the food has always scored worse than other measures for the Lancaster Regional. Additional topics scored as follows – Site 86%, Directors 93%, Hospitality 84%, Partnership 82%, Overall “Recommend” rate 90%.
- Tournament bottom line was a profit of \$4,102, or 4.2% of receipts.

2024 highlights:

- Room rate is unchanged @ \$129
- Meal price increasing 15%
- Entry Fees: Primary entry fee planned at \$23 to match the rate for Philadelphia Regional. 199'er entry planned at \$15/session. Online entry planned at 21 boards and \$15/session.
- Additional hospitality to be provided – dessert every day, hot coffee & tea added to lunch, treats exclusively for lecture attendees.
- Using duplicated boards for Sunday's Bracketed Teams

Rochester

(8/8/5 - 8/10/24)

Betty Youmans

The Finger Lakes Regional will be held at the Louis Wolk Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Rochester, NY on August 5-9 with an online component on August 10.

The key leadership consists of:

Betty Youmans, Chair

Jim Patton, Business Manager

Mary Miller, Intermediate/Newcomer Chair

Dan Boye, Partnership Chair

Joann Glasson, Daily Bulletin Editor

Alex Bealles, Director in Charge

There is no hotel on site. Arrangements have been made with the Country Inn and Suites for a discounted rate for bridge players.

The JCC has a café on site, but has changed vendors since last year. The new vendor, Fox's Deli, is in the process of developing a menu and costs for the daily lunches.

In the past, major items (Bridgemates, boards, cards, cases) needed for the Regional had to be transported from the King of Prussia tournament to Rochester and then transported to Lancaster. To alleviate this, Unit 112 has purchased boards, cards and cases which will be used for the Regionals and Sectionals. The Rochester Area Bridge Association plans to supply the Bridgemates.

The Toronto NABC will be held July 17-28. Our Regional is a week later. It is unknown whether the NABC will affect our attendance. We are hopeful that players will go to Toronto, spend a week visiting upstate New York and then come to Rochester.

We hope to see many District 4 players at our Regional!

Philadelphia Summer 2025 NABC

(7/23- 8/3/250)

John Dickenson & Ala Hamilton-Day

Ala and John are working with Montie Hamblen and Christina Goldsby at ACBL meeting services.

Logo has been completed to our satisfaction.

Fundraising to begin in earnest in July after John makes contact with a potential large sponsor at Reston regional.

Site visit to Marriott planned for June or July.

ACBL will reserve a table for us in Toronto (2024 Summer NABC). Ala and John will staff to promote PHL NABC.

Ellen Berkowitz has been connected to Chip Dombrowski for Restaurant Guide.

Wilkes-Barre

Walt Mitchell

Unit 120 President, Joe Distini is not prepared to recommend holding a Regional facing the prospects of losing significant money. He still wants to see how their October 19 & 20 Sectional makes out. He noted that the unit has gone from 17 clubs pre-COVID to 4 clubs currently and that the surviving clubs have only 5 or 6 tables of players at best. And many of the players play at more than one club. Local player turnout is critical and there are now only 160 players in the entire Unit.

Rehoboth Beach Delaware

Kim Holm & Harold Jordan

(4/29 - 5/3/24)

(4/28 - 5/2/25)

By most measures we had a successful tournament. We were blessed with great weather, we stretched capacity without going over and we had great support from most all District 4 members. We charged \$25 per session for the first time with very little negative feedback. Our attendance was up just over 20% and we think most attendees had a good time. We tried the first ever Wine and Cheese party with live music on Wednesday night. Although the attendance was disappointing the feedback from those who did attend was very positive. We plan on doing this again next year.

In 2025 we are exploring a second sight in anticipation of potential further growth and exploring ideas to continually enhance the player enjoyment. We hope to see you all there April 28 - May 2, 2025,

Allentown (U133) I/N

(12/14 - 12/16/23)

The NLM Regional was a resounding success. After much hard work and preparation, we now know what to expect and I think it might be feasible to do one every other year in Allentown allowing for all other units to host one every other year as well. I would suggest having 2 directors for all days. We made a decent profit and made some wonderful contacts with local businesses for donations of food.

Harrisburg (U168) I/N

(11/23 - 11/24/24)

Harrisburg NLM Rainbow Weekend. D4 750NLM Regional Saturday/Sunday November 23-24, 2024 will be preceded by a Unit 168 750NLM Sectional on Friday November 22. Flyers are going out and are already posted on the ACBL Tournament Page.

OLD BUSINESS

Betsy Cutler

The matter of having Wilkes-Barre host a future D4 Regional. See W-B Regional.

Vote on bylaws amendment to reduce the terms of President, Vice-President and Treasurer to two years. The amendment was adopted with one in opposition. Note: The amendment applies to the incumbent officers who will thus serve one more year rather than two more years.

NEW BUSINESS

Betsy Cutler

Vote on an amendment to have the President assume the duties of the Finance committee chair.

Several Board members did not want to see the President have another responsibility. Rather they preferred the Finance Chair be the Vice-President who has far fewer responsibilities. And it would be a good learning experience.

Since no motion was made to adopt the amendment, it was not necessary to table or vote on the amendment. Betsy will just make the appointment of our Vice-President, Ala, to the position of Finance Chair. Of course, the President is a member of all committees, and it is permissible to add a few more people.

NEXT MEETING

Betsy Cutler

Friday, November 1, 2024 at 7:00 PM during the Lancaster Regional held at Spooky Nook. The meeting will be preceded by dinner at 6:00 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

Betsy Cutler

The meeting adjourned at 8:50.

Respectively submitted by: William L. Bauer III
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